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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE WHITE LADY OF HAZELWOOD: A TALE OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY ***

Emily Sarah Holt

"The White Lady of Hazelwood"

Preface.

On the crowded canvas of the fourteenth century stands out as one of its most prominent figures that of the warrior Countess of Montfort. No reader of Froissart's Chronicle can forget the siege of Hennebon, and the valiant part she played in the defence of her son's dominions. Actuated by more personal motives than the peasant maid, she was nevertheless the Joan of Arc of her day, and of Bretagne.

What became of her?

After the restoration of her son, we see no more of that brave and tender mother. She drops into oblivion. Her work was done. Those who have thought again of her at all have accepted without question the only extant answer—the poor response of a contemporary romance, according to which she dwelt in peace, and closed an honoured and cherished life in a castle in the duchy of her loving and grateful son.

It has been reserved for the present day to find the true reply—to draw back the veil from the "bitter close of all," and to show that the hardest part of her work began when she laid down her sword, and the ending years of her life were the saddest and weariest portion. Never since the days of Lear has such a tale been told of a parent's sacrifice and of a child's ingratitude. In the royal home of the Duke of Bretagne, there was no room for her but for whose love and care he would have been a homeless fugitive. The discarded mother was imprisoned in a foreign land, and left to die.

Let us hope that as it is supposed in the story, the lonely, broken heart turned to a truer love than that of her cherished and cruel son—even to His who says "My mother" of all aged women who seek to do the will of God, and who will never forsake them that trust in Him.

Chapter One.

At the Patty-Maker's Shop.

"Man wishes to be loved—expects to be so:
And yet how few live so as to be loved!"

Rev. Horatius Bonar, D.D.

It was a warm afternoon in the beginning of July—warm everywhere; and particularly so in the house of Master Robert Altham, the patty-maker, who lived at the corner of Saint Martin's Lane, where it runs down into the Strand. Shall we look along the Strand? for the time is 1372, five hundred years ago, and the Strand was then a very different place from the street as we know it now.

In the first place, Trafalgar Square had no being. Below where it was to be in the far future, stood Charing Cross—the real Eleanor Cross of Charing, a fine Gothic structure—and four streets converged upon it. That to the north-west parted almost directly into the Hay Market and Hedge Lane, genuine country roads, in which both the hay and the hedge had a real existence. Southwards ran King Street down to Westminster; and northwards stood the large building of the King's Mews, where his Majesty's hawks were kept. Two hundred years later, bluff King Hal would turn out the hawks to make room for his horses; but as yet the word mews had its proper signification of a place where hawks were mewed or confined. At the corner of the Mews, between it and the patty-maker's, ran up Saint Martin's

Lane; its western boundary being the long blank wall of the Mews, and its eastern a few houses, and then Saint Martin's Church. Along the Strand, eastwards, were stately private houses on the right hand, and shops upon the left. Just below the cross, further to the south, was Scotland Yard, the site of the ancient Palace of King David of Scotland, and still bearing traces of its former grandeur; then came the Priory of Saint Mary Rouncival, the town houses of six Bishops, the superb mansion of the Earl of Arundel, and the house of the Bishops of Exeter, interspersed with smaller dwellings here and there. A long row of these stretched between Durham Place and Worcester Place, behind which, with its face to the river, stood the magnificent Palace of the Savoy, the city habitation of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, eldest surviving son of the reigning King. The Strand was far narrower than now, and the two churches, instead of being in the middle, broke the monotony of the rows of houses on the north side. Let us look more especially at the long row which ran unbroken from the corner of Saint Martin's Lane to the first church, that of "our Lady and the holy Innocents atte Stronde."

What would first strike the eye was the signboards, gaily painted, and swinging in the summer breeze. Every house had one, for there were no numbers, and these served the purpose; consequently no two similar ones must be near each other. People directed letters to Master Robert Altham, "at the Katherine Wheel, by Saint Martin's Church, nigh the King's Mews," when they had any to write; but letters, except to people in high life or in official positions, were very rare articles, and Master Altham had not received a full dozen in all the seven-and-twenty years that he had lived in the Strand and made patties. Next door to him was John Arnold, the bookbinder, who displayed a Saracen's head upon his signboard; then came in regular order Julian Walton, the mercer, with a wheelbarrow; Stephen Fronsard, the girdler, with a cardinal's hat; John Silverton, the peltier or furrier, with a star; Peter Swan, the Court broiderer, with cross-keys; John Morstowe, the luminer, or illuminator of books, with a rose; Lionel de Ferre, the French baker, with a vine; Herman Goldsmith, the Court goldsmith, who bore a dolphin; William Alberton, the forcermonger, who kept what we should call a fancy shop for little boxes, baskets, etcetera, and exhibited a *fleur-de-lis*; Michael Ladychapman, who sported a unicorn, and sold goloshes; Joel Garlickmonger, at the White Horse, who dealt in the fragrant vegetable whence he derived his name; and Theobald atte Home, the hatter, who being of a poetical disposition, displayed a landscape entitled, as was well understood, the Hart's Bourne. Beyond these stretched far away to the east other shops—those of a mealman, a lapidary, a cordwainer—namely, a shoemaker; a lindraper, for they had not yet added the syllable which makes it linen; a lorimer, who dealt in bits and bridles; a pouchmonger, who sold bags and pockets; a parchment-maker; a treaclemonger, a spicer, a chandler, and a pepperer, all four the representatives of our modern grocer; an apothecary; a scrivener, who wrote for the numerous persons who could not write; a fuller, who cleaned clothes; a tapiser, who sold tapestry, universally used for hangings of rooms; a barber, an armourer, a spurrier, a scourer, a dyer, a glover, a turner, a goldbeater, an upholdester or upholsterer, a toothdrawer, a buckler-maker, a fletcher (who feathered arrows), a poulter or poulterer, a vinter or wine-merchant, a pewterer, a haberdasher, a pinner or pin-maker, a skinner, a hamper-maker, and a hosier. The list might be prolonged through fifty other trades, but we have reached Temple Bar. So few houses between Saint Martin's Lane and Temple Bar! Yes, so few. Ground was cheap, and houses were low, and it cost less to cover much ground than to build high. Only very exalted mansions had three floors, and more than three were unknown even to imagination. Moreover, the citizens of London had decided ideas of the garden order. They did not crush their houses tight together, as if to squeeze out another inch, if possible. Though their streets were exceedingly narrow, yet nearly every house had its little garden; and behind that row to which we are paying particular attention, ran "le Covent Garden," the Abbot of Westminster's private pleasure ground, and on its south-east was Auntrous' Garden, bordered by "the King's highway, leading from the town of Seint Gylys to Stronde Crosse." The town of Seint Gylys was quite a country place, and as to such remote villages as Blumond's Bury or Iseldon, which we call Bloomsbury and Islington, nobody thought of them in connection with London, any more than with Nottingham or Durham.

The houses were much more picturesque than those of modern build. There was no attempt at uniformity. Each man set his house down as it suited him, and some thatches turned to the east and west, while others fronted north and south. There were few chimneys, except in the larger houses, and no shop windows; a large wooden shutter fixed below the window covered it at night, and in the day it was let down to hang, tablewise, as a counter whereon the goods sold by the owner were displayed.

The Strand was one of the few chief streets where various trades congregated together. Usually every street had its special calling, and every trade its own particular street. Some of the latter retain their significant names even yet—Hosier Lane, Cordwainer Street, Bread Street, Soper's Lane, the Poultry, Silver Street, Ironmonger's Lane, and Paternoster Row, in which last lived the text-writers and rosary-makers. The mercers lived mainly in Cheapside, the drapers in Lombard Street (they were mostly Italians, as the name shows), the furriers in Saint Mary Axe, the fishmongers in Knightriders' Street, the brewers by the Thames, the butchers in Eastcheap, and the goldsmiths in Guthrum's (now Gutter) Lane.

But it is time to inquire what kind of patties were inviting the passer-by on Mr Altham's counter. They were a very large variety: oyster, crab, lobster, anchovy, and all kinds of fish; sausage-rolls, jelly, liver, galantine, and every sort of meat; ginger, honey, cream, fruit; cheese-cakes, almond and lemon; little open tarts called bry tarts, made of literal cheese, with a multitude of other articles—eggs, honey or sugar, and spices; and many another compound of multifarious and indigestible edibles; for what number of incongruities, palatable or sanitary, did our forefathers *not* put together in a pie! For one description of dainty, however, Mr Altham would have been asked on this July afternoon in vain. He would have deemed it next door to sacrilege to heat his oven for a mince pie, outside the charmed period between Christmas Eve and Twelfth Day.

On the afternoon in question, Mr Altham stepped out of his door to speak with his neighbour the girdler, and no sooner was he well out of the way than another person walked into it. This was a youth of some eighteen years, dressed in a very curious costume. Men did not affect black clothes then, except in mourning; and the taste of few led them to the sombre browns and decorous greys worn by most now. This young gentleman had on a tunic of dark red, in shape not unlike a butcher's blue frock, which was fastened round the hips by a girdle of black leather, studded with brass spangles. His head was covered by a loose hood of bright blue, and his hose or stockings—for stockings and trousers were in one—were a light, bright shade of apple-green. Low black shoes completed this showy

costume, but it was not more showy than that of every other man passing along the street. Our young man seemed rather anxious not to be seen, for he cast sundry suspicious glances in the direction of the girdler's, and having at length apparently satisfied himself that the patty-maker was not likely to return at once, he darted across the street, and presented himself at the window of the corner shop. Two girls were sitting behind it, whose ages were twenty and seventeen. These young ladies were scarcely so smart as the gentleman. The elder wore a grey dress striped with black, over which was a crimson kirtle or pelisse, with wide sleeves and tight grey ones under them; a little green cap sat on her light hair, which was braided in two thick masses, one on each side of the face. The younger wore a dress of the same light green as the youth's hose, with a silvery girdle, and a blue cap.

"Mistress Alexandra!" said the youth in a loud whisper.

The elder girl took no notice of him. The younger answered as if she had just discovered his existence, though in truth she had seen him coming all the time.

"O Clement Winkfield, is that you? We've no raffiolys (Sausage-rolls) left, if that be your lack."

"I thank you, Mistress Ricarda; but I lack nought o' the sort. Mistress Alexandra knoweth full well that I come but to beg a kind word from her."

"I've none to spare this even," said the elder, with a toss of her head.

"But you will, sweet heart, when you hear my tidings."

"What now? Has your mother bought a new kerchief, or the cat caught a mouse?"

"Nay, sweet heart, mock me not! Here be grand doings, whereof my Lord talked this morrow at dinner, I being awaiting. What say you to a goodly tournament at the Palace of the Savoy?"

"I dare reckon you fell asleep and dreamed thereof."

"Mistress Alexandra, you'd make a saint for to swear! Howbeit, if you reck not thereof,—I had meant for to practise with my cousin at Arundel House, for to get you standing room with the maids yonder; but seeing you have no mind thereto—I dare warrant Mistress Joan Silverton shall not say me nay, and may be Mistress Argenta—"

"Come within, Clement, and eat a flaune," said Ricarda in a very different tone, taking up a dish of cheese-cakes from the counter. "When shall the jousting be?"

"Oh, it makes no bones, Mistress Ricarda. Your sister hath no mind thereto, 'tis plain."

However, Clement suffered himself to be persuaded to do what he liked, and Ricarda going close to her sister to fetch a plate, whispered to her a few words of warning as to what she might lose by too much coldness, whereupon the fair Alexandra thawed somewhat, and condescended to seem slightly interested in the coming event. Ricarda, however, continued to do most of the talking.

Clement Winkfield was scullion in the Bishop of Durham's kitchen, and would have been considered in that day rather a good match for a tradesman's daughter; for anything in the form of manufacture or barter was then in a very mean social position. Domestic service stood much higher than it does now; and though Mr Altham's daughters were heiresses in a small way, they could not afford to despise Clement Winkfield, except as a political stratagem.

"And what like shall the jousting be, Clement?" asked Ricarda, when that young gentleman had been satisfactorily settled on a form inside the shop, with a substantial cheese-cake before him—not a mere mouthful, but a large oval tart from which two or three people might be helped.

"It shall be the richest and rarest show was seen this many a day, my mistress," replied Clement, having disposed of his first bite. "In good sooth, Mistress, but you wot how to make flaunes! My Lord hath none such on his table."

"That was Saundrina's making," observed Ricarda with apparent carelessness.

"Dear heart! That's wherefore it's so sweet, trow," responded Clement gallantly.

Alexandra laughed languidly. "Come now, Clem, tell us all about the jousting, like a good lad as thou art, and win us good places to see the same, and I will make thee a chowet-pie (liver-pie) of the best," said she, laying aside her affected indifference.

"By my troth, I'll talk till my tongue droppeth on the floor," answered the delighted Clement; "and I have heard all of Will Pierpoint, that is in my Lord of Arundel his stable, and is thick as incle-weaving with one of my Lord of Lancaster his palfreymen. The knights be each one in a doublet of white linen, spangled of silver, having around the sleeves and down the face thereof a border of green cloth, whereon is broidered the device chosen, wrought about with clouds and vines of golden work. The ladies and damsels be likewise in green and white. For the knights, moreover, there be masking visors, fourteen of peacocks' heads, and fourteen of maidens' heads, the one sort to tilt against the other. My Lord Duke of Lancaster, that is lord of the revels, beareth a costume of white velvet paled with cramoisie (striped with crimson velvet), whereon be wrought garters of blue, and the Lady of Cambridge, that is lady of the jousts, and shall give the prizes, shall be in Inde-colour (blue), all wrought with roses of silver. There be at this present forty women broiderers a-working in the Palace, in such haste they be paid mighty high wage—fourpence halfpenny each one by the day."

In order to understand the value of these payments, we must multiply them by about sixteen. The wages of a broideress, according to the present worth of money, were, when high, six shillings a day.

"And the device, what is it?"

"Well, I counsel not any man to gainsay it. 'It is as it is'—there you have it."

"Truly, a merry saying. And when shall it be, Clem?"

Mistress Alexandra was quite gracious now.

"Thursday shall be a fortnight, being Saint Maudlin's Day, at ten o' the clock in the forenoon. Will hath passed word to me to get me in, and two other with me. You'll come, my mistresses? There'll not be room for Mistress Amphillis; I'm sorry."

Alexandra tossed her head very contemptuously.

"What does Amphillis want of jousts?" said she. "She's fit for nought save to sift flour and cleanse vessels when we have a-done with them. And she hasn't a decent kirtle, never name a hood. I wouldn't be seen in her company for forty shillings."

"Saundrina's been at Father to put her forth," added Ricarda, "if he could but hear of some service in the country, where little plenishing were asked. There's no good laying no money out on the like of her."

A soft little sound at the door made them look round. A girl was standing there, of about Clement's age—a pale, quiet-looking girl, who seemed nervously afraid of making her presence known, apparently lest she should be blamed for being there or anywhere. Alexandra spoke sharply.

"Come within and shut the door, Amphillis, and stare not thus like a goose! What wouldst?"

Amphillis neither came in nor shut the door. She held it in her hand, while she said in a shy way, "The patties are ready to come forth, if one of you will come," and then she disappeared, as if frightened of staying a minute longer than she could help.

"'Ready to come forth!'" echoed Ricarda. "Cannot the stupid thing take them forth by herself?"

"I bade her not do so," explained her sister, "but call one of us—she is so unhandy. Go thou, Ricarda, or she'll be setting every one wrong side up."

Ricarda, with a martyr-like expression—which usually means an expression very unlike a martyr's—rose and followed Amphillis. Alexandra, thus left alone with Clement, became so extra amiable as to set that not over-wise youth on a pinnacle of ecstasy, until she heard her father's step, when she dismissed him hastily.

She did not need to have been in a hurry, for the patty-maker was stopped before he reached the threshold, by a rather pompous individual in white and blue livery. Liveries were then worn far more commonly than now—not by servants only, but by officials of all kinds, and by gentlemen retainers of the nobles—sometimes even by nobles themselves. To wear a friend's livery was one of the highest compliments that could be paid. Mr Altham knew by a glance at his costume that the man who had stopped him bore some office in the household of the Duke of Lancaster, since he not only wore that Prince's livery, but bore his badge, the ostrich feather ermine, affixed to his left sleeve.

"Master Altham the patty-maker, I take it?"

"He, good my master, and your servant."

"A certain lady would fain wit of you, Master, if you have at this present dwelling with you a daughter named Amphillis?"

"I have no daughter of that name. I have two daughters, whose names be Alexandra and Ricarda, that dwell with me; likewise one wedded, named Isabel. I have a niece named Amphillis."

"That dwelleth with you?"

"Ay, she doth at this present, sithence my sister, her mother, is departed (dead); but—"

"You have had some thought of putting her forth, maybe?"

Mr Altham looked doubtful.

"Well! we have talked thereof, I and my maids; but no certain end was come to thereabout."

"That is it which the lady has heard. Mistress Walton the silkwoman, at the Wheelbarrow, spake with this lady, saying such a maid there was, for whom you sought service; and the lady wotteth (knows) of a gentlewoman with whom she might be placed an' she should serve, and the service suited your desires for her."

"Pray you, come within, and let us talk thereon at our leisure. I am beholden to Mistress Walton; she knew I had some thoughts thereanent (about it), and she hath done me a good turn to name it."

The varlet, as he was then called, followed Mr Altham into the shop. Aralet is a contraction of this word. But varlet, at that date, was a term of wide signification, including any type of personal attendant. The varlet of a duke would be a gentleman by birth and education, for gentlemen were not above serving nobles even in very menial positions. People had then, in some respects, "less nonsense about them" than now, and could not see that it was any

degradation for one man to hand a plate to another.

Alexandra rose when the varlet made his appearance. She did not keep a heart, and she did keep a large stock of vanity. She was consequently quite ready to throw over Clement Winkfield as soon as ever a more eligible suitor should present himself; and her idea of mankind ranged them in two classes—such as were, and such as were not, eligible suitors for Alexandra Altham.

Mr Altham, however, led his guest straight through the shop and upstairs, thus cutting short Miss Altham's wiles and graces. He took him into what we should call his study, a very little room close to his bedchamber, and motioned him to the only chair it contained; for chairs were rare and choice things, the form or bench being the usual piece of furniture. Before shutting the door, however, he called—"Phyllis!"

Somebody unseen to the varlet answered the call, and received directions in a low voice. Mr Altham then came in and shut the door.

"I have bidden the maid bring us hypocras and spice," said he; "so you shall have a look at her."

Hypocras was a very light wine, served as tea now is in the afternoon, and spice was a word which covered all manner of good things—not only pepper, sugar, cinnamon, and nutmegs, but rice, almonds, ginger, and even gingerbread.

Mr Tynneslowe—for so the varlet was named—sat down in the chair, and awaited the tray and Amphillis.

Chapter Two.

The Goldsmith's Daughter.

"I can live
A life that tells on other lives, and makes
This world less full of evil and of pain—
A life which, like a pebble dropped at sea,
Sends its wide circles to a hundred shores."

Rev. Horatius Bonar, D.D.

The coming hypocras interested Mr Tynneslowe more than its bearer. He was privately wondering, as he sat awaiting it, whether Mr Altham would have any in his cellar that was worth drinking, especially after that of his royal master. His next remark, however, had reference to Amphillis.

"It makes little matter, good Master, that I see the maid," said he. "The lady or her waiting-damsels shall judge best of her. You and I can talk over the money matters and such. I am ill-set to judge of maids: they be kittle gear."

"Forsooth, they be so!" assented Mr Altham, with a sigh: for his fair and wayward Alexandra had cost him no little care before that summer afternoon. "And to speak truth, Master Tynneslowe, I would not be sorry to put the maid forth, for she is somewhat a speckled bird in mine house, whereat the rest do peck. Come within!"

The door of the little chamber opened, and Amphillis appeared carrying a tray, whereon was set a leather bottle flanked by two silver cups, a silver plate containing cakes, and a little silver-gilt jar with preserved ginger. Glass and china were much too rare and costly articles for a tradesman to use, but he who had not at least two or three cups and plates of silver in his closet was a very poor man. Of course these, by people in Mr Altham's position, were kept for best, the articles commonly used being pewter or wooden plates, and horn cups.

Amphillis louted to the visitor—that is, she dropped what we call a charity school-girl's "bob"—and the visitor rose and courtesied in reply, for the courtesy was then a gentleman's reverence. She set down the tray, poured out wine for her uncle and his guest into the silver cups, handed the cakes and ginger, and then quietly took her departure.

"A sober maid and a seemly, in good sooth," said Mr Tynneslowe, when the door was shut. "Hath she her health reasonable good? She looks but white."

"Ay, good enough," said the patty-maker, who knew that Amphillis was sufficiently teased and worried by those lively young ladies, her cousins, to make any girl look pale.

"Good. Well, what wages should content you?"

Mr Altham considered that question with pursed lips and hands in his pockets.

"Should you count a mark (13 shillings 4 pence) by the year too much?"

This would come to little over ten pounds a year at present value, and seems a very poor salary for a young lady; but it must be remembered that she was provided with clothing, as well as food and lodging, and that she was altogether free from many expenses which we should reckon necessities—umbrellas and parasols, watches, desks, stamps, and stationery.

"Scarce enough, rather," was the unexpected answer. "Mind you, Master Altham, I said a *lady*."

Master Altham looked curious and interested. We call every woman a lady who has either money or education; but in 1372 ranks were more sharply defined. Only the wives and daughters of a prince, peer, or knight were termed ladies;

the wives of squires and gentlemen were gentlewomen; while below that they were simply called wives or maids, according as they were married or single.

“This lady, then, shall be—Mercy on us! sure, Master Tynneslowe, you go not about to have the maid into the household of my Lady’s Grace of Cambridge, or the Queen’s Grace herself of Castile?”

The Duke of Lancaster having married the heiress of Castile, he and his wife were commonly styled King and Queen of Castile.

Mr Tynneslowe laughed. “Nay, there you fly your hawk at somewhat too high game,” said he; “nathless (nevertheless), Master Altham, it is a lady whom she shall serve, and a lady likewise who shall judge if she be meet for the place. But first shall she be seen of a certain gentlewoman of my lady’s household, that shall say whether she promise fair enough to have her name sent up for judgment. I reckon three nobles (one pound; present value, 6 pounds) by the year shall pay her reckoning.”

“Truly, I would be glad she had so good place. And for plenishing, what must she have?”

“Store sufficient of raiment is all she need have, and such jewelling as it shall please you to bestow on her. All else shall be found. The gentlewoman shall give her note of all that lacketh, if she be preferred to the place.”

“And when shall she wait on the said gentlewoman?”

“Next Thursday in the even, at Master Goldsmith’s.”

“I will send her.”

Mr Tynneslowe declined a second helping of hypocras, and took his leave. The patty-maker saw him to the door, and then went back into his shop.

“I have news for you, maids,” said he.

Ricarda, who was arranging the fresh patties, looked up and stopped her proceedings; Alexandra brought her head in from the window. Amphyllis only, who sat sewing in the corner, went on with her work as if the news were not likely to concern her.

“Phyllis, how shouldst thou like to go forth to serve a lady?”

A bright colour flushed into the pale cheeks.

“I, Uncle?” she said.

“A lady!” cried Alexandra in a much shriller voice, the word which had struck her father’s ear so lightly being at once noted by her. “Said you a *lady*, Father? What lady, I pray you?”

“That cannot I say, daughter. Phyllis, thou art to wait on a certain gentlewoman, at Master Goldsmith’s, as next Thursday in the even, that shall judge if thou shouldst be meet for the place. Don thee in thy best raiment, and mind thy manners.”

“May I go withal, Father?” cried Alexandra.

“There was nought said about thee. Wouldst thou fain be put forth? I never thought of no such a thing. Maybe it had been better that I had spoken for you, my maids.”

“I would not go forth to serve a city wife, or such mean gear,” said Alexandra, contemptuously. “But in a lady’s household I am well assured I should become the place better than Phyllis. Why, she has not a word to say for herself,—a poor weak creature that should never—”

“Hush, daughter! Taunt not thy cousin. If she be a good maid and discreet, she shall be better than fair and foolish.”

“Gramercy! cannot a maid be fair and discreet belike?”

“Soothly so. ’Tis pity she is not oftener.”

“But may we not go withal, Father?” said Ricarda.

“Belike ye may, my maid. Bear in mind the gentlewoman looks to see Amphyllis, not you, and make sure that she wist which is she. Then I see not wherefore ye may not go.”

Any one who had lived in Mr Altham’s house from that day till the Thursday following would certainly have thought that Alexandra, not Amphyllis, was the girl chosen to go. The former made far more fuss about it, and she was at the same time preparing a new mantle wherein to attend the tournament, of which Amphyllis was summoned to do all the plain and uninteresting parts. The result of this preoccupation would have been very stale pastry on the counter, if her father had not seen to that item for himself. Ricarda was less excited and egotistical, yet she talked more than Amphyllis.

The Thursday evening came, and the three girls, dressed in their best clothes, took their way to the Dolphin. The Court goldsmith was a more select individual than Mr Altham, and did not serve in his own shop, unless summoned to a customer of rank. The young men who were there had evidently been prepared for the girls’ coming, and showed them upstairs with a fire of jokes which Alexandra answered smartly, while Amphyllis was silent under them.

They were ushered into the private chamber of the goldsmith's daughter, who sat at work, and rose to receive them. She kissed them all, for kissing was then the ordinary form of greeting, and people only shook hands when they wished to be warmly demonstrative.

"Is the gentlewoman here, Mistress Regina?"

"Sit you down," said Mistress Regina, calmly. "No, she is not yet come. She will not long be. Which of you three is de maiden dat go shall?"

"That my cousin is," said Alexandra, making fun of the German girl's somewhat broken English, though in truth she spoke it fairly for a foreigner. But Amphyllis said gently—

"That am I, Mistress Regina; and I take it full kindly of you, that you should suffer me to meet this gentlewoman in your chamber."

"So!" was the answer. "You shall better serve of de three."

Alexandra had no time to deliver the rather pert reply which she was preparing, for the door opened, and the young man announced "Mistress Chaucer."

Had the girls known that the lady who entered was the wife of a man before whose fame that of many a crowned monarch would pale, and whose poetry should live upon men's lips when five hundred years had fled, they would probably have looked on her with very different eyes. But they knew her only as a Lady of the Bedchamber, first to the deceased Queen Philippa, and now to the Queen of Castile, and therefore deserving of all possible subservience. Of her husband they never thought at all. The "chiel among 'em takin' notes" made no impression on them: but five centuries have passed since then, and the chiel's notes are sterling yet in England.

Mistress Chaucer sat down on the bench, and with quiet but rapid glances appraised the three girls. Then she said to Amphyllis—

"Is it thou whom I came to see?"

Amphyllis louted, and modestly assented, after which the lady took no further notice of the two who were the more anxious to attract her attention.

"And what canst thou do?" she said.

"What I am told, Mistress," said Amphyllis.

"*Ach!*" murmured Regina; "you den can much do."

"Ay, thou canst do much," quietly repeated Mistress Chaucer. "Canst dress hair?"

Amphyllis thought she could. She might well, for her cousins made her their maid, and were not easily pleased mistresses.

"Thou canst cook, I cast no doubt, being bred at a patty-shop?"

"Mistress, I have only dwelt there these six months past. My father was a poor gentleman that died when I was but a babe, and was held to demean himself by wedlock with my mother, that was sister unto mine uncle, Master Altham. Mine uncle was so kindly as to take on him the charge of breeding me up after my father died, and he set my mother and me in a little farm that 'longeth to him in the country: and at after she departed likewise, he took me into his house. I know somewhat of cookery, an' it like you, but not to even my good cousins here."

"Oh, Phyllis is a metely fair cook, when she will give her mind thereto," said Alexandra with a patronising air, and a little toss of her head—a gesture to which that young lady was much addicted.

A very slight look of amusement passed across Mistress Chaucer's face, but she did not reply to the remark.

"And thy name?" she asked, still addressing Amphyllis.

"Amphyllis Neville, and your servant, Mistress."

"Canst hold thy peace when required so to do?" Amphyllis smiled. "I would endeavour myself so to do."

"Canst be patient when provoked of other?"

"With God's grace, Mistress, I so trust." Alexandra's face wore an expression of dismay. It had never occurred to her that silence and patience were qualities required in a bower-maiden, as the maid or companion to a lady was then called; for the maid was the companion then, and was usually much better educated than now—as education was understood at that time. In Alexandra's eyes the position was simply one which gave unbounded facilities for flirting, laughing, and giddiness in general. She began to think that Amphyllis was less to be envied than she had supposed.

"And thou wouldst endeavour thyself to be meek and buxom (humble and submissive) in all things to them that should be set over thee?"

"I would so, my mistress."

"What fashions of needlework canst do?"

"Mistress, I can sew, and work tapestry, and embroider somewhat if the pattern be not too busy (elaborate, difficult). I would be glad to learn the same more perfectly."

Mistress Chaucer rose. "I think thou wilt serve," said she. "But I can but report the same—the deciding lieth not with me. Mistress Regina, I pray you to allow of another to speak with this maid in your chamber to-morrow in the even, and this time it shall be the lady that must make choice. Not she that shall be thy mistress, my maid; she dwelleth not hereaway, but far hence."

Amphillis cared very little where her future duties were to lie. She was grateful to her uncle, but she could hardly be said to love him; and her cousins had behaved to her in such a style, that the sensation called forth towards them was a long way from love. She felt alone in the world; and it did not much signify in what part of that lonely place she was set down to work. The only point about which she cared at all was, that she was rather glad to hear she was not to stay in London; for, like old Earl Douglas, she "would rather hear the lark sing than the mouse cheep."

The girls louted to Mistress Chaucer, kissed Regina, and went down into the shop, which they found filled with customers, and Master Herman himself waiting on them, they being of sufficient consequence for the notice of that distinguished gentleman. On the table set in the midst of the shop—which, like most tables at that day, was merely a couple of boards laid across trestles—was spread a blue cloth, whereon rested various glittering articles—a silver basin, a silver-gilt bottle, a cup of gold, and another of a fine shell set in gold, a set of silver apostle spoons, so-called because the handle of each represented one of the apostles, and another spoon of beryl ornamented with gold; but none of them seemed to suit the customers, who were looking for a suitable christening gift.

"*Ach!* dey vill not do!" ejaculated Master Herman, spreading out his fat fingers and beringed thumbs. "Then belike we must de jewels try. It is a young lady, de shild? *Gut!* den look you here. Here is de botoner of perry (button-hook of goldsmith's work), and de bottons—twelf—wrought wid garters, wid lilies, wid bears, wid leetle bells, or wid a reason (motto)—you can haf what reason you like. Look you here again, Madam—de ouches (brooches)—an eagle of gold and enamel, Saint George and de dragon, de white hart, de triangle of diamonds; look you again, de paternosters (rosaries), dey are *lieblich!* gold and coral, gold and pearls, gold and rubies; de rings, sapphire and ruby and diamond and smaragdus (emerald)—*ach!* I have it. Look you here!"

And from an iron chest, locked with several keys, Master Herman produced something wrapped carefully in white satin, and took off the cover as if he were handling a baby.

"Dere!" he cried, holding up a golden chaplet, or wreath for the head, of ruby flowers and leaves wrought in gold, a large pearl at the base of every leaf—"dere! You shall not see a better sight in all de city—*ach!* not in Nuremburg nor Cöln. Dat is what you want—it is *schön, schön!* and dirt sheap it is—only von hundred marks. You take it?"

The lady seemed inclined to take it, but the gentleman demurred at the hundred marks—66 pounds, 13 shillings and 4 pence, which, reduced to modern value, would be nearly eleven hundred pounds; and the girls, who had lingered as long as they reasonably could in their passage through the attractive shop, were obliged to pass out while the bargain was still uncompleted.

"I'd have had that chaplet for myself, if I'd been that lady!" said Alexandra as they went forward. "I'd never have cast that away for a christening gift."

"Nay, but her lord would not find the money," answered Ricarda.

"I'd have had it, some way," said her sister. "It was fair enough for a queen. Amphillis, I do marvel who is the lady thou shalt serve. There's ever so much ado ere the matter be settled. 'Tis one grander than Mistress Chaucer, trow, thou shalt see to-morrow even."

"Ay, so it seems," was the quiet answer.

"Nathless, I would not change with thee. I've no such fancy for silence and patience. Good lack! but if a maid can work, and dress hair, and the like, what would they of such weary gear as that?"

"Maids be not of much worth without they be discreet," said Amphillis.

"Well, be as discreet as thou wilt; I'll none of it," was the flippant reply of her cousin.

The young ladies, however, did not neglect to accompany Amphillis on her subsequent visit. Regina met them at the door.

"She is great lady, dis one, I am sure," said she. "Pray you, mind your respects."

The great lady carried on her conversation in French, which in 1372 was the usual language of the English nobles. Its use was a survival from the Norman Conquest, but the Norman-French was very far from pure, being derided by the real French, and not seldom by Englishmen themselves. Chaucer says of his prioress:—

"And French she spake full fair and fetously (cleverly),
After the scole of Stratford-atte-Bow,
For French of Paris was to hire (her) unknow."

This lady, the girls noticed, spoke the French of Paris, and was rather less intelligible in consequence. She put her queries in a short, quick style, which a little disconcerted Amphillis; and she had a weary, irritated manner. At last she said shortly—

"Very well! Consider yourself engaged. You must set out from London on Lammas Day (August 1st), and Mistress

Regina here, who is accustomed to such matters, will tell you what you need take. A varlet will come to fetch you; take care you are ready. Be discreet, and do not get into any foolish entanglements of any sort."

Amphillis asked only one question—Would the lady be pleased to tell her the name and address of her future mistress?

"Your mistress lives in Derbyshire. You will hear her name on the way."

And with a patronising nod to the girls, and another to Regina, the lady left the room.

"Lammas Day!" cried Alexandra, almost before the door was closed. "Gramercy, but we can never be a-ready!"

"*Ach! ja*, but you will if you hard work," said Regina.

"And the jousting!" said Ricarda.

"What for the jousting?" asked Regina. "You are not knights, dat you joust?"

"We should have seen it, though: a friend had passed his word to take us, that wist how to get us in."

"We'll go yet, never fear!" said her sister. "Phyllis must work double."

"Den she will lose de sight," objected Regina.

"Oh, *she* won't go!" said Alexandra, contemptuously. "Much she knows about tilting!"

"What! you go, and not your cousin? I marvel if you about it know more dan she. And to see a pretty sight asks not much knowing."

"I'm not going to slave myself, I can tell you!" replied Alexandra. "Phyllis must work. What else is she good for?"

Regina left the question unanswered. "Well, you leave Phyllis wid me; I have something to say to her—to tell her what she shall take, and how she must order herself. Den she come home and work her share—no more."

The sisters saw that she meant it, and they obeyed, having no desire to make an enemy of the wealthy goldsmith's daughter.

Chapter Three.

Who can she be?

"O thou child of many prayers!
Life hath quicksands—life hath snares."

Longfellow.

"Now, sit you down on de bench," said Regina, kindly. "Poor maid! you tremble, you are white. *Ach!* when folks shall do as dey should, dey shall not do as dey do no more. Now we shall have von pleasant talking togeder, you and I. You know de duties of de bower-woman? or I tell dem you?"

"Would you tell me, an' it please you?" answered Amphillis, modestly. "I do not know much, I dare say."

"*Gut!* Now, listen. In de morning, you are ready before your lady calls; you keep not her awaiting. Maybe you sleep in de truckle-bed in her chamber; if so, you dress more quieter as mouse, you wake not her up. She wakes, she calls—you hand her garments, you dress her hair. If she be wedded lady, you not to her chamber go ere her lord be away. Mind you be neat in your dress, and lace you well, and keep your hair tidy, wash your face, and your hands and feet, and cut short your nails. Every morning you shall your teeth clean. Take care, take much care what you do. You walk gravely, modestly; you talk low, quiet; you carry you sad (Note 1) and becomingly. Mix water plenty with your wine at dinner: you take not much wine, dat should shocking be! You carve de dishes, but you press not nobody to eat—dat is not good manners. You wash hands after your lady, and you look see there be two seats betwixt her and you—no nearer you go (Note 2). You be quiet, quiet! sad, sober always—no chatter fast, no scamper, no loud laugh. You see?"

"I see, and I thank you," said Amphillis. "I hope I am not a giglot."

"You are not—no, no! Dere be dat are. Not you. Only mind you not so become. Young maids can be too careful never, never! You lose your good name in one hour, but in one year you win it not back."

And Regina's plump round face went very sad, as if she remembered some such instance of one who was dear to her.

"*Ach so!*—Well! den if your lady have daughters young, she may dem set in your care. You shall den have good care dey learn courtesy (Note 3), and gaze not too much from de window, and keep very quiet in de bower (Note 4). And mind you keep dem—and yourself too—from de mans. Mans is bad!"

Amphillis was able to say, with a clear conscience, that she had no hankering after the society of those perilous creatures.

"See you," resumed Regina, with some warmth, "dere is one good man in one hundert mans. No more! De man you

see, shall he be de hundert man, or one von de nine and ninety? What you tink?"

"I think he were more like to be of the ninety and nine," said Amphyllis with a little laugh. "But how for the women, Mistress Regina? Be they all good?"

Regina shook her head in a very solemn manner.

"Dere is bad mans," answered she, "and dey is bad: and dere is bad womans, and dey is badder; and dere is bad angels, and dey is baddest of all. Look you, you make de sharpest vinegar von de sweetest wine. Amphyllis, you are good maid, I tink; keep you good! And dat will say, keep you to yourself, and run not after no mans, nor no womans neider. You keep your lady's counsel true and well, but you keep no secrets from her. When any say to you, 'Amphyllis, you tell not your lady,' you say to yourself, 'I want noting to do wid you; I keep to myself, and I have no secrets from my lady.' Dat is *gut!*"

"Mistress Regina, wot you who is the lady I am to serve?"

"I know noting, no more dan you—no, not de name of de lady you dis evening saw. She came from de Savoy—so much know I, no more."

Amphyllis knew that goldsmiths were very often the bankers of their customers, and that their houses were a frequent rendezvous for business interviews. It was, therefore, not strange at all that Regina should not be further in the confidence of the lady in question.

"Now you shall not tarry no later," said Regina, kissing her. "You serve well your lady, you pray to God, and you keep from de mans. Good-night!"

"Your pardon granted, Mistress Regina, but you have not yet told me what I need carry withal."

"*Ach so!* My head gather de wool, as you here say. Why, you take with you raiment enough to begin—dat is all. Your lady find you gowns after, and a saddle to ride, and all dat you need. Only de raiment to begin, and de brains in de head—she shall not find you dat. Take wid you as much of dem as you can get. Now run—de dark is *gekommen.*"

It relieved Amphyllis to find that she needed to carry nothing with, her except clothes, brains, and prudence. The first she knew that her uncle would supply; for the second, she could only take all she had; and as to the last, she must do her best to cultivate it.

Mr Altham, on hearing the report, charged his daughters to see that their cousin had every need supplied; and to do those young ladies justice, they took fairly about half their share of the work, until the day of the tournament, when they declared that nothing on earth should make them touch a needle. Instead of which, they dressed themselves in their best, and, escorted by Mr Clement Winkfield, were favoured by permission to slip in at the garden door, and to squeeze into a corner among the Duke's maids and grooms.

A very grand sight it was. In the royal stand sat the King, old Edward the Third, scarcely yet touched by that pitiful imbecility which troubled his closing days; and on his right hand sat the queen of the jousts, the young Countess of Cambridge, bride of Prince Edmund, with the Duke of Lancaster on her other hand, the Duchess being on the left of the King. All the invited ladies were robed uniformly in green and white, the prize-giver herself excepted. The knights were attired as Clement had described them. I am not about to describe the tournament, which, after all, was only a glorified prize-fight, and, therefore, suited to days when few gentlemen could read, and no forks were used for meals. We call ourselves civilised now, yet some who consider themselves such, seem to entertain a desire to return to barbarism. Human nature, in truth, is the same in all ages, and what is called culture is only a thin veneer. Nothing but to be made partaker of the Divine nature will implant the heavenly taste.

The knights who were acclaimed victors, or at least the best jousts on the field, were led up to the royal stand, and knelt before the queen of the jousts, who placed a gold chaplet on the head of the first, and tied a silken scarf round the shoulders of the second and third. Happily, no one was killed or even seriously injured—not a very unusual state of things. At a tournament eighteen years later, the Duke of Lancaster's son-in-law, the last of the Earls of Pembroke, was left dead upon the field.

Alexandra and Ricarda came back very tired, and not in exceptionally good tempers, as Amphyllis soon found out, since she was invariably a sufferer on these occasions. They declared themselves, the next morning, far too weary to put in a single stitch; and occupied themselves chiefly in looking out of the window and exchanging airy nothings with customers. But when Clement came in the afternoon with an invitation to a dance at his mother's house, their exhausted energies rallied surprisingly, and they were quite able to go, though the same farce was played over again on the ensuing morning.

By dint of working early and late, Amphyllis was just ready on the day appointed—small thanks to her cousins, who not only shirked her work, but were continually summoning her from it to do theirs. Mr Altham gave his niece some good advice, along with a handsome silver brooch, a net of gold tissue for her hair, commonly called a crespine or dove-cote, and a girdle of black leather, set with bosses of silver-gilt. These were the most valuable articles that had ever yet been in her possession, and Amphyllis felt herself very rich, though she could have dispensed with Ricarda's envious admiration of her treasures, and Alexandra's acetous remarks about some people who were always grabbing as much as they could get. In their father's presence these observations were omitted, and Mr Altham had but a faint idea of what his orphan niece endured at the hands—or rather the tongues—of his daughters, who never forgave her for being more gently born than themselves.

Lammas Day dawned warm and bright, and after early mass in the Church of Saint Mary at Strand—which nobody in those days would have dreamed of missing on a saint's day—Amphyllis placed herself at an upstairs window to watch

for her escort. She had not many minutes to wait, before two horses came up the narrow lane from the Savoy Palace, and trotting down the Strand, stopped at the patty-maker's door. After them came a baggage-mule, whose back was fitted with a framework intended to sustain luggage.

One horse carried a man attired in white linen, and the other bore a saddle and pillion, the latter being then the usual means of conveyance for a woman. On the saddle before it sat a middle-aged man in the royal livery, which was then white and red. The man in linen alighted, and after a few minutes spent in conversation with Mr Altham, he carried out Amphyllis's luggage, in two leather trunks, which were strapped one on each side of the mule. As soon as she saw her trunks disappearing, Amphyllis ran down and took leave of her uncle and cousins.

"Well, my maid, God go with thee!" said Mr Altham. "Forget not thine old uncle and these maids; and if thou be ill-used, or any trouble hap thee, pray the priest of thy parish to write me a line thereanent, and I will see what can be done."

"Fare thee well, Phyllis!" said Alexandra, and Ricarda echoed the words.

Mr Altham helped his niece to mount the pillion, seated on which, she had to put her arms round the waist of the man in front, and clasp her hands together; for without this precaution, she would have been unseated in ten minutes. There was nothing to keep her on, as she sat with her left side to the horse's head, and roads in those days were rough to an extent of which we, accustomed to macadamised ways, can scarcely form an idea now.

And so, pursued for "luck" by an old shoe from Ricarda's hand, Amphyllis Neville took her leave of London, and rode forth into the wide world to seek her fortune.

Passing along the Strand as far as the row of houses ran, at the Strand Cross they turned to the left, and threading their way in and out among the detached houses and little gardens, they came at last into Holborn, and over Holborn Bridge into Smithfield. Under Holborn Bridge ran the Fleet river, pure and limpid, on its way to the silvery Thames; and as they emerged from Cock Lane, the stately Priory of Saint Bartholomew fronted them a little to the right. Crossing Smithfield, they turned up Long Lane, and thence into Aldersgate Street, and in a few minutes more the last houses of London were left behind them. As they came out into the open country, Amphyllis was greeted, to her surprise, by a voice she knew.

"God be wi' ye, Mistress Amphyllis!" said Clement Winkfield, coming up and walking for a moment alongside, as the horse mounted the slight rising ground. "Maybe you would take a little farewell token of mine hand, just for to mind you when you look on it, that you have friends in London that shall think of you by nows and thens."

And Clement held up to Amphyllis a little silver box, with a ring attached, through which a chain or ribbon could be passed to wear it round the neck. A small red stone was set on one side.

"'Tis a good charm," said he. "There is therein writ a Scripture, that shall bear you safe through all perils of journeying, and an hair of a she-bear, that is good against witchcraft; and the carnelian stone appeaseth anger. Trust me, it shall do you no harm to bear it anigh you."

Amphyllis, though a sensible girl for her time, was not before her time, and therefore had full faith in the wonderful virtues of amulets. She accepted the silver box with the entire conviction that she had gained a treasure of no small value. Simple, good-natured Clement lifted his cap, and turned back down Aldersgate Street, while Amphyllis and her escort went on towards Saint Albans.

A few miles they rode in silence, broken now and then by a passing remark from the man in linen, chiefly on the deep subject of the hot weather, and by the sumpterman's frequent requests that his mule would "gee-up," which the perverse quadruped in question showed little inclination to do. At length, as the horse checked its speed to walk up a hill, the man in front of Amphyllis said—

"Know you where you be journeying, my mistress?"

"Into Derbyshire," she answered. "Have there all I know."

"But you wot, surely, whom you go to serve?"

"Truly, I wot nothing," she replied, "only that I go to be bower-woman to some lady. The lady that saw me, and bound me thereto, said that I might look to learn on the road."

"Dear heart! and is that all they told you?"

"All, my master."

"Words must be costly in those parts," said the man in linen.

"Well," answered the other, drawing out the word in a tone which might mean a good deal. "Words do cost much at times, Master Saint Oly. They have cost men their lives ere now."

"Ay, better men than you or me," replied the other. "Howbeit, my mistress, there is no harm you should know—is there, Master Dugan?—that you be bounden for the manor of Hazelwood, some six miles to the north of Derby, where dwell Sir Godfrey Foljambe and his dame."

"No harm; so you tarry there at this present," said Master Dugan.

"Ay, I've reached my hostel," was the response.

"Then my Lady Foljambe is she that I must serve?"

The man in linen exchanged a smile with the man in livery.

"You shall see her the first, I cast no doubt, and she shall tell you your duties," answered Dugan.

Amphillis sat on the pillion, and meditated on her information as they journeyed on. There was evidently something more to tell, which she was not to be told at present. After wondering for a little while what it might be, and deciding that her imagination was not equal to the task laid upon it, she gave it up, and allowed herself to enjoy the sweet country scents and sounds without apprehension for the future.

For six days they travelled on in this fashion, about twenty miles each day, staying every night but one at a wayside inn, where Amphillis was always delivered into the care of the landlady, and slept with her daughter or niece; once at a private house, the owners of which were apparently friends of Mr Dugan. They baited for the last time at Derby, and about two o'clock in the afternoon rode into the village of Hazelwood.

It was only natural that Amphillis should feel a little nervous and uneasy, in view of her introduction to her new abode and unknown companions. She was not less so on account of the mystery which appeared to surround the nameless mistress. Why did everybody who seemed to know anything make such a secret of the affair?

The Manor house of Hazelwood was a pretty and comfortable place enough. It stood in a large garden, gay with autumn flowers, and a high embattled wall protected it from possible enemies. The trio rode in under an old archway, through a second gate, and then drew up beneath the entrance arch, the door being—as is yet sometimes seen in old inns—at the side of the arch running beneath the house. A man in livery came forward to take the horses.

"Well, Master Saint Oly," said he; "here you be!"

"I could have told thee that, Sim," was the amused reply. "Is all well? Sir Godfrey at home?"

"Ay to the first question, and No to the second."

"My Lady is in her bower?"

"My Lady's in the privy garden, whither you were best take the damsel to her."

Sim led the horses away to the stable, and Saint Oly turned to Amphillis.

"Then, if it please you, follow me, my mistress; we were best to go to my Lady at once."

Amphillis followed, silent, curious, and a little fluttered.

They passed under the entrance arch inwards, and found themselves in a smaller garden than the outer, enclosed on three sides by the house and its adjacent outbuildings. In the midst was a spreading tree, with a form underneath it; and in its shade sat a lady and a girl about the age of Amphillis. Another girl was gathering flowers, and an elderly woman was coming towards the tree from behind. Saint Oly conducted Amphillis to the lady who sat under the tree.

"Dame," said he, "here, under your good leave, is Mistress Amphillis Neville, that is come to you from London town, to serve her you wot of."

This, then, was Lady Foljambe. Amphillis looked up, and saw a tall, handsome, fair-complexioned woman, with a rather grave, not to say stern, expression of face. "Good," said Lady Foljambe. "You are welcome, Mistress Neville. I trust you can do your duty, and not giddle and chatter?"

The girl who sat by certainly giggled on hearing this question, and Lady Foljambe extinguished her by a look.

"I will do my best, Dame," replied Amphillis, nervously.

"None can do more," said her Ladyship more graciously. "Are you aweary with your journey?"

"But a little, Dame, I thank you. Our stage to-day was but short."

"You left your friends well?" was the next condescending query.

"Yes, Dame, I thank you."

Lady Foljambe turned her head. "Perrote!" she said.

"Dame!" answered the elderly woman.

"Take the damsel up to your Lady's chambers, and tell her what her duties will be.—Mistress Neville, one matter above all other must I press upon you. Whatever you see or hear in your Lady's chamber is never to come beyond. You will company with my damsels, Agatha—" with a slight move of her head towards the girl at her side—"and Marabel,"—indicating by another gesture the one who was gathering flowers. "Remember, in your leisure times, when you are talking together, no mention of *your* Lady must ever be made. If you hear it, rebuke it. If you make it, you may not like that which shall follow. Be wise and discreet, and you shall find it for your good. Chatter and be giddy, and you shall find it far otherwise. Now, follow Mistress Perrote."

Amphillis louted silently, and as silently followed.

The elderly woman, who was tall, slim, and precise-looking, led her into the house, and up the stairs.

When two-thirds of them were mounted, she turned to the left along a passage, lifted a heavy curtain which concealed its end, and let it drop again behind them. They stood in a small square tower, on a little landing which gave access to three doors. The door on the right hand stood ajar; the middle one was closed; but the left was not only closed, but locked and barred heavily. Mistress Perrote led the way into the room on the right, a pleasant chamber, which looked out into the larger garden.

At the further end of the room stood a large bed of blue camlet, with a canopy, worked with fighting griffins in yellow. A large chest of carved oak stood at the foot. Along the wall ran a settle, or long bench, furnished with blue cushions; and over the back was thrown a dorsor of black worsted, worked with the figures of David and Goliath, in strict fourteenth-century costume. The fireplace was supplied with andirons, a shovel, and a fire-fork, which served the place of a poker. A small leaf table hung down by the wall at one end of the settle, and over it was fixed a round mirror, so high up as to give little encouragement to vanity. On hooks round the walls were hangings of blue tapestry, presenting a black diamond pattern, within a border of red roses.

“Will you sit?” said Mistress Perrote, speaking in a voice not exactly sharp, but short and staccato, as if she were—what more voluble persons often profess to be—unaccustomed to public speaking, and not very talkative at any time. “Your name, I think, is Amhillis Neville?”

Amhillis acknowledged her name.

“You have father and mother?”

“I have nothing in the world,” said Amhillis, with a shake of her head, “save an uncle and cousins, which dwell in London town.”

“Ha!” said Mistress Perrote, in a significant tone. “That is wherefore you were chosen.”

“Because I had no kin?” said Amhillis, looking up.

“That, and also that you were counted discreet. And discreet you had need be for this charge.”

“What charge?” she asked, blankly.

“You know not?”

“I know nothing. Nobody would tell me anything.”

Mistress Perrote’s set features softened a little.

“Poor child!” she said. “You are young—too young—to be given a charge like this. You will need all your discretion, and more.”

Amhillis felt more puzzled than ever.

“You may make a friend of Marabel, if you choose; but beware how you trust Agatha. But remember, as her Ladyship told you, no word that you hear, no thing that you see, must be suffered to go forth of these chambers. You may repeat *nothing!* Can you do this?”

“I will bear it in mind,” was the reply. “But, pray you, if I may ask—seeing I know nothing—is this lady that I shall serve an evil woman, that you caution me thus?”

“No!” answered Mistress Perrote, emphatically. “She is a most terribly injured— What say I? Forget my words. They were not discreet. Mary, Mother! there be times when a woman’s heart gets the better of her brains. There be more brains than hearts in this world. Lay by your hood and mantle, child, on one of those hooks, and smooth your hair, and repose you until supper-time. To-morrow you shall see your Lady.”

Note 1. Sad, at this time, did not mean sorrowful, but serious.

Note 2. These are the duties of a bower-woman, laid down in the Books of Courtesy at that time.

Note 3. Then a very expressive word, including both morals and manners.

Note 4. A private sitting-room for ladies.

Chapter Four.

The White Lady.

“The future is all dark,
And the past a troubled sea,
And Memory sits in the heart,
Wailing where Hope should be.”

Supper was ready in the hall at four o’clock, and Amhillis found herself seated next below Agatha, the younger of

Lady Foljambe's damsels. It was a feast-day, so that meat was served—a boar's head, stewed beef, minced mutton, squirrel, and hedgehog. The last dainty is now restricted to gypsies, and no one eats our little russet friend of the bushy tail; but our forefathers indulged in both. There were also roast capons, a heron, and chickens dressed in various ways. Near Amphyllis stood a dish of beef jelly, a chowet or liver-pie, a flampoynt or pork-pie, and a dish of sops in fennel. The sweets were Barlee and Mon Amy, of which the first was rice cream, and the second a preparation of curds and cream.

Amphyllis looked with considerable interest along the table, and at her opposite neighbours. Lady Foljambe she recognised at once; and beside her sat a younger lady whom she had not seen before. She applied to her neighbour for information.

"She?" said Agatha. "Oh, she's Mistress Margaret, my Lady's daughter-in-law; wife to Master Godfrey, that sits o' t' other side of his mother; and that's Master Matthew, o' this side. The priest's Father Jordan—a fat old noodle as ever droned a psalm through his nose. Love you mirth and jollity?"

"I scarce know," said Amphyllis, hesitatingly. "I have had so little."

Agatha's face was a sight to see.

"Good lack, but I never reckoned you should be a spoil-sport!" said she, licking her spoon as in duty bound before she plunged it in the jelly—a piece of etiquette in which young ladies at that date were carefully instructed. The idea of setting a separate spoon to help a dish had not dawned upon the mediaeval mind.

"I shall hate you, I can tell you, if you so are. Things here be like going to a funeral all day long—never a bit of music nor dancing, nor aught that is jolly. Mistress Margaret might be eighty, so sad and sober is she; and as for my Lady and Mistress Perrote, they are just a pair of old jog-trots fit to run together in a quirle (the open car then used by ladies, something like a waggonette). Master Godfrey's all for arms and fighting, so he's no better. Master Matthew's best of the lot, but bad's the best when you've a-done. And he hasn't much chance neither, for if he's seen laughing a bit with one of us, my Lady's a-down on him as if he'd broke all the Ten Commandments, and whisks him off ere you can say Jack Robinson; and if she whip you not, you may thank the saints or your stars, which you have a mind. Oh, 'tis a jolly house you've come to, that I can tell you! I hoped you'd a bit more fun in you than Clarice—she wasn't a scrap of good. But I'm afraid you're no better."

"I don't know, really," said Amphyllis, feeling rather bewildered by Agatha's reckless rattle, and remembering the injunction not to make a friend of her. "I suppose I have come here to do my duty; but I know not yet what it shall be."

"I detest doing my duty!" said Agatha, energetically.

"That's a pity, isn't it?" was the reply.

Agatha laughed.

"Come, you can give a quip-word," said she. "Clarice was just a lump of wood, that you could batter nought into,—might as well sit next a post. Marabel has some brains, but they're so far in, there's no fetching 'em forth. I declare I shall do somewhat one o' these days that shall shock all the neighbourhood, only to make a diversion."

"I don't think I would," responded Amphyllis. "You might find it ran the wrong way."

"You'll do," said Agatha, laughing. "You are not jolly, but you're next best to it."

"Whose is that empty place on the form?" asked Amphyllis, looking across.

"Oh, that's Master Norman's—Sir Godfrey's squire—he's away with him."

And Agatha, without any apparent reason, became suddenly silent.

When supper was over, the girls were called to spin, which they did in the large hall, sitting round the fire with the two ladies and Perrote. Amphyllis, as a newcomer, was excused for that evening; and she sat studying her neighbours and surroundings till Mistress Perrote pronounced it bed-time. Then each girl rose and put by her spindle; courtesied to the ladies, and wished them each "Good-even," receiving a similar greeting; and the three filed out of the inner door after Perrote, each possessing herself of a lighted candle as she passed a window where they stood. At the solar landing they parted, Perrote and Amphyllis turning aside to their own tower, Marabel and Agatha going on to the upper floor. (The solar was an intermediate storey, resembling the French *entresol*.) Amphyllis found, as she expected, that she was to share the large blue bed and the yellow griffins with Perrote. The latter proved a very silent bedfellow. Beyond showing Amphyllis where she was to place her various possessions, she said nothing at all; and as soon as she had done this, she left the room, and did not reappear for an hour or more. As Amphyllis lay on her pillow, she heard an indistinct sound of voices in an adjoining room, and once or twice, as she fancied, a key turned in the lock. At length the voices grew fainter, the hoot of the white owl as he flew past the turret window scarcely roused her, and Amphyllis was asleep—so sound asleep, that when Perrote lay down by her side, she never made the discovery.

The next morning dawned on a beautiful summer day. Perrote roused her young companion about four o'clock, with a reminder that if she were late it would produce a bad impression upon Lady Foljambe. When they were dressed, Perrote repeated the Rosary, Amphyllis making the responses, and they went down to the hall.

Breakfast was at this time a luxury not indulged in by every one, and it was not served before seven o'clock. Lady Foljambe patronised it. At that hour it was accordingly spread in the hall, and consisted of powdered beef, boiled

beef, brawn, a jug of ale, another of wine, and a third of milk. The milk was a condescension to a personal weakness of Perrote; everybody else drank wine or ale.

Amphillis was wondering very much, in the private recesses of her mind, how it was that no lady appeared whom she could suppose to be her own particular mistress; and had she not received such strict charges on the subject, she would certainly have asked the question. As it was, she kept silence; but she was gratified when, after breakfast, having been bidden to follow Perrote, that worthy woman paused to say, as they followed the passage which led to their own turret—

“Now, Amphillis Neville, you shall see your Lady.”

She stopped before the locked and barred door opposite to their own, unfastened it, and led Amphillis into the carefully-guarded chamber.

The barred room proved to be an exceedingly pleasant one, except that it was darker than the other, for it looked into the inner garden, and therefore much less sun ever entered it. A heavy curtain of black worsted, whereon were depicted golden vines and recumbent lions, stretched across the room, shutting off that end which formed the bedchamber. Within its shelter stood a bed of green silk wrought with golden serpents and roses; a small walnut-wood cabinet against the wall; two large chests; a chair of carved walnut-wood, upholstered in yellow satin; a mirror set in silver; and two very unusual pieces of furniture, which in those days they termed folding-chairs, but which we should call a shut-up washstand and dressing-table. The former held an ewer and basin of silver-gilt, much grander articles than Amphillis had ever seen, except in the goldsmith’s shop. In front of the curtain was a bench with green silk cushions, and two small tables, on one of which lay some needlework; and by it, in another yellow satin chair, sat the solitary inhabitant of the chamber, a lady who appeared to be about sixty years of age. She was dressed in widow’s mourning, and in 1372 that meant pure snowy white, with chin and forehead so covered by barb and wimple that only the eyes, nose, and mouth were left visible. This lady’s face was almost as white as her robes. Even her lips seemed colourless; and the fixed, weary, hopeless expression was only broken by two dark, brilliant, sunken eyes, in which lay a whole volume of unread history—eyes that looked as if they could flash with fury, or moisten with pity, or grow soft and tender with love; eyes that had done all these, long, long ago! so long ago, that they had forgotten how to do it. Sad, tired, sorrowful eyes—eyes out of which all expectation had departed; which had nothing left to fear, only because they had nothing left to hope. They were turned now upon Amphillis.

“Your Grace’s new chamber-dame,” said Mistress Perrote, “in the room of Clarice. Her name is Amphillis Neville.”

The faintest shadow of interest passed over the sorrowful eyes.

“Go near,” said Perrote to Amphillis, “and kiss her Grace’s hand.”

Amphillis did as she was told. The lady, after offering her hand for the kiss, turned it and gently lifted the girl’s face.

“Dost thou serve God?” she said, in a voice which matched her eyes.

“I hope so, Dame,” replied Amphillis.

“I hope nothing,” said the mysterious lady. “It is eight years since I knew what hope was. I have hoped in my time as much as ever woman did. But God took away from me one boon after another, till now He hath left me desolate. Be thankful, maid, that thou canst yet hope.”

She dropped her hand, and went back to her work with a weary sigh.

“Dame,” said Perrote, “your Grace wot that her Ladyship desires not that you talk in such strain to the damsels.”

The white face changed as Amphillis had thought it could not change, and the sunken eyes shot forth fire.

“Her Ladyship!” said the widow. “Who is Avena Foljambe, that she looketh to queen it over Marguerite of Flanders? They took my lord, and I lived through it. They took my daughter, and I bare it. They took my son, my firstborn, and I was silent, though it brake my heart. But by my troth and faith, they shall not still my soul, nor lay bonds upon my tongue when I choose to speak. Avena Foljambe! the kinswoman of a wretched traitor, that met the fate he deserved—why, hath she ten drops of good blood in her veins? And she looks to lord it over a daughter of Charlemagne, that hath borne sceptre ere she carried spindle!”

Mistress Perrote’s calm even voice checked the flow of angry words.

“Dame, your Grace speaks very sooth (truth). Yet I beseech you remember that my Lady doth present (represent) an higher than herself—the King’s Grace and no lesser.”

The lady in white rose to her feet.

“What mean you, woman? King Edward of Windsor may be your master and hers, but he is not mine! I owe him no allegiance, nor I never sware any.”

“Your son hath sworn it, Dame.”

The eyes blazed out again.

“My son is a hound!—a craven cur, that licks the hand that lashed him!—a poor court fool that thinks it joy enough to carry his bauble, and marvel at his motley coat and his silvered buttons! That he should be my son,—and *his!*”

The voice changed so suddenly, that Amphyllis could scarcely believe it to be the same. All the passionate fury died out of it, and instead came a low soft tone of unutterable pain, loneliness, and regret. The speaker dropped down into her chair, and laying her arm upon the little table, hid her face upon it.

"My poor Lady!" said Perrote in tender accents—more tender than Amphyllis had imagined she could use.

The lady in white lifted her head.

"I was not so weak once," she said. "There was a time when man said I had the courage of a man and the heart of a lion. Maiden, never man sat on a horse better than I, and no warrior ever fought that could more ably handle sword. I have mustered armies to the battle ere now; I have personally conducted sieges, I have headed sallies on the camp of the King of France. Am I meek pigeon to be kept in a dovecote? Look around thee! This is my cage. Ha! the perches are fine wood, sayest thou? the seed is good, and the water is clean! I deny it not. I say only, it is a cage, and I am a royal eagle, that was never made to sit on a perch and coo! The blood of an hundred kings is thrilling all along my veins, and must I be silent? The blood of the sovereigns of France, the kingdom of kingdoms,—of the sea-kings of Denmark, of the ancient kings of Burgundy, and of the Lombards of the Iron Crown—it is with this mine heart is throbbing, and man saith, 'Be still!' How can I be still, unless I were still in death? And man reckoneth I shall be a-paid for my lost sword with a needle, and for my broken sceptre he offereth me a bodkin!"

With a sudden gesture she brushed all the implements for needlework from the little table to the floor.

"There! gather them up, which of you list. I lack no such babe's gear. If I were but now on my Feraunt, with my visor down, clad in armour, as I was when I rode forth of Hennebon while the French were busied with the assault on the further side of the town,—forth I came with my three hundred horse, and we fired the enemy's camp—ah, but we made a goodly blaze that day! I reckon the villages saw it for ten miles around or more."

"But your Grace remembereth, we won not back into the town at after," quietly suggested Perrote.

"Well, what so? Went we not to Brest, and there gathered six hundred men, and when we appeared again before Hennebon, the trumpets sounded, and the gates were flung open, and we entered in triumph? Thy memory waxeth weak, old woman! I must refresh it from mine own."

"Please it, your good Grace, I am nigh ten years younger than yourself."

"Then shouldest thou be the more 'shamed to have so much worsen a memory. Why, hast forgot all those weeks at Hennebon, that we awaited the coming of the English fleet? Dost not remember how I went down to the Council with thyself at mine heels, and the child in mine arms, to pray the captains not to yield up the town to the French, and the lither loons would not hear me a word? And then at the last minute, when the gates were opened, and the French marching up to take possession, mindest thou not how I ran to yon window that giveth toward the sea, and there at last, at last! the English fleet was seen, making straight sail for us. Then flung I open the contrary casement toward the street, and myself shouted to the people to shut the gates, and man the ramparts, and cry, 'No surrender!' Ah, it was a day, that! Had there been but time, I'd never have shouted—I'd have been down myself, and slammed that gate on the King of France's nose! The pity of it that I had no wings! And did I not meet the English Lords and kiss them every one (Note 1), and hang their chambers with the richest arras in my coffers? And the very next day, Sir Walter Mauny made a sally, and destroyed the French battering-ram, and away fled the French King with ours in pursuit. Ha, that was a jolly sight to see! Old Perrote, hast thou forgot it all?"

We are accustomed in the present day to speak of the deliverer of Hennebon as Sir Walter Manny. That his name ought really to be spelt and sounded Mauny, is evidenced by a contemporary entry which speaks of his daughter as the Lady of Maweny.

Old Perrote had listened quietly, while her mistress poured forth these reminiscences in rapid words. When the long waiting for the English fleet was mentioned, a kind of shudder passed over her, as if her recollection of that time were painful and distinct enough; but otherwise she stood motionless until the concluding question. Then she answered—

"Ay, Dame—no, I would say: I mind it well."

"Thou shouldest! Then quote not Avena Foljambe to me. I care not a brass nail for Avena Foljambe. Hand me yonder weary gear. It is better than counting one's fingers, maybe."

Amphyllis stooped and gathered up the scattered broidery, glancing at Perrote to see if she were doing right. As she approached her mistress to offer them, Perrote whispered, hurriedly, "On the knee, child! on the knee!" and Amphyllis, blushing for her mistake, dropped on one knee. She was hoping that the lady would not be angry—that she could be severely so, there could be no doubt—and she was much relieved to see her laugh.

"Thou foolish old woman!" she said to Perrote, as she took her work back. Then addressing Amphyllis, she added,—"Seest thou, my maid, man hath poured away the sparkling wine out of reach of my thirsty lips; and this silly old Perrote reckons it of mighty moment that the empty cup be left to shine on the buffet. What matters it if the caged eagle have his perch gilded or no? He would a thousand times liefer sit of a bare rock in the sun than of a perch made of gold, and set with emeralds. So man granteth me the gilded perch, to serve me on the knee like a queen, and he setteth it with emeralds, to call me Duchess in lieu of Countess, and he reckoneth that shall a-pay the caged eagle for her lost liberty, and her quenched sunlight, and the grand bare rock on the mountain tops. It were good enough for the dove to sit on the pigeon-house, and preen her feathers, and coo, and take decorous little flights between the dovecote and the ground whereon her corn lieth. She cares for no more. The bare rock would frighten her, and the sun would dazzle her eyes. So man bindeth the eagle by a bond long enough for the dove, and quoth he, 'Be patient!' I am not patient. I am not a silly dove, that I should be so. Chide me not, old woman, to tug at my bond. I am an

eagle.”

“Ah, well, Dame!” said Perrote, with a sigh. “The will of God must needs be done.”

“I marvel if man’s will be alway God’s, in sooth. Folks say, whatever happeth, ‘God’s will be done.’ Is everything His will?—the evil things no less than the good? Is it God’s will when man speaketh a lie, or slayeth his fellow, or robbeth a benighted traveller of all his having? Crack me that nut, Perrote.”

“Truly, Dame, I am no priest, to solve such matters.”

“Then leave thou to chatter glibly anentis God’s will. What wist any man thereabout?”

Perrote was silent.

“Open the window!” said the Countess, suddenly. “I am dying for lack of fresh air.”

Lifting her hand to her head, she hastily tore off the barb and wimple, with little respect to the pins which fastened them, and with the result of a long rent in the former.

“That’s for one of you to amend,” she said, with a short laugh. “Ye should be thankful to have somewhat to do provided for you. Ay me!”

The words were uttered in a low long moan.

Perrote made no reply to the petulant words and action. An expression of tender pity crossed her face, as she stooped and lifted the torn barb, and examined the rent, with as much apparent calmness as if it had been damaged in the washing. There was evidently more in her than she suffered to come forth.

Note 1. This action, in the estimation of the time, was merely equivalent to a cordial shaking of hands between the Countess and her deliverers.

Chapter Five.

New and Strange.

“I stretched mine empty hands for bread,
And see, they have given me stones instead!”

“B.M.”

Before anything more could be said, the door opened, and Lady Foljambe came in. She addressed herself at once to Perrote.

“Did I not bid you alway to lock the door when you should enter? Lo, here it is unlocked. Wherefore have you a key apart from mine, but that you should so do?”

“I cry you mercy, Dame,” said Perrote, meekly. “Did you ever this before?”

“I mind not well, Dame.”

“Well, of a surety! Call you this guarding a prisoner? Mind you not that which happed at Tickhill, when she ‘scaped forth by aid of that knight—his name I forget—and had nigh reached the border of the liberties ere it was discovered? Is this your allegiance and duty? Dame, I bid you good morrow.”

“Better late than never, Avena,” said the Countess, a little satirically. “Thou fond thing, there, lie over twenty years betwixt yon night at Tickhill and this morrow. And if the night were back, where is the knight? Nay, Avena Foljambe, I have nought to escape for, now.”

“Dame, I must needs say you be rare unbuxom and unthankful.”

“Ay, so said the fox to the stork, when he ‘plained to be served with thin broth.”

“Pray you, look but around. You be lodged fit for any queen, be she the greatest in Christendom; you need but speak a wish, and you shall have it fulfilled—”

“Namely, thou shalt not put me off with red silk to my broidery when I would have blue.”

“You eat of the best, and lie of the softest, and speak with whom you would—”

“Hold there!” The fire had come back to the sunken eyes. “I would speak with some that come never anigh me, mine own children, that have cast me off, or be kept away from me; they never so much as ask the old mother how she doth. And I slaved and wrought and risked my life for them, times out of mind! And here you keep me, shut up in four walls,—never a change from year end to year end; never a voice to say ‘Mother!’ or ‘I love thee;’ never a hope to look forward to till death take me! No going forth of my cage; even the very air of heaven has to come in to me. And I may choose, may I, whether my bed shall be hung with green or blue? I may speak my pleasure if I would have to my four-hours macaroons or gingerbread? and be duly thankful that this liberty and these delicates are granted me! Avena

Foljambe, all your folly lieth not in your legs."

Lady Foljambe evidently did not appreciate this pun upon her surname.

"Dame!" she said, severely.

"Well? I can fare forth, if you have not had enough. What right hath your King thus to use me? I never was his vassal. I entreated his aid, truly, as prince to prince; and had he kept his bond and word, he had been the truer man. I never brake mine, and I had far more need than he. Wherefore played he at see-saw, now aiding me, and now Charles, until none of his knights well knew which way he was bent? I brought Charles de Blois to him a prisoner, and he let him go for a heap of yellow stuff, and fiddled with him, off and on, till Charles brake his pledged word, and lost his life, as he deserved, at Auray. I desire to know what right King Edward had, when I came to visit him after I had captured mine enemy, to make *me* a prisoner, and keep me so, now and then suffering me, like a cat with a mouse, to escape just far enough to keep within his reach when he list to catch me again. But not now, for eight long years—eight long years!"

"Dame, I cannot remain here to list such language of my sovereign."

"Then don't. I never asked you. My tongue is free, at any rate. You can go."

And the Countess turned back to the black satin on which she was embroidering a wreath of red and white roses.

"Follow me, Amphyllis," said Lady Foljambe, with as much dignity as the Countess's onslaught had left her.

She led the way into the opposite chamber, the one shared by Perrote and Amphyllis.

"It were best, as this hath happed, that you should know quickly who this lady is that wotteth not how to govern her tongue. She is the Duchess of Brittany. Heard you ever her story?"

"Something, Dame, an' it please you; yet not fully told. I heard, as I think, of some quarrel betwixt her and a cousin touching the succession to the duchy, and that our King had holpen her, and gave his daughter in wedlock to the young Duke her son."

"So did he, in very deed; and yet is she thus unbuxom. Listen, and you shall hear the inwards thereof. In the year of our Lord 1341 died Duke John of Brittany, that was called the Good, and left no child. Two brothers had he—Sir Guy, that was his brother both of father and mother, and Sir John, of the father only, that was called Count de Montfort. Sir Guy was then dead, but had left behind him a daughter, the Lady Joan, that man called Joan the Halting, by reason she was lame of one leg. Between her and her uncle of Montfort was the war of succession—she as daughter of the brother by father and mother, he as nearer akin to Duke John, being brother himself. (Note 1.) Our King took part with the Count de Montfort, and the King of France espoused the cause of the Lady Joan."

Lady Foljambe did not think it necessary to add that King Edward's policy had been of the most halting character in this matter—at one time fighting for Jeanne, and at another for Montfort, until his nobles might well have been pardoned, if they found it difficult to remember at any given moment on which side their master was.



"She rode all up and down the town, clad in armour."—P. 65.

"Well, the King of France took the Count, and led him away captive to Paris his city. Whereupon this lady, that is now here in ward, what did she but took in her arms her young son, that was then a babe of some few months old, and

into the Council at Rennes she went—which city is the chief town of Brittany—and quoth she unto the nobles there assembled, ‘Fair Sirs, be not cast down by the loss of my lord; he was but one man. See here his young son, who shall ‘present him for you; and trust me, we will keep the stranger out of our city as well without him as with him.’ Truly, there was not a man to come up to her. She handled sword as well as any marshal of the King’s host; no assault could surprise her, no disappointment could crush her, nor could any man, however wily, take her off her guard. When she had gone forward to Hennebon—for Rennes surrendered ere help could come from our King—man said she rade all up and down the town, clad in armour, encouraging the townsmen, and moving the women to go up to the ramparts and thence to hurl down on the besiegers the stones that they tare up from the paved streets. Never man fought like her!”

“If it please you, Dame, was her lord never set free?” asked Amphyllis, considerably interested.

“Ay and no,” said Lady Foljambe. “Set free was he never, but he escaped out of Louvre (Note 2) in disguise of a pedlar, and so came to England to entreat the King’s aid; but his Grace was then so busied with foreign warfare that little could he do, and the poor Count laid it so to heart that he died. He did but return home to die in his wife’s arms.”

“Oh, poor lady!” said Amphyllis.

“Three years later,” said Lady Foljambe, “this lady took prisoner Sir Charles de Blois, the husband of the Lady Joan, and brought him to the King; also bringing her young son, that was then a lad of six years, and was betrothed to the King’s daughter, the Lady Mary. The King ordered her residence in the Castle of Tickhill, where she dwelt many years, until a matter of two years back, when she was brought hither.”

Amphyllis felt this account exceedingly unsatisfactory.

“Dame,” said she, “if I may have leave to ask at you, wherefore is this lady a prisoner? What hath she done?”

Lady Foljambe’s lips took a stern set. She was apparently not pleased with the freedom of the question.

“She was a very troublesome person,” said she. “Nothing could stay her; she was ever restless and interfering. But these be matters too high for a young maid such as thou. Thou wert best keep to thy broidery and such-like duties.”

Harvest Home—the sixteenth of August—arrived when Amphyllis had been a week at Hazelwood. She had not by any means concluded that process which is known as “settling down.” On the contrary, she had never felt so unsettled, and the feeling grew rather than diminished. Even Alexandra and Ricarda had tried her less than her present companions, in one sense; for they puzzled her less, though they teased her more. She was beginning to understand her mistress, whose mood was usually one of weary lack of interest and energy, occasionally broken either by seasons of acute sorrow, or by sudden flashes of fiery anger: and the last were less trying than the first—indeed, it seemed sometimes to Amphyllis that they served as a vent and a relief; that for a time after them the weariness was a shade less dreary, and the languor scarcely quite so overpowering.

Late in the evening, on the night before Harvest Home, Sir Godfrey returned home, attended by his squire, Master Norman Hylton. The impression received by Amphyllis concerning the master of the house was that he was a fitting pendant to his wife—tall, square, and stern. She did not know that Sir Godfrey had been rather wild in his youth, and, as some such men do, had become correspondingly severe and precise in his old age. Not that his heart had changed; it was simply that the sins of youth had been driven out by the sins of maturer life. And Satan is always willing to let his slaves replace one sin by another, for it makes them none the less surely his. Sir Godfrey suffered under no sense of inconsistency in sternly rebuking, when exhibited by Agatha or Matthew, slight tendencies to evil of the same types as he had once been addicted to himself. Had he not sown his wild oats, and become a reformed character? The outside of the cup and platter were now so beautifully clean, that it never so much as occurred to him to question the condition of the inside. Yet within were some very foul things—alienation from God, and hardness of heart, and love of gold, that grew upon him year by year. And he thought himself a most excellent man, though he was only a whitewashed sepulchre. He lifted his head high, as he stood in the court of the temple, and effusively thanked God that he was not as other men. An excellent man! said everybody who knew him—perhaps a little too particular, and rather severe on the peccadilloes of young people. But when the time came that another Voice pronounced final sentence on that whitewashed life, the verdict was scarcely “Well done!”

Norman Hylton sat opposite to Amphyllis at the supper-table, in the only manner in which people could sit opposite to each other at a mediaeval table—namely, when it was in the form of a squared horseshoe. The table, which was always one or more boards laid across trestles, was very narrow, the inside of the horseshoe being reserved for the servants to hand the dishes. There were therefore some yards of distance between opposite neighbours. Amphyllis studied her neighbour, so far as an occasional glance in his direction allowed her to do so, and she came to the conclusion that there was nothing remarkable about him except the expression of his face. He was neither tall nor short, neither handsome nor ugly, neither lively nor morose. He talked a little with his next neighbour, Matthew Foljambe, but there was nothing in the manner of either to provoke curiosity as to the subject of their conversation. But his expression puzzled Amphyllis. He had dark eyes—like the Countess’s, she thought; but the weary and sometimes fiery aspect of hers was replaced in these by a look of perfect contentment and peace. Yet it was utterly different from the self-satisfied expression which beamed out of Sir Godfrey’s eyes.

“What manner of man is Master Hylton?” she asked of Agatha, who always sat next her. Precedence at table was regulated by strict rules.

“The youngest of six brethren; prithee, trouble not thine head over him,” was that young lady’s answer.

“But that doth me not to wit what manner of man he is,” responded Amphyllis, turning to the sewer or waiter, who

was offering her some rissoles of lamb.



"Now, Amphyllis Neville, you shall see your Lady."—P. 53.

Agatha indulged in a little explosion of laughter under cover of her handkerchief.

"Oh, Amphyllis, where hast thou dwelt all thy life? Thou art the full seliest (simplest, most unconventional) maid ever I did see."

Amphyllis replied literally. "Why, in Hertfordshire was I born, but I dwelt in London town a while ere I came hither."

"A jolly townswoman must thou have made! Canst not conceive what I mean? Why, the youngest of six brethren hath all his fortune to make, and cannot be no catch at all for a maid, without he be full high of rank, and she have gold enough to serve her turn without."

"But I don't want to catch him," said Amphyllis, innocently.

Agatha burst out laughing, and Lady Foljambe, from the middle of the horseshoe table, looked daggers at her. Unrestrained laughter at table, especially in a girl, was a serious breach of etiquette.

"I say, you shouldn't be so funny!" remonstrated Agatha. "How shall man help to laugh if you say so comical words?"

"I wist not I was thus comical," said Amphyllis. "But truly I conceive you not. Wherefore should I catch Master Hylton, and wherewith, and to what end?"

"Amphyllis, you shall be the death of me! My Lady shall snap off my head at after supper, and the maid is not born that could help to laugh at you. To what end? Why, for an husband, child! As to wherewith, that I leave to thee." And Agatha concluded with another stifled giggle.

"Agatha!" was all that the indignant Amphyllis could say in answer. She could hardly have told whether she felt more vexed or astonished. The bare idea of such a thing, evidently quite familiar to Agatha, was utterly new to her. "You never, surely, signify that any decent maid could set herself to seek a man for an husband, like an angler with fish?"

"They must be uncommon queer folks in Hertfordshire if thou art a sample thereof," was the reply. "Why, for sure, I so signified. Thou must have been bred up in a convent, Phyllis, or else tied to thy grandmother's apron-string all thy life. Shall a maid ne'er have a bit of fun, quotha?"

Amphyllis made no answer, but finished her rissoles in silence, and helped herself to a small pound-cake.

"Verily, some folks be born as old as their grandmothers," said Agatha, accepting a fieldfare from the sewer, and squeezing a lemon over it. "I would fain enjoy my youth, though I'm little like to do it whilst here I am. Howbeit, it were sheer waste of stuff for any maid to set her heart on Master Norman; he wist not how to discourse with maids. He should have been a monk, in very sooth, for he is fit for nought no better. There isn't a sparkle about him."

"He looks satisfied," said Amphyllis, rather wistfully. She was wishing that she felt so.

Agatha's answer was a puzzled stare, first at Amphyllis, and then at Mr Hylton.

"Satisfied!" she repeated, as if she wondered what the word could mean. "Aren't we all satisfied?"

"Maybe you are," replied Amphyllis, "though I reckon I have heard you say what looked otherwise. You would fain have more life and jollity, if I err not."

"Truly, therein you err not in no wise," answered Agatha, laughing again, though in a more subdued manner than before. "I never loved to dwell in a nunnery, and this house is little better. 'Satisfied!'" she said again, as though the word perplexed her. "I never thought of no such a thing. Doth Master Norman look satisfied? What hath satisfied him, trow?"

"That is it I would fain know," said Amphyllis.

"In good sooth, I see not how it may be," resumed Agatha. "He has never a penny to his patrimony. I heard him to say once to Master Godfrey that all he had of his father was horse, and arms, and raiment. Nor hath he any childless old uncle, or such, that might take to him, and make his fortune. He lives of his wits, belike. Now, I am an only daughter, and have never a brother to come betwixt me and the inheritance; I shall have a pretty penny when my father dies. So I have some right to be jolly. Ay, and jolly I'll be when I am mine own mistress, I warrant you! I've no mother, so there is none to oversee me, and rule me, and pluck me by the sleeve when I would go hither and thither, so soon as I can be quit of my Lady yonder. Oh, there's a jolly life afore *me*."

It was Amphyllis's turn to be astonished.

"Dear heart!" she said. "Why, I have no kindred nearer than uncle and cousins, but I have ever reckoned it a sore trouble to lose my mother, and no blessing."

"Very like it was to you!" said Agatha. "You'd make no bones if you were ruled like an antiphonarium (music-book for anthems and chants), I'll be bound, I'm none so fond of being driven in harness. I love my own way, and I'll have it, too, one of these days."

"But then you have none to love you! That is one of the worst sorrows in the world, I take it."

"Love! bless you, I shall have lovers enough! I've three hundred a year to my fortune."

Three hundred pounds in 1372 was equal to nearly five thousand now.

"But what good should it do you that people wanted your money?" asked Amphyllis. "That isn't loving *you*."

"Amphyllis, I do believe you were born a hundred years old! or else in some other world, where their notions are quite diverse from this," said Agatha, taking a candied orange from the sewer. "I never heard such things as you say."

"But lovers who only want your money seem to me very unsatisfying folks," replied Amphyllis. "Will they smooth your pillows when you are sick? or comfort you when your heart is woeful?"

"I don't mean my heart to be woeful, and as to pillows, there be thousands will smooth them for wages."

"They are smoother when 'tis done for love," was the answer.

Agatha devoted herself to her orange, and in a few minutes Lady Foljambe gave the signal to rise from table. The young ladies followed her to her private sitting-room, where Agatha received a stern reprimand for the crime of laughing too loud, and was told she was no better than a silly giglot, who would probably bring herself some day to dire disgrace. Lady Foljambe then motioned her to the spindle, and desired her not to leave it till the bell rang for evening prayers in the chapel, just before bed-time. Agatha pulled a face behind Lady Foljambe's back, but she did not dare to disobey.

Note 1. It seems very strange to us that the Count de Montfort should have imagined himself to have a better claim to the crown than his niece; but the principle under which he claimed was the law of non-representation, which forbade the child of a deceased son or brother to inherit; and this, little as it is now allowed or even understood, was not only the custom of some Continental states, but was the law of succession in England, itself until 1377. The struggle between Stephen and the Empress Maud, and that between King John and his nephew Arthur, were fought upon this principle.

Note 2. The Louvre, then considered *near* Paris, was usually mentioned without the article.

Chapter Six.

A Thankless Child.

"We will not come to Thee
Till Thou hast nailed us to some bitter cross
And made us look on Thee."

"B.M."

Amphyllis took her own spindle, and sat down beside Marabel, who was just beginning to spin.

"What was it so diverted Agatha at supper?" inquired Marabel.

"She laughs full easily," answered Amphyllis; and told her what had been the subject of discourse.

"She is a light-minded maid," said Marabel. "So you thought Master Norman had a satisfied look, trow? Well, I count you had the right."

"Agatha said she knew not of nought in this world that should satisfy him."

Marabel smiled. "I misdoubt if that which satisfieth him ever came out of this world. Amphyllis, whenas you dwelt in London town, heard you at all preach one of the poor priests?"

"What manner of folks be they?"

"You shall know them by their raiment, for they mostly go clad of a frieze coat, bound by a girdle of unwrought leather."

"Oh, ay? I heard once a friar so clad; and I marvelled much to what Order he belonged. But it was some while gone."

"What said he?"

"Truly, that cannot I tell you, for I took not but little note. I was but a maidling, scarce past my childhood. My mother was well pleased therewith. I mind her to have said, divers times, when she lay of her last sickness, that she would fain have shriven her of the friar in the frieze habit. Wherefore, cannot I say."

"Then perchance I can say it for you:—for I reckon it was because he brought her gladder tidings than she had heard of other."

Amphyllis looked surprised. "Why, whatso? Sermons be all alike, so far as ever I could tell."

"Be they so? No, verily, Amphyllis. Is there no difference betwixt preaching of the law—'Do this, and thou shalt live,' and preaching of the glad gospel of the grace of God—'I give unto them everlasting life?'"

"But we must merit Heaven!" exclaimed Amphyllis.

"Our Lord, then, paid not the full price, but left at the least a few marks over for us to pay? Nay, He bought Heaven for us, Amphyllis: and only He could do it. We have nothing to pay; and if we had, how should our poor hands reach to such a purchase as that? It took God to save the world. Ay, and it took God, too, to love the world enough to save it."

"Why, but if so be, we are saved—not shall be."

"We are, if we ever shall be."

"But is that true Catholic doctrine?"

"It is the true doctrine of God's love. Either, therefore, it is Catholic doctrine, or Catholic doctrine hath erred from it."

"But the Church cannot err!"

"Truth, so long as she keep her true to God's law. The Church is men, not God! and God must be above the Church. But what is the Church? Is it this priest or that bishop? Nay, verily; it is the congregation of all the faithful elect that follow Christ, and do after His commandments. So long, therefore, as they do after His commands, and follow Him, they be little like to err. 'He that believeth in the Son *hath* everlasting life.'"

"But we all believe in our Lord!" said Amphyllis, feeling as if so many new ideas had never entered her head all at once before.

"Believe what?" said Marabel, and she smiled.

"Why, we believe that He came down from Heaven, and died, and rose again, and ascended, and such-like."

"Wherefore?"

"Wherefore came He? Truly, that know I not. By reason that it liked Him, I count."

"Ay, that was the cause," said Marabel, softly. "He came because—shall we say?—He so loved Amphyllis Neville, that He could not do without her in Heaven: and as she could win there none other way than by the laying down of His life, He came and laid it down."

"Marabel! Never heard I none to speak after this manner! Soothly, our Lord died for us: but—"

"But—yet was it not rightly for us, thee and me, but for some folks a long way off, we cannot well say whom?"

Amphyllis span and thought—span fast, because she was thinking hard: and Marabel did not interrupt her thoughts.

"But—we must merit it!" she urged again at last.

"Dost thou commonly merit the gifts given thee? When man meriteth that he receiveth—when he doth somewhat, to obtain it—it is a wage, not a gift. The very life and soul of a gift is that it is not merited, but given of free favour, of friendship or love."

"I never heard no such doctrine!"

Marabel only smiled.

"Followeth my Lady this manner?"

"A little in the head, maybe; for the heart will I not speak."

"And my La—I would say, Mistress Perrote?" Amphyllis suddenly recollected that her mistress was never to be mentioned.

"Ask at her," said Marabel, with a smile.

"Then Master Norman is of this fashion of thinking?"

"Ay. So be the Hyltons all."

"Whence gat you the same?"

"It was learned me of my Lady Molyneux of Sefton, that I served as chamberer ere I came hither. I marvel somewhat, Amphyllis, that thou hast never heard the same, and a Neville. All the Nevilles of Raby be of our learning—well-nigh."

"Dear heart, but I'm no Neville of Raby!" cried Amphyllis, with a laugh at the extravagance of the idea. "At the least, I know not well whence my father came; his name was Walter Neville, and his father was Ralph, and more knew I never. He bare arms, 'tis true—gules, a saltire argent; and his device, '*Ne vile velis.*'"

"The self arms of the Nevilles of Raby," said Marabel, with an amused smile. "I marvel, Amphyllis, thou art not better learned in thine own family matters."

"Soothly. I never had none to learn me, saving my mother; and though she would tell me oft of my father himself, how good and true man he were, yet she never seemed to list to speak much of his house. Maybe it was by reason he came below his rank in wedding her, and his kin refused to acknowledge her amongst them. Thus, see you, I dropped down, as man should say, into my mother's rank, and never had no chance to learn nought of my father's matters."

"Did thine uncle learn thee nought, then?"

"He learned me how to make patties of divers fashions," answered Amphyllis, laughing. "He was very good to me, and belike to my mother, his sister; but I went not to dwell with him until after she was departed to God. And then I was so slender (insignificant) a country maid, with no fortune, ne parts (talents), that my cousins did somewhat slight me, and keep me out of sight. So never met I any that should be like to wise me in this matter. And, the sooth to say, but I would not desire to dwell amongst kin that had set my mother aside, and reckoned her not fit to company with them, not for no wickedness nor unseemly dealing, but only that she came of a trading stock. It seemeth me, had such wist our blessed Lord Himself, they should have bidden Him stand aside, for He was but a carpenter's son. That's the evil of being in high place, trow."

"Ah, no, dear heart! It hath none ado with place, high or low. 'Tis human nature. Thou shalt find a duchess more ready to company with a squire's wife, oft-times, than the squire's wife with the bailiff's wife, and there is a deal further distance betwixt. It hangeth on the heart, not on the station."

"But folks' hearts should be the better according to their station."

Marabel laughed. "That were new world, verily. The grace of God is the same in every station, and the like be the wiles of Satan—not that he bringeth to all the same temptation, for he hath more wit than so; but he tempteth all, high and low. The high have the fairer look-out, yet the more perilous place; the low have the less to content them, yet are they safer. Things be more evenly parted in this world than many think. Many times he that hath rich food, hath little appetite for it; and he that hath his appetite sharp, can scarce get food to satisfy it."

"But then things fit not," said Amphyllis.

"Soothly, nay. This world is thrown all out of gear by sin. Things fitted in Eden, be thou sure. Another reason is there also—that he which hath the food may bestow it on him that can relish it, and hath it not."

The chapel bell tolled softly for the last service of the day, and the whole household assembled. Every day this was done at Hazelwood, for prime, sext, and compline, at six a.m., noon, and seven p.m. respectively, and any member of the household found missing would have been required to render an exceedingly good reason for it. The services were very short, and a sermon was a scarcely imagined performance. After compline came bed-time. Each girl took her lamp, louted to Lady Foljambe and kissed her hand, and they then filed upstairs to bed after Perrote, she and Amphyllis going to their own turret.

Hitherto Perrote had been an extremely silent person. Not one word unnecessary to the work in hand had she ever uttered, since those few on Amphyllis's first arrival. It was therefore with some little surprise that the girl heard her voice, as she stood that evening brushing her hair before the mirror.

"Amphyllis, who chose you to come hither?"

"Truly, Mistress, that wis I not. Only, first of all, Mistress Chaucer, of the Savoy Palace, looked me o'er to see if I should be meet for taking into account, and then came a lady thence, and asked at me divers questions, and judged

that I should serve; but who she was I knew not. She bade me be well ware that I gat me in no entanglements of no sort," said Amphyllis, laughing a little; "but in good sooth, I see here nothing to entangle me in."

"She gave thee good counsel therein. There be tangles of divers sorts, my maid, and those which cut the tightest be not alway the worst. Thou mayest tangle thy feet of soft wool, or rich silk, no less than of rough cord. Ah me! there be tangles here, Amphyllis, and hard to undo. There were skilwise fingers to their tying—hard fingers, that thought only to pull them tight, and harried them little touching the trouble of such as should be thus tethered. And there be knots that no man can undo—only God. Why tarry the wheels of His chariot?"

Amphyllis turned round from the mirror.

"Mistress Perrote, may I ask a thing at you?"

"Ask, my maid."

"My Lady answered me not; will you? What hath our Lady done to be thus shut close in prison?"

"*She* done?" was the answer, with a piteous intonation. Perrote looked earnestly into the girl's face. "Amphyllis, canst thou keep a secret?"

"If I know myself, I can well."

"Wilt thou so do, for the love of God and thy Lady? It should harm her, if men knew thou wist it. And, God wot, she hath harm enough."

"I will never speak word, Mistress Perrote, to any other than you, without you bid me, or grant me leave."

"So shall thou do well. Guess, Amphyllis, who is it that keepeth this poor lady in such durance."

"Nay, that I cannot, without it be our Lord the King."

"He, surely; yet is he but the gaoler. There is another beyond him, at whose earnest entreaty, and for whose pleasure he so doth. Who is it, thinkest?"

"It seemeth me, Mistress, looking to what you say, this poor lady must needs have some enemy," said Amphyllis.

"Amphyllis, that worst enemy, the enemy that bindeth these fetters upon her, that bars these gates against her going forth, that hath quenched all the sunlight of her life, and hushed all the music out of it—this enemy is her own son, that she nursed at her bosom—the boy for whose life she risked hers an hundred times, whose patrimony she only saved to him, whose welfare through thirty years hath been dearer to her than her own. Dost thou marvel if her words be bitter, and if her eyes be sorrowful? Could they be aught else?"

Amphyllis looked as horrified as she felt.

"Mistress Perrote, it is dreadful! Can my said Lord Duke be Christian man?"

"Christian!" echoed Perrote, bitterly. "Dear heart, ay! one of the best Catholics alive! Hath he not built churches with the moneys of his mother's dower, and endowed convents with the wealth whereof he defrauded her? What could man do better? A church is a great matter, and a mother a full little one. Mothers die, but churches and convents endure. Ah, when such mothers die and go to God, be there no words writ on the account their sons shall thereafter render? Is He all silent that denounced the Jewish priests for their Corban, by reason they allowed man to deny to his father and mother that which he had devote to God's temple? Is His temple built well of broken hearts, and His altar meetly covered with the rich tracery of women's tears? 'The hope of the hypocrite shall perish, when God taketh away his soul.'"

Never before had Amphyllis seen any one change as Perrote had changed now. The quiet, stolid-looking woman had become an inspired prophetess. It was manifest that she dearly loved her mistress, and was proportionately indignant with the son who treated her so cruelly.

"Child," she said to Amphyllis, "she lived for nought save that boy! Her daughter was scarce anything to her; it was alway the lad, the lad! And thus the lad a-payeth her for all her love and sacrifice—for the heart that stood betwixt him and evil, for the gold and jewels that she thought too mean to be set in comparison with him, for the weary arms that bare him, and the tired feet that carried him about, a little wailing babe—for the toil and the labour, the hope and the fear, the waiting and the sorrow! Ay, but I marvel in what manner of coin God our Father shall pay him!"

"But wherefore doth he so?" cried Amphyllis.

"She was in his way," replied Perrote, in a tone of constrained bitterness. "He could not have all his will for her. He desired to make bargains, and issue mandates, and reign at his pleasure, and she told him the bargains were unprofitable, and the mandates unjust, and it was not agreeable. 'Twas full awkward and ill-convenient, look you, to have an old mother interfering with man's pleasure. He would, have set her in a fair palace, and given her due dower, I reckon, would she but there have tarried, like a slug on a cabbage-leaf, and let him alone; and she would not. How could she? She was not a slug, but an eagle. And 'tis not the nature of an eagle to hang hour after hour upon a cabbage-leaf. So, as King Edward had at the first kept her in durance for his own ends, my gracious Lord Duke did entreat him to continue the same on his account. As for my Lady Duchess, I say not; I know her not. This only I know, that my Lady Foljambe is her kinswoman. And, most times, there is a woman at the bottom of all evil mischief. Ay, there is so!"

"Mistress Perrote, it seemeth me this is worsere world than I wist ere I came hither."

"Art avised o' that? Ay, Phyllis, thou shalt find it so; and the further thou journeyest therein, the worsere shalt thou find it."

"Mistress, wherefore is it that this poor lady of ours is kept so secret? It seemeth as though man would have none know where she were."

"*Ha, chétife!* (Oh, miserable!) I can but advise thee to ask so much at them that do keep her."

"Shall she never be suffered to come forth?"

"Ay," said Perrote, slowly and solemnly. "She shall come forth one day. But I misdoubt if it shall be ere the King come Himself for her."

"The King! Shall his Grace come hither?" inquired Amphyllis, with much interest. She thought of no king but Edward the Third.

Perrote's eyes were uplifted towards the stars. She spoke as if she were answering them rather than Amphyllis.

"He shall deem (judge) the poor men of the people, and He shall make safe the sons of poor men; and He shall make low the false challenger. And He shall dwell with the sun, and before the moon, in generation and in to generation... And He shall be Lord from the sea till to the sea, and from the flood till to the ending of the world... For He shall deliver a poor man from the mighty, and a poor man to whom was none helper. He shall spare a poor man and needy, and He shall make safe the souls of poor men... Blessed be the name of His majesty withouten end! and all earth shall be filled with His majesty. Be it done, be it done!" (Note 1.)

Amphyllis almost held her breath as she listened, for the first time in her life, to the grand roll of those sonorous verses.

"That were a King!" she said.

"That shall be a King," answered Perrote, softly. "Not yet is His kingdom of this world. But He is King of Israel, and King of kings, and King of the everlasting ages; and the day cometh when He shall be King of nations, when there shall be one Lord over all the earth, and His Name one. Is He thy King, Amphyllis Neville?"

"Signify you our blessed Lord, Mistress Perrote?"

"Surely, my maid. Could any other answer thereto?"

"I reckon so," said Amphyllis, calmly, as she put away her brush, and began undressing.

"I would make sure, if I were thou. For the subjects be like to dwell in the Court when they be preferred to higher place. 'Ye ben servantis to that thing to which ye han obeisched.' (Note 2.) Whose servant art thou? Who reigns in thine inner soul, Phyllis?"

"Soothly, Mistress, I myself. None other, I ween."

"Nay, one other must there needs be. Thou obeyest the rule of one of two masters—either Christ our Lord, or Satan His enemy."

"In very deed, Mistress, I serve God."

"Then thou art concerned to please God in everything. Or is it rather, that thou art willing to please God in such matters as shall not displease Amphyllis Neville?"

Amphyllis folded up sundry new and not altogether agreeable thoughts in the garments which she was taking off and laying in neat order on the top of her chest for the morning. Perrote waited for the answer. It did not come until Amphyllis's head was on the pillow.

"Cannot I please God and myself both?"

"That canst thou, full well and sweetly, if so be thou put God first. Otherwise, nay."

"Soothly, Mistress, I know not well what you would be at."

"What our Saviour would be at Himself, which is, thy true bliss and blessedness, Phyllis. My maid, to be assured of fair ending and good welcome at the end of the journey makes not the journeying wearier. To know not whither thou art wending, save that it is into the dark; to be met of a stranger, that may be likewise an enemy; to be had up afore the judge's bar, with no advocate to plead for thee, and no surety of acquittal,—that is evil journeying, Phyllis, Dost not think so much?"

Perrote listened in vain for any answer.

Note 1. Psalm seventy-two, verses 4, 5, 8, 12, 13, 18, 19; Hereford and Purvey's version, 1381-8.

Note 2. Romans six, verse 16; Wycliffe's version, 1382.

Chapter Seven.

On the Terrace.

"Where we disavow
Being keeper to our brother, we're his Cain."

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

"Hylton, thou art weary gear!"

"What ails me?"

"What ails thee, forsooth? Marry, but that's as good a jest as I heard this year! I lack thee to tell me that. For what ails me at thee, that were other matter, and I can give thee to wit, an' thou wilt. Thou art as heavy as lead, and as dull as ditch-water, and as flat as dowed (flat) ale. I would I were but mine own master, and I'd mount my horse, and ride away from the whole sort of you!"

"From your father and mother, Matthew?"

"Certes. Where's the good of fathers and mothers, save to crimp and cramp young folks that would fain stretch their wings and be off into the sunlight? Mine never do nought else."

"Think you not the fathers and mothers might reasonably ask, Where's the good of sons and daughters? How much have you cost yours, Matthew, since you were born?"

Matthew Foljambe turned round with a light laugh, and gazed half contemptuously at the speaker.

"Gentlemen never reckon," said he. "'Tis a mean business, only fit for tradesfolk."

"You might reckon that sum, Matthew, without damage to your gentle blood. The King himself reckoneth up the troops he shall lack, and the convention-subsidy due from each man to furnish them. You shall scanty go above him, I count."

"I would I were but a king! Wouldn't I lead a brave life!"

"That would not I be for all the riches in Christendom."

"The which speech showeth thine unwisdom. Why, a king can have his purveyor to pick of the finest in the market ere any other be serven; he can lay tax on his people whenas it shall please him (this was true at that time); he can have a whole pig or goose to his table every morrow; and as for the gifts that be brought him, they be without number. Marry, but if I were a king, wouldn't I have a long gown of blue velvet, all o'er broidered of seed-pearl, and a cap of cramoisie (crimson velvet), with golden broidery! And a summer jack (the garment of which jacket is the diminutive) of samitelle would I have—let me see—green, I reckon, bound with gold ribbon; and fair winter hoods of miniver and ermine, and buttons of gold by the score. Who so bravely apparelled as I, trow?"

"Be your garments not warm enough, Matthew?"

"Warm enough? certes! But they be only camoca and lamb's far, with never a silver button, let be gold."

"What advantage should gold buttons be to you? Those pearl do attach your gown full evenly as well."

"Hylton, thou hast no ambitiousness in thee! Seest not that folks should pay me a deal more respect, thus donned (dressed) in my bravery?"

"That is, they should pay much respect to the blue velvet and the gold buttons? You should be no different that I can see."

"I should be a vast sight comelier, man alive!"

"You!" returned Hylton.

"Where's the good of talking to thee? As well essay to learn a sparrow to sing, '*J'ay tout perdu mon temps.*'"

"I think you should have lost your time in very deed, and your labour belike, if you spent them on broidering gowns and stitching on buttons, when you had enow aforetime."

"Thou sely loon! (Simple creature!) Dost reckon I mean to work mine own broidery, trow? I'd have a fair score of maidens always a-broidering for me, so that I might ever have a fresh device when I lacked a new gown."

"The which should come in a year to—how much?"

"Dost look for me to know?"

"I do, when I have told you. Above an hundred and twenty pound, Master Matthew. That should your bravery cost you, in broidering-maids alone."

"Well! what matter, so I had it?"

"It might serve you. I should desire to buy more happiness with such a sum than could be stitched into golden broidery and seed-pearl."

"Now come, Norman, let us hear thy notion of happiness. If thou hadst in thine hand an hundred pound, what should'st do withal?"

"I would see if I could not dry up as many widows' tears as I had golden pieces, and bring as many smiles to the lips of orphans as they should divide into silver."

"Prithee, what good should that do thee?"

"It should keep mine heart warm in the chillest winter thereafter. But I thought rather of the good it should do them than me."

"But what be such like folks to thee?"

"Our Lord died for them, and He is something to me."

"Fate meant thee for a monk, Hylton. Thou rannest thine head against the wall to become a squire."

"Be monks the sole men that love God?"

"They be the sole men that hold such talk."

"I have known monks that held full different talk, I do ensure you. And I have known laymen that loved God as well as any monk that ever paced cloister."

"Gramercy! do leave preaching of sermons. I have enow of them from my Lady my mother. Let's be jolly, if we can."

"You should have the better right to be jolly, to know whither you were going, and that you should surely come out safe at the far end."

"Happy man be my dole! I'm no wise feared. I'll give an hundred pound to the Church the week afore I die, and that shall buy me a soft-cushioned seat in Heaven, I'll warrant."

"Who told you so much? Any that had been there?"

"Man alive! wilt hold thy peace, and let man be? Thou art turned now into a predicant friar. I'll leave thee here to preach to the gilly-flowers."

And Matthew walked off, with a sprig of mint in his mouth. He was not a bad man, as men go. He was simply a man who wanted to please himself, and to be comfortable and easy. In his eyes the whole fabric of the universe revolved round Matthew Foljambe. He did not show it as the royal savage did, who beat a primitive gong in token that, as he had sat down to dinner, the rest of the world might lawfully satisfy their hunger; but the sentiment in Matthew's mind was a civilised and refined form of the same idea. If he were comfortable, what did it signify if everybody else were uncomfortable?

Like all men in his day—and a good many in our own—Matthew had a low opinion of woman. It had been instilled into him, as it was at that time into every man who wrote himself "esquire," that the utmost chivalrous reverence was due to the ladies as an abstract idea; but this abstract idea was quite compatible with the rudest behaviour and the supremest contempt for any given woman in the concrete. Woman was an article of which there were two qualities: the first-class thing was a toy, the second was a machine. Both were for the use of man—which was true enough, had they only realised that it meant for man's real help and improvement, bodily, mental, and spiritual; but they understood it to mean for the bodily comfort and mental amusement of the nobler half of the human race. The natural result of this was that every woman must be appropriated to some master. The bare notion of allowing a woman to choose whether she would go through life unattached to a master, or, if otherwise, to reject one she feared or disliked, would have seemed to Matthew the most preposterous audacity on the part of the inferior creature, as it would also have appeared if the inferior creature had shown discontent with the lot marked out for it. The inferior creature, on the whole, walked very meekly in the path thus swept for it. This was partly, no doubt, because it was so taught as a religious duty; but partly, also, because the style of education then given to women left no room for the mental wings to expand. The bird was supplied with good seed and fresh water, and the idea of its wanting anything else was regarded as absurd. Let it sit on the perch and sing in a properly subdued tone. That it was graciously allowed to sing was enough for any reasonable bird, and ought to call forth on its part overflowing gratitude.

Even then, a few of the caged birds were not content to sit meekly on the perch, but they were eyed askance by the properly behaved ones, and held up to the unfledged nestlings as sorrowful examples of the pernicious habit of thinking for one's self. Never was bird less satisfied to be shut up in a cage than the hapless prisoner in that manor house, whom the peasants of the neighbourhood knew as the White Lady. Now and then they caught a glimpse of her at the window of her chamber, which she insisted on having open, and at which she would stand sometimes by the hour together, looking sorrowfully out on the blue sky and the green fields, wherein she might wander no more. A wild bird was Marguerite of Flanders, in whose veins ran the blood of those untamed sea-eagles, the Vikings of Denmark; and though bars and wires might keep her in the cage, to make her content with it was beyond their power.

So thought Norman Hylton, looking up at the white figure visible behind the bars which crossed the casement of the captive's chamber. He knew little of her beyond her name.

"Saying thy prayers to the moon, Hylton? or to the White Lady?" asked a voice behind him.

"Neither, Godfrey. I was marvelling wherefore she is mew'd up there. Dost know?"

"I know she was a full wearisome woman to my Lord Duke her son, and that he is a jollier man by the acre since she here dwelt."

"Was she his own mother?" asked Norman.

"His own?—ay, for sure; and did him a good turn at the beginning, by preserving his kingdom for him when he was but a lad."

"And could he find no better reward for her than this?"

"Tut! she sharped (teased, irritated) him, man. He could not have his will for her."

"Could he ne'er have put up with a little less of it? Or was his will so much dearer to him than his mother?"

"Dost reckon he longed sore to be ridden of an old woman, and made to trot to market at her pleasure, when his own was to take every gate and hurdle in his way? Thou art old woman thyself, an' thou so dost. My Lord Duke is no jog-trot market-ass, I can tell thee, but as fiery a war-charger as man may see in a summer's day. And dost think a war-charger should be well a-paid to have an old woman of his back?"

"My Lady his mother, then, hath no fire in her?" said Norman, glancing up at her where she stood behind the bars in her white weeds, looking down on the two young men in the garden.

"Marry, enough to burn a city down. She did burn the King of France's camp afore Hennebon. And whenas she was prisoner in Tickhill Castle, a certain knight, whose name I know not, (the name of this knight is apparently not on record), covenanted secretly with her by means of some bribe, or such like, given to her keepers, that he would deliver her from durance; and one night scaled he the walls, and she herself gat down from her window, and clambered like a cat by means of the water-spout and slight footholds in the stonework, till she came to the bottom, and then over the walls and away. They were taken, as thou mayest lightly guess, yet they gat them nigh clear of the liberties ere they could again be captivated. Fire! ay, that hath she, and ever will. Forsooth, that is the cause wherefore she harried her son. If she would have sat still at her spinning, he'd have left her be. But, look thou, she could not leave him be."

"Wherein did she seek to let him, wot you?"

"Good lack! not I. If thou art so troubled thereanent, thou wert best ask my father. Maybe he wist not. I cannot say."

"It must have been sore disheartenment," said Norman, pityingly, "to win nearly away, and then be brought back."

"Ay, marry; and then was she had up to London afore the King's Grace, and had into straiter prison than aforetime. Ere that matter was she treated rather as guest of the King and Queen, though in good sooth she was prisoner; but after was she left no doubt touching that question. Some thought she might have been released eight years ago, when the convention was with the Lady Joan of Brittany, which after her lord was killed at Auray, gave up all, receiving the county of Penthievre, the city of Limoges, and a great sum of money; and so far as England reckoned, so she might, and maybe would, had it been to my Lord Duke's convenience. But he had found her aforetime very troublesome to him. Why, when he was but a youth, he fell o' love with some fair damsel of his mother's following, and should have wedded her, had not my Lady Duchess, so soon as ever she knew it, packed her off to a nunnery."

"Wherefore?"

"That wis I not, without it were that she was not for him." (Unsuitable.)

"Was the tale true, think you?"

"That wis I not likewise. Man said so much—behold all I know. Any way, she harried him, and he loved it not, and here she is. That's enough for me."

"Poor lady!"

"Poor? what for poor? She has all she can want. She is fed and clad as well as ever she was—better, I dare guess, than when she was besieged in Hennebon. If she would have broidery silks, or flowers, or any sort of women's toys, she hath but to say, and my Lady my mother shall ride to Derby for them. The King gave order she should be well used, and well used she is. He desireth not that she be punished, but only kept sure."

"I would guess that mere keeping in durance, with nought more to vex her, were sorest suffering to one of her fashioning."

"But what more can she lack? Beside, she is only a woman."

"Women mostly live in and for their children, and your story sounds as though hers cared little enough for her."

"Well! they know she is well treated; why should they harry them over her? They be young, and would lead a jolly life, not to be tied for ever to her apron-string."

"I would not use my mother thus."

"What wouldst? Lead her horse with thy bonnet doffed, and make a leg afore her whenever she spake unto thee?"

"If it made her happy so to do, I would. Meseemeth I should be as well employed in leading her horse as another, and could show my chivalry as well towards mine old mother as any other lady. I were somewhat more beholden to her of the twain, and God bade me not honour any other, but He did her."

"*Ha, chétife!* 'Tis easier work honouring a fair damsel, with golden hair and rose-leaf cheek, than a toothless old harridan that is for ever plaguing thee."

"Belike the Lord knew that, and writ therefore His fifth command."

Godfrey did not answer, for his attention was diverted. Two well-laden mules stood at the gate, and two men were coming up to the Manor House, carrying a large pack—a somewhat exciting vision to country people in the Middle Ages. There were then no such things as village shops, and only in the largest and most important towns was any great stock kept by tradesmen. The chief trading in country places was done by these itinerant pedlars, whose visits were therefore a source of great interest to the family, and especially to the ladies. They served frequently as messengers and carriers in a small way, and were particularly valuable between the four seasons, when alone anything worth notice could be expected in the shops—Easter, Whitsuntide, All Saints, and Christmas. There were also the spring and autumn fairs, but these were small matters except in the great towns. As it was now the beginning of September, Godfrey knew that a travelling pedlar would be a most acceptable visitor to his mother and wife.

The porter, instructed by his young master, let in the pedlars.

"What have ye?" demanded Godfrey.

"I have mercery, sweet Sir, and he hath jewellery," answered the taller of the pedlars, a middle-aged man with a bronzed face, which told of much outdoor exposure.

"Why, well said! Come ye both into hall, and when ye have eaten and drunk, then shall ye open your packs."

Godfrey led the pedlars into the hall, and shouted for the sewer, whom he bade to set a table, and serve the wearied men with food.

An hour later, Amphyllis, who was sewing in her mistress's chamber, rose at the entrance of Lady Foljambe.

"Here, Dame, be pedlars bearing mercery and jewellery," said she. "Would your Grace anything that I can pick forth to your content?"

"Ay, I lack a few matters, Avena," said the Countess, in her usual bitter-sweet style. "A two-three yards of freedom, an' it like thee; and a boxful of air, so he have it fresh; and if thou see a silver chain of daughter's duty, or a bit of son's love set in gold, I could serve me of those if I had them. They'll not come over sea, methinketh."

"Would it like your Grace," asked Lady Foljambe, rather stiffly, "to speak in plain language, and say what you would have?"

"Plain language!" repeated the Countess. "In very deed, but I reckoned I had given thee some of that afore now! I would have my liberty, Avena Foljambe; and I would have my rights; and I would have of mine own childre such honour as 'longeth to a mother by reason and God's law. Is that plain enough? or wouldst have it rougher hewn?"

"Dame, your Grace wist well that such matter as this cometh not of pedlars' packs."

"Ay!" said the Countess, with a long, weary sigh. "I do, so! Nor out of men's hearts, belike. Well, Avena, to come down to such petty matter as I count I shall be suffered to have, prithee, bring me some violet silk of this shade for broidery, and another yard or twain of red samitelle for the backing. It were not in thy writ of matters allowable, I reckon, that the pedlars should come up and open their packs in my sight?"

Lady Foljambe looked scandalised.

"Dear heart! Dame, what means your Grace?"

"I know," said the Countess. "They have eyes, no less than I; and they shall see an old woman in white doole, and fall to marvelling, and maybe talking, wherefore their Lord King Edward keepeth her mewed up with bars across her casement. His Grace's honour must be respected, trow. Be it done. 'Tis only one penny the more to the account that the Lord of the helpless shall demand of him one day. I trust he hath in his coffers wherewith to pay that debt. Verily, there shall be some strange meetings in that further world. I marvel something what manner of tale mine old friend De Mauny carried thither this last January, when he went on the long journey that hath no return. Howbeit, seeing he wedded his master's cousin, maybe it were not to his conveniency to remind the Lord of the old woman behind the bars at Hazelwood. It should scantily redound to his lord's credit. And at times it seemeth me that the Lord lacketh reminding, for He appears to have forgot me."

"I cannot listen, Dame, to such speech of my Sovereign."

"Do thy duty, Avena. After all, thy Sovereign's not bad man, as men go. Marvellous ill they go, some of them! He hath held his sceptre well even betwixt justice and mercy on the whole, saving in two matters, whereof this old woman is one, and old women be of small account with most men. He should have fared well had he wist his own mind a bit better—but that's in the blood. Old King Harry, his father's grandfather, I have heard say, was a weary set-out for that. Go thy ways, Avena, and stand not staring at me. I'm neither a lovesome young damsel nor a hobgoblin, that thou shouldst set eyes on me thus. Three ells of red samitelle, and two ounces of violet silk this hue—and a bit of gold twist shall harm no man. Amphyllis, my maid, thou art not glued to the chamber floor like thy mistress; go thou

and take thy pleasure to see the pedlars' packs. Thou hast not much here, poor child!"

Amphillis thankfully accepted her mistress's considerate permission, and ran down to the hall. She found the mercer's pack open, and the rich stuffs hung all about on the forms, which had been pulled forward for that purpose. The jeweller meanwhile sat in a corner, resting until he was wanted. Time was not of much value in the Middle Ages.

Chapter Eight.

Ainers and Samitelle.

"And there's many a deed I could wish undone, though the law might not be broke;
And there's many a word, now I come to think, that I wish I had not spoke."

The mercer's stock, spread out upon the benches of the hall, was a sight at once gay and magnificent. Cloth of gold, diaper, baldekin, velvet, tissue, samite, satin, tartaryn, samitelle, sarcenet, taffata, sindon, cendall, say—all of them varieties of silken stuffs—ribbons of silk, satin, velvet, silver, and gold, were heaped together in brilliant and bewildering confusion of beautiful colours. Lady Foljambe, Mrs Margaret, Marabel, and Agatha, were all looking on.

"What price is that by the yard?" inquired Lady Foljambe, touching a piece of superb Cyprus baldekin, striped white, and crimson. Baldekin was an exceedingly rich silk, originally made at Constantinople: it was now manufactured in England also, but the "oversea" article was the more valuable, the baldekin of Cyprus holding first rank. Baldachino is derived from this word.

"Dame," answered the mercer, "that is a Cyprus baldekin; it is eight pound the piece of three ells."

Lady Foljambe resigned the costly beauty with a sigh.

"And this?" she asked, indicating a piece of soft blue.

"That is an oversea cloth, Dame, yet not principal (of first-class quality)—it is priced five pound the piece."

Lady Foljambe's gesture intimated that this was too much for her purse. "Hast any gold cloths of tissue, not over three pound the piece?"

"That have I, Dame," answered the mercer, displaying a pretty pale green, a dark red, and one of the favourite yellowish-brown shade known as tawny.

Lady Foljambe looked discontented; the beautiful baldekins first seen had eclipsed the modest attractions of their less showy associates.

"Nay, I pass not (do not care) for those," said she. "Show me velvet."

The mercer answered by dexterously draping an unoccupied form, first with a piece of rich purple, then one of tawny, then one of deep crimson, and lastly a bright blue.

"And what price be they?"

He touched each as he recounted the prices, beginning with the purple.

"Fifteen shillings the ell, Dame; a mark (13 shillings 4 pence); fourteen shillings; half a mark. I have also a fair green at half a mark, a peach blossom at fourteen shillings, a grey at seven-and-sixpence, and a murrey (mulberry colour) at a mark."

Lady Foljambe slightly shrugged her shoulders.

"Say a noble (6 shillings 8 pence) for the grey, and set it aside," she said.

"Dame, I could not," replied the mercer, firmly though respectfully. "My goods be honest matter; they be such as they are set forth, and they have paid the King's dues."

Like many other people, Lady Foljambe would have preferred smuggled goods, if they were cheaper than the honest article. Her conscience was very elastic about taxes. It was no great wonder that this spirit prevailed in days when the Crown could ruthlessly squeeze its subjects whenever it wanted extra money, as Henry the Third had done a hundred years before; and though his successors had not imitated his example, the memory of it remained as a horror and a suspicion. Dishonest people, whether they are kings or coal-heavers, always make a place more difficult to fill for those who come after them.

"Well! then set aside the blue," said Lady Foljambe, with a slight pout. "Margaret, what lackest thou?"

Mrs Margaret looked wistfully at the fourteen-shilling crimson, and then manfully chose the six-and-eightpenny green.

"Now let us see thy samitelles," said her Ladyship.

Samitelle, as its name implies, was doubtless a commoner quality of the rich and precious samite, which ranked in costliness and beauty with baldekin and cloth of gold, and above satin and velvet. Samite was a silk material, of

which no more is known than that it was very expensive, and had a glossy sheen, like satin. Some antiquaries have supposed it to be an old name for satin; but as several Wardrobe Rolls contain entries relating to both in immediate sequence, this supposition is untenable.

The mercer exhibited three pieces of samitelle.

"Perse, Dame, four marks the piece," said he, holding up a very pale blue; "ash-colour, thirty shillings; apple-bloom, forty shillings."

"No," said Lady Foljambe; "I would have white."

"Forty-five shillings the piece, Dame."



"Hast no cheaper?"

"Not in white, Dame."

"Well! lay it aside; likewise three ells of the red. I would have moreover a cendall of bean-flower colour, and a piece or twain of say—murrey or sop-in-wine."

Cendall was a very fine, thin silk fit for summer wear, resembling what is now called foulard; say was the coarsest and cheapest sort of silk, and was used for upholstery as well as clothing.

"I have a full fair bean-flower cendall, Dame, one shilling the ell; and a good sop-in-wine say at twopence."

The mercer, as he spoke, held up the piece of say, of a nondescript colour, not unlike what is now termed crushed strawberry.

"That shall serve for the chamberers," said Lady Foljambe; "but the cendall is for myself; I would have it good."

"Dame, it is principal; you shall not see better."

"Good. Measure me off six ells of the cendall, and nine of the say. Then lay by each piece skeins of thread of silk, an ounce to the piece, each to his colour; two ounces of violet, and two of gold twist. Enough for this morrow."

The mercer bowed, with deft quickness executed the order, and proceeded to pack up the remainder of his goods. When the forms were denuded of their rich coverings, he retired into the corner, and the jeweller came forward.

The little jeweller was less dignified, but more lively and loquacious, than his companion the mercer. He unstrapped his pack, laid it open at the feet of Lady Foljambe, and executed a prolonged flourish of two plump brown hands.

"What may I lay before your Ladyship? Buttons and buttoners of de best, paternosters of de finest, gold and silver collars, chains, crucifixes garnished of stones and pearls; crespines, girdles of every fashion, ouches, rings, tablets (tablets were of two sorts, reliquaries and memorandum-books), charms, gipsers, and forcers (satchels to hang from the waist, and small boxes), combs, spoons, caskets, collars for de leetle dogs, bells, points (tagged laces, then much used), alners (alms-bags, larger than purses), purses, knives, scissors, cups—what asks your Ladyship? Behold dem all."

"Dost call thyself a jeweller?" asked Lady Foljambe, with a laugh. "Why, thou art jeweller, silversmith, girdler, forcer-maker, and cutler."

"Dame, I am all men to please my customers," answered the little jeweller, obsequiously. "Will your Ladyship look? Ah, de beautiful tings!"

"Art thou Englishman?"

"Ah! no, Madame, I am a Breton. I come from Hennebon."

A sudden flash of suspicious uneasiness lighted up the eyes of the Countess of Montfort's gaoler. Yet had the man meant mischief, he would scarcely have been so communicative. However that might be, Lady Foljambe determined to get him out of the house as quickly as possible.

"I lack but little of thy sort," she said. "Howbeit, thou mayest show us thine alners and thy buttons."

"I would fain have a gipser," said Mrs Margaret.

While Mrs Margaret was selecting from the stock of gipsers a pretty red velvet one with a silver clasp, price half-a-crown, Perrote came quietly into the hall, and stood beside Amphillis, a little behind Lady Foljambe, who had not heard her entrance.

"Here are de alners, Madame," said the lively little Breton. "Blue, green, black, white, red, tawny, violet. Will your Ladyship choose? T'ree shillings to free marks—beautiful, beautiful! Den here are—*Bon saints, que vois-je?* Surely, surely it is Mademoiselle de Carhaix!"

"It is," said Perrote; "and thou art Ivo filz Jehan?"

"I am Ivo filz Jehan, dat man calls Ivo le Breton. I go from Cornwall, where dwell my countrymen, right up to de Scottish border. And how comes it, den, if a poor man may ask, dat I find here, in de heart of England, a Breton damsel of family?"

Lady Foljambe was in an agony. She would have given her best gold chain for the little Breton jeweller to have kept away from Hazelwood. If he had any sort of penetration, another minute might reveal the secret hitherto so jealously guarded, that his Sovereign's missing mother was a prisoner there. Her misery was the greater because she could not feel at all sure of Perrote, whom she strongly suspected of more loyalty to her mistress than to King Edward in her heart, though she had not shown it by any outward action. Perrote knew the direction of Lady Foljambe's thoughts as well as if she had spoken them. She answered very calmly, and with a smile.

"May Breton damsels not tarry in strange lands, as well as Breton pedlars? I have divers friends in England."

"Surely, surely!" said the pedlar, hastily, perceiving that he had transgressed against Lady Foljambe's pleasure. "Only, if so poor man may say it, it is full pleasant to see face dat man know in strange land. Madame, would it please your Ladyship to regard de alners?"

Lady Foljambe was only too glad to turn Ivo's attention back to the alners. She bought six for presents—they were a favourite form of gift; and picked out twenty buttons of silver-gilt, stamped with an eagle. Mrs Margaret also selected a rosary, of coral set in silver, to help her in saying her prayers, for which article, in her eyes of the first necessity, she gave 33 shillings 4 pence, and for a minute enamelled image of the Virgin and Child, in a little tabernacle or case of silver filagree, of Italian work, she paid five pounds. This was to be set before her on the table and prayed to. Mrs Margaret would not have put it quite in that plain form of words, for no idolater will ever admit that he addresses the piece of wood or stone; but it was what she really did without admitting it. Alas for the worshipper whose god has to be carried about, and requires dusting like any other ornament! "They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them."

Perrote bought an ivory comb of Ivo, which cost her three shillings, for old acquaintance sake; Marabel purchased six silver buttons in the form of a lamb, for which she paid 8 shillings 9 pence; Agatha invested four shillings in a chaplet of pearls; while Amphillis, whose purse was very low, and had never been otherwise, contented herself with a sixpenny casket. Ivo, however, was well satisfied, and packed up his goods with a radiant face.

When the two itinerant tradesmen had shouldered their packs, and had gone forth, Lady Foljambe hastily summoned her husband's squire. She was not sufficiently high in dignity to have a squire of her own.

"Prithee, keep watch of yon little jeweller packman," said she, uneasily. "Mark whither he goeth, and see that he hold no discourse with any of the household, without it be to trade withal. I desire to know him clear of the vicinage ere the dark falleth."

Norman Hylton bowed in answer, and went out.

He found the two packmen in the courtyard, the centre of an admiring throng of servants and retainers, all of whom were anxious to inspect their goods, some from a desire to make such purchases as they could afford, and all from that longing to relieve the monotony of life which besets man in general, and must have been especially tempting in the Middle Ages. A travelling pedlar was the substitute for an illustrated newspaper, his pack supplying the engravings, and his tongue the text. These men and pilgrims were the chief newsmongers of the day.

Ivo dangled a pair of blue glass ear-rings before the enchanted eyes of Kate the chambermaid.

"You shall have dem dirt sheap! Treepence de pair—dat is all. Vat lack you, my young maids? Here is mirrors and

combs, scissors and knives, necklaces, beads and girdles, purses of Rouen, forciers and gipsers—all manner you can wish. Relics I have, if you desire dem—a little finger-bone of Saint George, and a tooth of de dragon dat he slew; a t'read of de veil of Saint Agat'a, and de paring of Saint Matthew's nails. Here is brooches, crespines, charms, spectacles, alners, balls, puppets, coffers, bells, baskets for de maids' needlework, pins, needles, ear-rings, shoe-buckles, buttons—everything! And here—here is my beautifullest ting—my chiefest relic, in de leetle silver box—see!”

“Nay, what is it, trow?” inquired Kate, who looked with deep interest through the interstices of the filagree, and saw nothing but a few inches of coarse linen thread.

“Oh, it is de blessed relic! Look you, our Lady made shirt for Saint Joseph, and she cut off de t'read, and it fall on de floor, and dere it lie till Saint Petronilla come by, and she pick it up and put it in her bosom. It is all writ down inside. De holy Fader give it my moder's grandmoder's aunt, when she go to Rome. It is wort' tousands of pounds—de t'read dat our blessed Lady draw t'rough her fingers. You should have no maladies never, if you wear dat.”

“Ay, but such things as that be alonely for folk as can pay for 'em, I reckon,” said Kate, looking wistfully, first at the blue ear-rings, and then at the blessed relic.

Ivo made a screen of his hand, and spoke into Kate's ear.

“See you, now! You buy dem, and I trow him you into de bargain! Said I well, fair maid?”

“What, all for threepence?” gasped the bewitched Kate.

“All for t'ree-pence. De blessed relic and de beautiful ear-rings! It is dirt sheap. I would not say it to nobody else, only my friends. See you?”

Kate looked in his face to see if he meant it, and then slowly drew out her purse. The warmth of Ivo's friendship, ten minutes old at the most, rather staggered her. But the ear-rings had taken her fancy, and she was also, though less, desirous to possess the holy relic. She poured out into the palm of her hand various pence, halfpence, and farthings, and began endeavouring to reckon up the threepence; a difficult task for a girl utterly ignorant of figures.

“You leave me count it,” suggested the little packman. “I will not cheat you—no, no! How could I, wid de blessed relic in mine hand? One, two, free. Dere! I put in de rings in your ears? ah, dey make you look beautiful, beautiful! De widow lady, I see her not when I have my pack in hall. She is well?”

“What widow lady, trow?” said Kate, feeling the first ear-ring glide softly into her ear.

“Ah, I have afore been here. I see a widow lady at de window. Why come she not to hall?—Oh, how fair you shall be! you shall every eye charm!—She is here no more—yes?”

“Well, ay—there is a widow lady dwelleth here,” said Kate, offering the other ear to her beguiler, just as Norman Hylton came up to them; “but she is a prisoner, and—hush! haste you, now, or I must run without them.”

“Dat shall you not,” said Ivo, quickly slipping the second ear-ring into its place. “Ah, how lovesome should you be, under dat bush by the gate, that hath de yellow flowers, when de sun was setting, and all golden behind you! Keep well de holy relic; it shall bring you good.”

And with a significant look, and a glance upwards at the house, Ivo shouldered his pack, and turned away.

The mercer had not seemed anxious to do business with the household. Perhaps he felt that his wares were scarcely within their means. He sat quietly in the gateway until the jeweller had finished his chaffering, when he rose and walked out beside him. The two packs were carefully strapped on the waiting mules, which were held by the lad, and the party marched down the slope from the gateway.

“What bought you with your holy relic and your ear-rings, Ivo?” asked the mercer, with a rather satirical glance at his companion, when they were well out of hearing. “Aught that was worth them?”

“I bought the news that our Lady abideth hither,” was the grave reply; “and it was cheap, at the cost of a scrap of tin and another of glass, and an inch or twain of thread out of your pack. If yon maid have but wit to be under the shrub by the gate at sunset, I shall win more of her. But she's but a poor brain, or I err. Howbeit, I've had my ear-rings' worth. They cost but a halfpenny. Can you see aught from here? Your eyes be sharper than mine.”

“I see somewhat white at yonder window. But, Ivo, were you wise to tell the lady you came from Hennebon?”

“I was, Sir Roland. She will suspect me now, instead of you; and if, as I guess, she send a spy after us, when we part company he will follow me, and you shall be quit of him.”

The mercer glanced back, as though to see if any one were following.

“Well, perchance you say well,” he answered. “There is none behind, methinks. So now to rejoin Father Eloy.”

Norman Hylton had not followed the packmen beyond the gate. He did not like the business, and was glad to be rid of it. He only kept watch of them till they disappeared up the hill, and then returned to tell Lady Foljambe the direction which they had taken.

Kate's mind was considerably exercised. As Ivo had remarked, her wits were by no means of the first quality, but her conceit and love of admiration far outstripped them. The little jeweller had seen this, and had guessed that she would best answer his purpose of the younger members of the household. Quiet, sensible Joan, the upper chambermaid,

would not have suited him at all; neither would sturdy, straightforward Meg, the cook-maid; but Kate's vanity and indiscretion were both so patent that he fixed on her at once as his chosen accomplice. His only doubt was whether she had sense enough to understand his hint about being under the bush at sunset. Ivo provided himself with a showy brooch of red glass set in gilt copper, which Kate was intended to accept as gold and rubies; and leaving his pack under the care of his fellow conspirator—for Ivo was really the pedlar which Roland was not—he slipped back to Hazelwood, and shortly before the sun set was prowling about in the neighbourhood of the bush which stood just outside the gate of Hazelwood Manor. Before he had been there many minutes, a light, tripping footstep was heard; and poor, foolish Kate, with the blue drops in her ears, came like a giddy fly into the web of Ivo the spider.

Chapter Nine.

Mischief.

"I've nothing to do with better and worse—I haven't to judge for the rest:
If other men are not better than I am, they are bad enough at the best."

When Ivo thought proper to see Kate approaching, he turned with an exclamation of hyperbolic admiration. He knew perfectly the type of woman with whom he had to deal. "Ah, it is den you, fair maid? You be fair widout dem, but much fairer wid de ear-rings, I you assure. Ah, if you had but a comely ouche at your t'roat, just dere,"—and Ivo laid a fat brown finger at the base of his own—"your beauty would be perfect—perfect!"

"Lack-a-day, I would I had!" responded silly Kate; "but ouches and such be not for the likes of me."

"How? Say no such a ting! I know of one jewel, a ruby of de best, and de setting of pure gold, fit for a queen, dat might be had by de maid who would give herself one leetle pain to tell me only one leetle ting, dat should harm none; but you care not, I dare say, to trouble you-self so much."

And Ivo thrust his hands in his pockets, and began to whistle softly.

"Nay, now; do you?" said the bewitched fly, getting a little deeper into the web. "Good Master Packman, do of your grace tell me how a maid should earn that jewel?"

Ivo drew the brooch half out of his breast, so as just to allow Kate the least glance at it possible.

"Is that the jewel?" she asked, eagerly. "Eh, but it shineth well-nigh to match the sun himself! Come, now; what should I tell you? I'll do aught to win it."

Ivo came close to her, and spoke into her ear.

"Show me which is the prisoner's window."

"Well, it's yon oriel, on the inner side of— Eh, but I marvel if I do ill to tell you!"

"Tell me noting at all dat you count ill," was the pious answer of Ivo, who had got to know all he needed except one item. "You can tarry a little longer? or you are very busy? Sir Godfrey is away, is it not?"

"Nay, he's at home, but he'll be hence next week. He's to tilt at the tournament at Leicester."

"Ah! dat will be grand sight, all de knights and de ladies. But I am sure—sure—dere shall not be one so fair as you, sweet maid. Look you, I pin de jewel at your neck. It is wort von hundred pound, I do ensure you."

"Eh, to think of it!" cried enchanted Kate.

"And I would not part wid it but to my friend, and a maid so fair and delightsome. See you, how it shine! It shine better as de sun when it do catch him. You sleep in de prisoner's chamber?—yes?"

"Nay, I'm but a sub-chambermaid, look you—not even an upper. Mistress Perrote, she sleeps in the pallet whenas any doth; but methinks her Ladyship lieth alone at this present. Howbeit, none never seeth her save Mistress Perrote and Mistress Amphillis, and my Lady and Sir Godfrey, of course, when they have need. I've ne'er beheld her myself, only standing behind the casement, as she oft loveth to do. My Lady hath a key to her chamber door, and Mistress Perrote the like; and none save these never entereth."

Ivo drank in all the information which Kate imparted, while he only seemed to be carelessly trimming a switch which he had pulled from a willow close at hand.

"They be careful of her, it should seem," he said.

"You may say that. They're mortal feared of any man so much as seeing her. Well, I reckon I should go now. I'm sure I'm right full indebted to you, Master Packman, for this jewel: only I don't feel as if I have paid you for it."

"You have me paid twice its value, to suffer me look on your beautiful face!" was the gallant answer, with a low bow. "But one more word, and I go, fair maid, and de sun go from me wid you. De porter, he is what of a man?—and has he any dog?"

"Oh ay, that he hath; but I can peace the big dog well enough, an' I did but know when it should be. Well, as for the

manner of man, he's pleasant enough where he takes, look you; but if he reckons you're after aught ill, you'll not come round him in no wise."

"Ah, he is wise man. I see. Well, my fairest of maidens, you shall, if it please you, keep de big dog looking de oder way at nine o'clock of de even, de night Sir Godfrey goes; and de Lady Princess have not so fair a crespine for her hair as you shall win, so to do. Dat is Monday night, trow?"

"Nay, 'tis Tuesday. Well, I'll see; I'll do what I can."

"Fair maid, if I t'ought it possible, I would say, de saints make you beautifuller! But no; it is not possible. So I say, de saints make you happier, and send you all dat you most desire! Good-night."

"Good even, Master Packman, and good befall you. You'll not forget that crespine?"

"Forget? Impossible! Absolute impossible! I bear your remembrance on mine heart all de days of my life. I adore you! Farewell."

When Meg, the next minute, joined Kate under the tree, there was no more sign of Ivo than if he had been the airy creature of a dream.

The little pedlar had escaped dexterously, and only just in time. He hid for a moment beneath the shade of a friendly shrub, and, as soon as he saw Meg's back turned, ran downwards into the Derby road as lithely as a cat, and took the way to that city, where he recounted to his companions, when other people were supposed to be asleep, the arrangement he had made to free the Countess.

"Thou art sore lacking in discretion, my son," said Father Eloy, whose normal condition was that of a private confessor in Bretagne, and whose temporary disguise was that of a horse-dealer. "Such a maid as thou describest is as certain to want and have a confidant as she is to wear that trumpery. Thou wilt find—or, rather, we shall find—the whole house up and alert, and fully aware of our intention."

Ivo's shoulders were shrugged very decidedly.

"*Ha, chétife!*" cried he; "she will want the crespine."

"Not so much as she will want to impart her secret," answered the priest. "Who whispered to the earth, 'Midas has long ears'?"

"It will not matter much to Ivo, so he be not taken," said the knight. "Nor, in a sense, to you, Father, as your frock protects you. I shall come off the worst."

"You'll come off well enough," responded Ivo. "You made an excellent mercer this morrow. You only need go on chaffering till you have sold all your satins, and by that time you will have your pockets well lined; and if you choose your route wisely, you will be near the sea."

"Well and good! if we are not all by that time eating dry bread at the expense of our worthy friend Sir Godfrey."

"Mind *you* are not, Sir Roland," said Ivo. "Every man for himself. I always fall on my feet like a cat, and have nine lives."

"Nine lives come to an end some day," replied Sir Roland, grimly.

"On what art thou a-thinking thus busily, Phyllis?"

"Your pardon, Mistress Perrote; I was thinking of you."

"Not hard to guess, when I saw thine eyes look divers times my ways. What anentis me, my maid?"

"I cry you mercy, Mistress Perrote; for you should very like say that whereon I thought was none of my business. Yet man's thoughts will not always be ruled. I did somewhat marvel, under your pleasure, at your answer to yon pedlar that asked how you came to be hither."

"Wherefore? that I told him no more?"

"Ay; and likewise—"

"Make an end, my maid."

"Mistress, again I cry you mercy; but it seemed me as though, while you sore pitied our Lady, you had no list to help her forth of her trouble, an' it might be compassed. And I conceived (Note 1) it not."

"It could not be compassed, Phyllis; and granting it so should, to what good purpose? Set in case that she came forth this morrow, a free woman—whither is she to wend, and what to do? To her son? He will have none of her. To her daughter? Man saith she hath scanty more freedom than her mother in truth, being ruled of an ill husband that giveth her no leave to work. To King Edward? It should but set him in the briars with divers other princes, the King of France and the Duke of Bretagne more in especial. To my Lady Princess? Verily, she is good woman, yet is she mother of my Lady Duchess; and though I cast no doubt she should essay to judge the matter righteously, yet 'tis but like that she should lean to her own child, which doubtless seeth through her lord's eyes; and it should set her in the briars no less than King Edward. Whither, then, is she to go for whom there is no room on middle earth (Note 2), and

whose company all men avoid? Nay, my maid, for the Lady Marguerite there is no home save Heaven; and there is none to be glad of her company save Him that was yet more lonely than she, and whose foes, like hers, were they of His own house."

"'Tis sore pitiful!" said Amphyllis, looking up with the tears in her eyes.

"'Pitiful!' ay, never was sadder case sithence that saddest of all in the Garden of Gethsemane. Would God she would seek Him, and accept of His pity!"

"Surely, our Lady is Christian woman!" responded Amphyllis, in a rather astonished tone.

"What signifiest thereby?"

"Why she that doth right heartily believe Christ our Lord to have been born and died, and risen again, and so forth."

"What good should that do her?"

Amphyllis stared, without answering.

"If that belief were very heartfelt, it should be life and comfort; but meseemeth thy manner of belief is not heartfelt, but headful. To believe that a man lived and died, Phyllis, is not to accept his help, and to affy thee in his trustworthiness. Did it ever any good and pleasure to thee to believe that one Julius Caesar lived over a thousand years ago?"

"No, verily; but—" Amphyllis did not like to say what she was thinking, that no appropriation of good, nor sensation of pleasure, had ever yet mingled with that belief in the facts concerning Jesus Christ on which she vaguely relied for salvation. She thought a moment, and then spoke out. "Mistress, did you mean there was some other fashion of believing than to think certainly that our Lord did live and die?"

"Set in case, Phyllis, that thou shouldst hear man to say, 'I believe in Master Godfrey, but not in Master Matthew,' what shouldst reckon him to signify? Think on it."

"I suppose," said Amphyllis, after a moment's pause for consideration, "I should account him to mean that he held Master Godfrey for a true man, in whom man might safely affy him; but that he felt not thus sure of Master Matthew."

"Thou wouldst not reckon, then, that he counted Master Matthew as a fabled man that was not alive?"

"Nay, surely!" said Amphyllis, laughing.

"Then seest not for thyself that there is a manner of belief far beside and beyond the mere reckoning that man liveth? Phyllis, dost thou trust Christ our Lord?"

"For what, Mistress? That He shall make me safe at last, if I do my duty, and pay my dues to the Church, and shrive me (confess sins to a priest) metely oft, and so forth? Ay, I reckon I do," said Amphyllis, in a tone which sounded rather as if she meant "I don't."

"Hast alway done thy duty, Amphyllis?"

"Alack, no, Mistress. Yet meseemeth there be worsor folks than I. I am alway regular at shrift."

"The which shrift thou shouldst little need, if thou hadst never failed in duty. But how shall our Lord make thee safe?"

"Why, forgive me my sins," replied Amphyllis, looking puzzled.

"That saith what He shall do, not how He shall do it. Thy sins are a debt to God's law and righteousness. Canst thou pay a debt without cost?"

"But forgiveness costs nought."

"Doth it so? I think scarce anything costs more. Hast ever meditated, Amphyllis, what it cost God to forgive sin?"

"I thought it cost Him nothing at all."

"Child, it could only be done in one of two ways, at the cost of His very self. Either He should forgive sin without propitiation—which were to cost His righteousness and truth and honour. Could that be? In no wise. Then it must be at the cost of His own bearing the penalty due unto the sinner. Thy sins, Amphyllis, thine every failure in duty, thine every foolish thought or wrongful word, cost the Father His own Son out of His bosom, cost the Son a human life of agony and a death of uttermost terribleness. Didst thou believe that?"

A long look of mingled amazement and horror preceded the reply. "Mistress Perrote, I never thought of no such thing! I thought—I thought," said Amphyllis, struggling for the right words to make her meaning clear, "I thought our Lord was to judge us for our sins, and our blessed Lady did plead with Him to have mercy on us, and we must do the best we could, and pray her to pray for us. But the fashion you so put it seemeth—it seemeth certain, as though the matter were settled and done with, and should not be fordone (revoked). Is it thus?"

If Perrote de Carhaix had not been gifted with the unction from the Holy One, she would have made a terrible mistake at that juncture. All that she had been taught by man inclined her to say "no" to the question. But "there are a few of us whom God whispers in the ear," and those who hear those whispers often go utterly contrary to man's teaching, being bound only by God's word. So bound they must be. If they speak not according to that word, it is because there

is no light in them—only an *ignis fatuus* which leads the traveller into quagmires. But they are often free from all other bonds. Perrote could not have told what made her answer that question in the way she did. It was as if a soft hand were laid upon her lips, preventing her from entering into any doctrinal disputations, and insisting on her keeping the question down to the personal level. She said—or that inward monitor said through her—

“Is it settled for thee, Amphillis?”

“Mistress, I don’t know! Can I have it settled?”

“‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.’ ‘I give unto them eternal life.’” (John three verse 36; ten, verse 28.) Perrote said no more.

“Then, if I go and ask at Him—?”

“‘My Lord God, I cried unto Thee, and Thou madest me whole.’ ‘All ye that hope in the Lord, do manly, and your heart shall be comforted.’” (Psalm thirty, verse 3; thirty-one, verse 25; Hereford and Purvey’s version.)

Once more it was as by a heavenly instinct that Perrote answered in God’s words rather than in her own. Amphillis drew a long breath. The light was rising on her. She could not have put her convictions into words; and it was quite as well, for had she done so, men might have persuaded her out of them. But the one conviction “borne in upon her” was—God, and not man; God’s word, not men’s words; God the Saviour of men, not man the saviour of himself; God the Giver of His Son for the salvation of men, not men the offerers of something to God for their own salvation. And when man or woman reaches that point, that he sees in all the universe only himself and God, the two points are not likely to remain long apart. When the one is need longing for love, and the Other is love seeking for need, what can they do but come close together?

Sir Godfrey set forth for his tournament in magnificent style, and Lady Foljambe and Mistress Margaret with him. Young Godfrey was already gone. The old knight rode a fine charger, and was preceded by his standard-bearer, carrying a pennon of bright blue, whereon were embroidered his master’s arms—sable, a bend or, between six scallops of the second. The ladies journeyed together in a quirl, and were provided with rich robes and all their jewellery. The house and the prisoner were left in the hands of Matthew, Father Jordan, and Perrote. Norman Hylton accompanied his master.

Lady Foljambe’s mind had grown tolerably easy on the subject of Ivo, and she only gave Perrote a long lecture, warning her, among other things, never to leave the door unlocked nor the prisoner alone. Either Perrote or Amphillis must sleep in the pallet bed in her chamber during the whole time of Lady Foljambe’s absence, so that she should never be left unguarded for a single moment. Matthew received another harangue, to which he paid little attention in reality, though in outward seeming he received it with due deference. Father Jordan languidly washed his hands with invisible soap, and assured his patrons that no harm could possibly come to the prisoner through their absence.

The Tuesday evening was near its close. The sun had just sunk behind the western hills; the day had been bright and beautiful in the extreme. Amphillis was going slowly upstairs to her turret, carrying her little work-basket, which was covered with brown velvet and adorned with silver cord, when she saw Kate standing in the window of the landing, as if she were waiting for something or some person. It struck Amphillis that Kate looked unhappy.

“Kate, what aileth thee?” she asked, pausing ere she mounted the last steps. “Dost await here for man to pass?”

“Nay, Mistress—leastwise— O Mistress Amphillis, I wis not what to do!”

“Anentis what, my maid?”

“Nay, I’d fain tell you, but— Lack-a-day, I’m all in a tumblement!”

“What manner of tumblement?” asked Amphillis, sitting down in the window-seat. “Hast brake some pottery, Kate, or torn somewhat, that thou fearest thy dame’s anger?”

“Nay, I’ve brake nought saving my word; and I’ve not done that *yet*.”

“It were evil to break thy word, Kate.”

“Were it so?” Kate looked up eagerly.

“Surely, without thou hadst passed word to do somewhat thou shouldst not.”

Kate’s face fell. She had thought she saw a way out of her difficulty; and it was closing round her again.

“It’s none so easy to tell what man shouldn’t,” she said, in a troubled tone.

“What hast thou done, Kate?”

“Nay, I’ve done nought yet. I’ve only passed word to do.”

“To do what?”

Before Kate could answer, Agatha whisked into the corner.

“Thank goodness they’re all gone, the whole lot of them! Won’t we have some fun now! Kate, run down stairs, and bring me up a cork; and I want a long white sheet and a mop. Now haste thee, do! for I would fain cause Father Jordan to skrike out at me, and I have scarce time to get my work done ere the old drone shall come buzzing up this

gait. Be sharp, maid! and I'll do thee a good turn next time."

And Agatha fairly pushed Kate down the stairs, allowing her neither excuse nor delay—a piece of undignified conduct which would bitterly have scandalised Lady Foljambe, could she have seen it. By the time that Kate returned with the articles prescribed, Agatha had possessed herself of a lighted candle, wherein she burnt the end of the cork, and with it proceeded to delineate, in the middle of the sheet, a very clever sketch of a ferocious Turk, with moustaches of stupendous length. Then elevating the long mop till it reached about a yard above her head, she instructed Kate to arrange the sheet thereon in such a manner that the Turk's face showed close to the top of the mop, and gave the idea of a giant about eight feet in height.

"Now then—quick! I hear the old bumble-bee down alow yonder. Keep as still as mice, and stir not, nor laugh for your lives!"

Kate appeared to have quite forgotten her trouble, and entered into Agatha's mischievous fun with all the thoughtless glee of a child.

"Agatha," said Amphyllis, "my Lady Foljambe should be heavy angered if she wist thy dealing. Prithee, work not thus. If Father Jordan verily believed thou wert a ghost, it were well-nigh enough to kill him, poor sely old man. And he hath ill deserved such treatment at thine hands."

In the present day we should never expect an adult clergyman to fall into so patent a trap; but in the Middle Ages even learned men were credulous to an extent which we can scarcely imagine. Priests were in the habit of receiving friendly visits from pretended saints, and meeting apparitions of so-called demons, apparently without the faintest suspicion that the spirits in question might have bodies attached to them, or that their imaginations might be at all responsible for the vision.

"Thank all the Calendar she's away!" was Agatha's response. "Thee hold thy peace, and be not a spoil-sport. I mean to tell him I'm a soul in Purgatory, and none save a priest named Jordan can deliver me, and he only by licking of three crosses in the dust afore our Lady's altar every morrow for a month. That shall hurt none of him! and it shall cause me die o' laughter to see him do it. Back! quick! here cometh he. I would fain hear the old snail skrike out at me, 'Avaunt, Sathanas!' as he surely will."

Amphyllis stepped back. Her quicker ear had recognised that the step beginning to ascend the stairs was not that of the old priest, and she felt pretty sure whose it was—that healthy, sturdy, plain-spoken Meg, the cook-maid, was the destined victim, and was likely to be little injured, while there was a good chance of Agatha's receiving her deserts.

Just as Meg reached the landing, a low groan issued from the uncanny thing. Agatha of course could not see; she only heard the steps, which she still mistook for those of Father Jordan. Meg stood calmly gazing on the apparition.

"Will none deliver an unhappy soul in Purgatory?" demanded a hollow moaning voice, followed by awful groans, such as Amphyllis had not supposed it possible for Agatha to produce.

"I rather reckon, my Saracen, thou'rt a soul out o' Purgatory with a body tacked to thee," said Meg, in the coolest manner. "Help thee? Oh ay, that I will, and bring thee back to middle earth out o' thy pains. Come then!"

And Meg laid hands on the white sheet, and calmly began to pull it down.

"Oh, stay, Meg! Thou shalt stifle me," said the Turk, in Agatha's voice.

"Ay, I thought you'd somewhat to do wi' 't, my damsel; it were like you. Have you driven anybody else out o' her seven senses beside me wi' yon foolery?"

"You've kept in seventy senses," pouted Agatha, releasing herself from the last corner of her ghostly drapery. "Meg, you're a spoil-sport."

"My dame shall con you but poor thanks, Mistress Agatha, if you travail folks o' this fashion while she tarrieth hence. Mistress Amphyllis, too! Marry, I thought—"

"I tarried here to lessen the mischief," said Amphyllis.

"It wasn't thee I meant to fright," said Agatha, with a pout. "I thought Father Jordan was a-coming; it was he I wanted. Never blame Amphyllis; she's nigh as bad as thou."

"Mistress Amphyllis, I ask your pardon. Mistress Agatha, you're a bad un. 'Tis a burning shame to harry a good old man like Father Jordan. Thee hie to thy bed, and do no more mischief, thou false hussy! I'll tell my dame of thy fine doings when she cometh home; I will, so!"

"Now, Meg, dear, sweet Meg, don't, and I'll—"

"You'll get you abed and 'bide quiet. I'm neither dear nor sweet; I'm a cook-maid, and you're a young damsel with a fortin, and you'd neither 'sweet' nor 'dear' me without you were wanting somewhat of me. Forsooth, they'll win a fortin that weds wi' the like of you! Get abed, thou magpie!"

And Meg was heard muttering to herself as she mounted the upper stairs to the attic chamber, which she shared with Joan and Kate.

understanding another person.

Note 2. The term “middle earth” arose from the belief then held, that the earth was in the midst of the universe, equidistant from Heaven above it and from Hell beneath.

Chapter Ten.

Night Alarms.

“Oh let me feel Thee near me,—
The world is very near:
I see the sights that dazzle,
The tempting sounds I hear;
My foes are ever near me,
Around me and within;
But, Jesus, draw Thou nearer,
And save my soul from sin.”

John E. Bode.

“Phyllis, thou wilt lie in my Lady’s pallet, tonight,” said Perrote, as she let her into their own chamber. Amphyllis looked rather alarmed. She had never yet been appointed to that responsible office. But it was not her nature to protest against superior orders; and she quietly gathered up such toilet articles as she required, and prepared to obey.

“You know your duty?” said Perrote, interrogatively. “You first help your Lady abed, and then hie abed yourself, in the dark, as silently and hastefully as may be. There is no more to do, without she call in the night, till her *lever*, for which you must be ready, and have a care not to arouse her till she wake and summon you, without the hour grow exceeding late, when you may lawfully make some little bruit to wake her after a gentle fashion. Come now.”

Amphyllis followed Perrote into the Countess’s room.

They found her standing by the window, as she often was at night, for the sunset and the evening lights had a great attraction for her. She turned her head as they entered.

“At last, Perrote!” she said. “In good sooth, but I began to think thou hadst forgot me, like everybody else in earth and heaven.”

“My Lady knows I shall never do that,” was the quiet reply. “Dame, my Lady Foljambe entreats of your Ladyship leave that Amphyllis here shall lie in your pallet until she return.”

“Doth she so?” answered the Countess, with a curt laugh. “My Lady Foljambe is vastly pleasant, trow. Asking her caged bird’s leave to set another bird in the cage! Well, little brown nightingale, what sayest? Art feared lest the old eagle bite, or canst trust the hooked beak for a week or twain?”

“Dame, an’ it please you, I am in no wise feared of your Grace.”

“Well said. Not that thou shouldst make much difference. Had I a mind to fight for the door or the window, I could soon be quit of such a white-faced chit as thou. Ah me! to what end? That time is by, for me. Well! so they went off in grand array? I saw them. If Godfrey Foljambe buy his wife a new quirle, and his daughter-in-law a new gown, every time they cry for it, he shall be at the end of his purse ere my cushion yonder be finished broidering. Lack-a-day! I would one of you would make an end thereof. I am aweary of the whole thing. Green and tawny and red—red and tawny and green; tent-stitch down here, and satin-stitch up yonder. And what good when done? There’s a cushion-cover more in the world; that is all. Would God—ah, would God, from the bottom of mine heart, that there were but one weary woman less!”

“My dear Lady!” said Perrote, sympathisingly.

“Ay, old woman, I know. Thou wouldst fain ask, Whither should I go? I know little, verily, and care less. Only let me lie down and sleep for ever, and forget everything—I ask but so much. I think God might let me have that. One has to wake ever, here, to another dreary day. If man might but sleep and not wake! or—ah, if man could blot out thirty years, and I sit once more in my mail on my Feraunt at the gate of Hennebon! Dreams, dreams, all empty dreams! Come, child, and lay by this wimple. ’Tis man’s duty to hie him abed now. Let’s do our duty. ’Tis all man has left to me—leave to do as I am bidden. What was that bruit I heard without, an half-hour gone?”

Amphyllis, in answer, for Perrote was unable to speak, told the story of Agatha’s mischievous trick. The Countess laughed.

“’Tis right the thing I should have done myself, as a young maid,” said she. “Ay, I loved dearly to make lordly, sober folks look foolish. Poor Father Jordan, howbeit, was scarce fit game for her crossbow. If she had brought Avena Foljambe down, I’d have given her a clap on the back. Now, maid, let us see how thou canst braid up this old white hair for the pillow. It was jet black once, and fell right to my feet. I little thought, then—I little thought!”

The *coucher* accomplished, the Countess lay down in her bed; Perrote took leave of her, and put out the light, admonishing Amphyllis to be quick. Then she left the room, locking the door after her.

"There!" said the voice of the Countess through the darkness. "Now then we are prisoners, thou and I. How doth it like thee?"

"It liketh me well, Dame, if so I may serve your Grace."

"Well said! Thou shalt be meet for the Court ere long. But, child, thou hast not borne years of it, as I have: sixteen years with a hope of release, and eight with none. Tell me thy history: I have no list to sleep, and it shall pass the time."

"If it may please your Grace, I reckon I have had none."

"Thou wert best thank the saints for that. Yet I count 'tis scarce thus. Didst grow like a mushroom?"

"Truly, no, Dame," said Amphyllis, with a little laugh. "But I fear it should ill repay your Grace to hear that I fed chickens and milked cows, and baked patties of divers sorts."

"It should well repay me. It were a change from blue silk and yellow twist, and one endless view from the window. Fare forth!"

Thus bidden, Amphyllis told her story as she lay in the pallet, uninterrupted save now and then by a laugh or a word of comment. It was not much of a story, as she had said; but she was glad if it amused the royal prisoner, even for an hour.

"Good maid!" said her mistress, when she saw that the tale was finished. "Now sleep thou, for I would not cut off a young maid from her rest. I can sleep belike, or lie awake, as it please the saints."

All was silence after that for half-an-hour. Amphyllis had just dropped asleep, when she was roused again by a low sound, of what nature she knew not at first. Then she was suddenly conscious that the porter's watch-dog, Colle, was keeping up a low, uneasy growl beneath the window, and that somebody was trying to hush him. Amphyllis lay and listened, wondering whether it were some further nonsense of Agatha's manufacture. Then came the sound of angry words and hurrying feet, and a woman's shrill scream.

"What ado is there?" asked the Countess. "Draw back the curtain, Phyllis, and see."

Amphyllis sprang up, ran lightly with bare feet across the chamber, and drew back the curtain. The full harvest moon was shining into the inner court, and she discerned eight black shadows, all mixed together in what was evidently a struggle of some kind, the only one distinguishable being that of Colle, who was as busy and excited as any of the group. At length she saw one of the shadows get free from the others, and speed rapidly to the wall, pursued by the dog, which, however, could not prevent his escape over the wall. The other shadows had a further short scuffle, at the end of which two seemed to be driven into the outer yard by the five, and Amphyllis lost sight of them. She told her mistress what she saw.

"Some drunken brawl amongst the retainers, most like," said the Countess. "Come back to thy bed, maid; 'tis no concern of thine."

Amphyllis obeyed, and silence fell upon the house. The next thing of which she was conscious was Perrote's entrance in the morning.

"What caused yon bruit in the night?" asked the Countess, as Amphyllis was dressing her hair.

"Dame," said Perrote, "it was an attack upon the house."

"An attack?" The Countess turned suddenly round, drawing her hair out of her tirewoman's hands. "After what fashion? thieves? robbers? foes? Come, tell me all about it."

"I scantily know, Dame, how far I may lightly tell," said Perrote, uneasily. "It were better to await Sir Godfrey's return, ere much be said thereanentis."

The Countess fixed her keen black eyes on her old attendant.

"The which means," said she, "that the matter has too much ado with me that I should be suffered to know the inwards thereof. Perrote, was it that man essayed once more to free me? Thou mayest well tell me, for I know it. The angels whispered it to me as I lay in my bed."

"My dear Lady, it was thus. Pray you, be not troubled: if so were, should you be any better off than now?"

"Mary, Mother!" With that wail of pain the Countess turned back to her toilet. "Who was it? and how? Tell me what thou wist."

Perrote considered a moment, and then answered the questions.

"Your Grace hath mind of the two pedlars that came hither a few days gone?"

"One of whom sold yon violet twist, the illest stuff that ever threaded needle? He had need be 'shamed of himself. Ay: well?"

"Dame, he was no pedlar at all, but Sir Roland de Pencouet, a knight of Bretagne."

"Ha! one of Oliver Clisson's following, or I err. Ay?"

A look of intense interest had driven out the usual weary listlessness in the black eyes.

"Which had thus disguised him in order to essay the freeing of your Grace."

"I am at peace with him, then, for his caitiff twist. Knights make ill tradesmen, I doubt not. Poor fool, to think he could do any such thing! What befell him?"

"With him, Dame, were two other—Ivo filz Jehan, yon little Breton jeweller that was used to trade at Hennebon; I know not if your Grace have mind of him—"

"Ay, I remember him."

"And also a priest, named Father Eloy. The priest won clean away over the wall; only Mark saith that Colle hath a piece of his hose for a remembrance. Sir Roland and Ivo were taken, and be lodged in the dungeon."

"Poor fools!" said the Countess again. "O Perrote, Perrote, to be free!"

"Dear my Lady, should it be better with you than now?"

"What wist thou? To have the right to go right or left, as man would; to pluck the flowerets by the roadside at will; to throw man upon the grass, and breathe the free air; to speak with whom man would; to feel the heaving of the salt sea under man's boat, and to hear the clash of arms and see the chargers and the swords and the nodding plumes file out of the postern—O Perrote, Perrote!"

"Mine own dear mistress, would I might compass it for you!"

"I know thou dost. And thou canst not. But wherefore doth not God compass it? Can He not do what He will? Be wrong and cruelty and injustice what He would? Doth He hate me, that He leaveth me thus to live and die like a rat in a hole? And wherefore? What have I done? I am no worsen sinner than thousands of other men and women. I never stole, nor murdered, nor sware falsely; I was true woman to God and to my lord, and true mother to the lad that they keep from me; ay, and true friend to Lord Edward the King, that cares not a brass nail whether I live or die—only that if I died he would be quit of a burden. Holy saints, but I would full willingly quit him of it! God! when I ask Thee for nought costlier than death, canst Thou not grant it to me?"

She looked like an inspired prophetess, that tall white-haired woman, lifting her face up to the morning sun, as if addressing through it the Eternal Light, and challenging the love and wisdom of His decrees. Amphyllis shrank back from her. Perrote came a little nearer.

"God is wiser than His creatures," she said.

"Words, words, Perrote! Only words. And I have heard them all aforetime, and many a time o'er. If I could but come at Him, I'd see if He could not tell me somewhat better."

"Ay," said Perrote, with a sigh; "if we could all but come at Him! Dear my Lady—"

"Cross thyself, old woman, and have done. When I lack an homily preacher, I'll send for a priest. My wimple, Phyllis. When comes Sir Godfrey back?"

"Saturday shall be a week, Dame."

Sir Godfrey came back in a bad temper. He had been overcome at the tournament, which in itself was not pacifying; and he was extremely angry to hear of the unsuccessful attempt to set his prisoner free. He scolded everybody impartially all round, but especially Matthew and Father Jordan, the latter of whom was very little to blame, since he was not only rather deaf, but he slept on the other side of the house, and had never heard the noise at all. Matthew growled that if he had calmly marched the conspirators up to the prisoner's chamber, and delivered her to them, his father could scarcely have treated him worse; whereas he had safely secured two out of the three, and the prisoner had never been in any danger.

Kate had been captured as well as the conspirators, and instead of receiving the promised cresset, she was bitterly rueing her folly, locked in a small turret room whose only furniture was a bundle of straw and a rug, with the pleasing prospect of worse usage when her mistress should return. The morning after their arrival at home, Lady Foljambe marched up to the turret, armed with a formidable cane, wherewith she inflicted on poor Kate a sound discipline. Pleading, sobs, and even screams fell on her ears with as little impression as would have been caused by the buzzing of a fly. Having finished her proceeding, she administered to the suffering culprit a short, sharp lecture, and then locked her up again to think it over, with bread and water as the only relief to meditation.

The King was expected to come North after Parliament rose—somewhere about the following February; and Sir Godfrey wrathfully averred that he should deal with the conspirators himself. The length of time that a prisoner was kept awaiting trial was a matter of supremely little consequence in the Middle Ages. His Majesty reached Derby, on his way to York, in the early days of March, and slept for one night at Hazelwood Manor, disposing of the prisoners the next morning, before he resumed his journey.

Nobody at Hazelwood wished to live that week over again. The King brought a suite of fourteen gentlemen, beside his guard; and they all had to be lodged somehow. Perrote, Amphyllis, Lady Foljambe, and Mrs Margaret slept in the Countess's chamber.

"The more the merrier," said the prisoner, sarcastically. "Prithee, Avena, see that the King quit not this house without he hath a word with me. I have a truth or twain to tell him."

But the King declined the interview. Perhaps it was on account of an uneasy suspicion concerning that truth or twain which might be told him. For fifty years Edward the Third swayed the sceptre of England, and his rule, upon the whole, was just and gentle. Two sore sins lie at his door—the murder of his brother, in a sudden outburst of most righteous indignation; and the long, dreary captivity of the prisoner of Tickhill and Hazelwood, who had done nothing to deserve it. Considering what a mother he had, perhaps the cause for wonder is that in the main he did so well, rather than that on some occasions he acted very wrongly. The frequent wars of this King were all foreign ones, and under his government England was at rest. That long, quiet reign was now drawing near its close. The King had not yet sunk into the sad state of senile dementia, wherein he ended his life; but he was an infirm, tired old man, bereft of his other self, his bright and loving wife, who had left him and the world about four years earlier. He exerted himself a little at supper to make himself agreeable to the ladies, as was then held to be the bounden duty of a good



“O Perrote, Perrote, to be free!”—P. 135.

knight; but after supper he enjoyed a peaceful slumber, with a handkerchief over his face to keep away the flies. The two prisoners were speedily disposed of, by being sent in chains to the Duke of Bretagne, to be dealt with as he should think fit. The King seemed rather amused than angered by Kate’s share in the matter: he had the terrified girl up before him, talked to her in a fatherly fashion, and ended by giving her a crown-piece with his own hand, and bidding her in the future be a good and loyal maid, and not suffer herself to be beguiled by the wiles of evil men. Poor Kate sobbed, promised, and louted confusedly; and in due course of time, when King Edward had been long in his grave, and Kate was a staid grandmother, the crown-piece held the place of honour on her son’s chest of drawers as a prized family heirloom.

The next event of any note, a few weeks afterwards, was Marabel’s marriage. In those days, young girls of good family, instead of being sent to school, were placed with some married lady as bower-women or chamberers, to be first educated and then married. The mistress was expected to make the one her care as much as the other; and it was not considered any concern of the girl’s except to obey. The husband was provided by the mistress, along with the wedding-dress and the wedding-dinner; and the bride meekly accepted all three with becoming thankfulness—or at least was expected to do so.

The new chamberer, who came in Marabel’s place, was named Ricarda; the girls were told this one evening at supper-time, and informed that she would arrive on the morrow. Her place at table was next below Amphyllis, who was greatly astonished to be asked, as she sat down to supper—

“Well, Phyllis, what hast thou to say to me?”

Amphyllis turned and gazed at the speaker.

“Well?” repeated the latter. “Thou hast seen me before.”

“Ricarda! How ever chanceth it?”

The astonishment of Amphyllis was intense. The rules of etiquette at that time were chains indeed; and the daughter of a tradesman was not in a position to be bower-woman to a lady of title. How had her cousin come there?

“What sayest, then,” asked Ricarda, with a triumphant smile, “to know that my Lady Foljambe sent to covenant with me by reason that she was so full fain of thee that she desired another of thy kin?”

“Is it soothly thus?” replied Amphyllis, her surprise scarcely lessened by hearing of such unusual conduct on the part of the precise Lady Foljambe. “Verily, but— And how do my good master mine uncle, and my good cousin Alexandra?”

“Saundrina’s wed, and so is my father. And Saundrina leads Clement a life, and Mistress Altham leads my father another. I was none so sorry to come away, I can tell thee. I hate to be ruled like a ledger and notched like a tally!”

“Thou shalt find things be well ruled in this house, Rica,” said Amphyllis, thinking to herself that Ricarda and Agatha would make a pair, and might give their mistress some trouble. “But whom hath mine uncle wed, that is thus unbuxom (disobedient) to him?”

“Why, Mistress Regina, the goldsmith’s daughter, that counts herself worth us all, and would fain be a queen in the patty-shop, and cut us all out according to her will.”

“But, Ricarda, I reckoned Mistress Regina a full good and wise woman.”

“‘Good and wise!’ She may soon be so. I hate goodness and wisdom. There’s never a bit of jollity for her. ’Tis all ‘thou shalt not.’ She might as well be the Ten Commandments and done with it.”

“Wouldst thou fain not keep the Ten Commandments, Rica?”

“I’d fain have my own way, and be jolly. Oh, she keeps the house well enough. Father saith he’s tenfold more comfortable sithence her coming.”

“I thought thou saidst she led him an ill, diseaseful (Note 1) life?”

“Well, so did I. Father didn’t.”

“Oh!” said Amphyllis, in an enlightened tone.

“And she’s a rare hand at the cooking, that will I say. She might have made patties all her life. She catches up everything afore you can say ‘Jack Robinson.’ She says it’s by reason she’s a Dutchwoman (Note 2). Rubbish! as if a lot of nasty foreigners could do aught better, or half as well, as English folks!”

“Be all foreigners nasty?” asked Amphyllis, thinking of her mistress.

“Of course they be! Phyllis, what’s come o’er thee?”

“I knew not anything had.”

“Lack-a-day! thou art tenfold as covenable and deliver (Note 3) as thou wert wont to be. Derbyshire hath brightened up thy wits.”

Amphyllis smiled. Privately, she thought that if her wits were brightened, it was mainly by being let alone and allowed to develop free of perpetual repression.

“I have done nought to bring the same about, Ricarda. But must I conceive that Master Winkfield’s diseaseful life, then, is in thine eyes, or in his own?”

“He reckons himself the blissefullest man under the sun,” said Ricarda, as they rose from the table: “and he dare not say his soul is his own; not for no price man should pay him.”

Amphyllis privately thought the bliss of a curious kind.

“Phyllis!” said her cousin, suddenly, “hast learned to hold thy tongue?”

“I count I am metely well learned therein, Rica.”

“Well, mind thou, not for nothing of no sort to let on to my Lady that Father is a patty-maker. I were put forth of the door with no more ado, should it come to her ear that I am not of gentle blood like thee.”

“Ricarda! Is my Lady, then, deceived thereon?”

“Sh—’sh! She thinks I am a Neville, and thy cousin of the father’s side. Thee hold thy peace, and all shall be well.”

“But, Rica! that were to tell a lie.”

“Never a bit of it! Man can’t tell a lie by holding his peace.”

“Nay, I am not so sure thereof as I would like. This I know, he may speak one by his life no lesser than his words.”

“Amphyllis, if thou blurt out this to my Lady, I’ll hate thee for ever and ever, Amen!” said Ricarda.

“I must meditate thereon,” was her cousin’s answer. “Soothly, I would not by my good will do thee an ill turn, Rica; and if it may stand with my conscience to be silent, thou hast nought to fear. Yet if my Lady ask me aught touching thee, that may not be thus answered, I must speak truth, and no lie.”

“A murrain take thy conscience! Canst not say a two-three times the Rosary of our Lady to ease it?”

“Maybe,” said Amphyllis, drily, “our Lady hath no more lore for lying than I have.”

“Mistress Ricarda!” said Agatha, joining them as they rose from the table, “I do right heartily pray you of better acquaintance. I trust you and I be of the same fashion of thinking, and both love laughter better than tears.”

"In good sooth, I hate long faces and sad looks," said Ricarda, accepting Agatha's offered kiss of friendship.

"You be not an ill-matched pair," added Amphyllis, laughing. "Only, I pray you, upset not the quire by over much prancing."

Note 1. Still used in its original sense of uncomfortable.

Note 2. The Dutch were then known as High Dutch, the Germans as Low Dutch.

Note 3. Agreeable and ready in conversation.

Chapter Eleven.

Beaten Back.

"I know not why my path should be at times
So straitly hedged, so strangely barred before:
I only know God could keep wide the door;
But I can trust."

"Mistress Perrote, I pray you counsel me. I am sore put to it to baffle my cousin's inquisitions touching our Lady. How she cometh to know there is any such cannot I say; but I may lightly guess that Agatha hath let it 'scape: and in old days mine uncle was wont to say, none never could keep hidlis (secrets) from Ricarda. Truly, might I have known aforehand my Lady Foljambe's pleasure, I could have found to mine hand to pray her not to advance Ricarda hither: not for that I would stand in her way, but for my Lady's sake herself."

"I know. Nay, as well not, Phyllis. It should tend rather to thine own disease, for folk might lightly say thou wert jealous and unkindly to thy kin. The Lord knoweth wherefore such things do hap. At times I think it be to prevent us from being here in earth more blissful than it were good for us to be. As for her inquisitions, parry them as best thou mayest; and if thou canst not, then say apertly (openly) that thou art forbidden to hold discourse thereanentis."

Amphyllis shook her head. She pretty well knew that such an assertion would whet Ricarda's curiosity, and increase her inquisitive queries.

"Mistress Perrote, are you ill at ease?"

"Not in health, thank God. But I am heavy of heart, child. Our Lady is in evil case, and she is very old."

We should not now call a woman very old who was barely sixty years of age; we scarcely think that more than elderly. But in 1373, when the numerous wars and insurrections of the earlier half of the century had almost decimated the population, so that, especially in the upper classes, an old man was rarely to be seen, and when also human life was usually shorter than in later times, sixty was the equivalent of eighty or ninety with us, while seventy was as wonderful as we think a hundred. King Edward was in his second childhood when he died at sixty-five; while "old John of Gaunt, time-honoured Lancaster," scarcely passed his fifty-ninth birthday.

"Is she sick?" said Amphyllis, pityingly. She had not seen her mistress for several days, for her periods of attendance on her were fitful and uncertain.

"She is very sick, and Father Jordan hath tried his best."

The household doctor at that time, for a country house, was either the mistress of the family or the confessor. There were few medical men who were not also priests, and they only lived in chief cities. Ladies were taught physic and surgery, and often doctored a whole neighbourhood. In a town the druggist was usually consulted by the poor, if they consulted any one at all who had learned medicine; but the physicians most in favour were "white witches," namely, old women who dealt in herbs and charms, the former of which were real remedies, and the latter heathenish nonsense. A great deal of superstition mixed with the practice of the best medical men of the day. Herbs must be gathered when the moon was at the full, or when Mercury was in the ascendant; patients who had the small-pox must be wrapped in scarlet; the blood-stone preserved its wearer from particular maladies; a hair from a saint's beard, taken in water, was deemed an invaluable specific. They bled to restore strength, administered plasters of verdigris, and made their patients wait for a lucky day to begin a course of treatment.

"He hath given her," pursued Perrote, sorrowfully, "myrrh and milelot and tutio (oxide of zinc), and hath tried plasters of diachylon, litharge, and ceruse, but to no good purpose. He speaketh now of antimony and orchis, but I fear—I fear he can give nothing to do any good. When our Lord saith 'Die,' not all the help nor love in the world shall make man live. And I think her time is come."

"O Mistress Perrote! must she die without deliverance?"

"Without earthly deliverance, it is like, my maid. Be it so. But, ah me, what if she die without the heavenly deliverance! She will not list me: she never would. If man would come by that she would list, and might be suffered so to do, I would thank God to the end of my days."

"Anentis what should she list, good Mistress?"

"Phyllis, she hath never yet made acquaintance with Christ our Lord. He is to her but a dead name set to the end of

her prayers—an image nailed to a cross—a man whom she has heard tell of, but never saw. The living, loving Lord, who died and rose for her—who is ready at this hour to be her best Friend and dearest Comforter—who is holding forth His hands to her, as to all of us, and entreating her to come to Him and be saved—she looketh on Him as she doth on Constantine the Great, as man that was good and powerful once, but long ago, and 'tis all over and done with. I would fain have her hear man speak of Him that knoweth Him.”

“Father Jordan, Mistress?”

“No. Father Jordan knows about Him. He knoweth Him not—at the least not so well as I want. Ay, I count he doth know Him after a fashion; but 'tis a poor fashion. I want a better man than he, and I want leave for him to come at her. And me feareth very sore that I shall win neither.”

“Shall we ask our Lord for it?” said Amphilis, shyly.

“So do, dear maid. Thy faith shameth mine unbelief.”

“What shall I say, Mistress?”

“Say, ‘Lord, send hither man that knoweth Thee, and incline the hearts of them in authority to suffer him to come at our Lady.’ I will speak yet again with Sir Godfrey, but I might well-nigh as good speak to the door-post: he is as hard, and he knows as little. And her time is very near.”

There were tears in Perrote’s eyes as she went away, and Amphilis entirely sympathised with her. She was coming to realise the paramount importance to every human soul of that personal acquaintance with Jesus Christ, which is the one matter of consequence to all who have felt the power of an endless life. The natural result of this was that lesser matters fell into their right place without any difficulty. There was no troubling “May I do this?” or “How far is it allowable to enjoy that?” If this were contrary to the mind of God, or if that grated on the spiritual taste, it simply could not be done, any more than something could be done which would grieve a beloved human friend, or could be eaten with relish if it were ill-flavoured and disgusting. But suppose the relish does remain? Then, either the conscience is ill-informed and scrupulous, requiring enlightenment by the Word of God, and the heart setting at liberty; or else—and more frequently—the acquaintance is not close enough, and the new affection not sufficiently deep to have “expulsive power” over the old. In either case, the remedy is to come nearer to the Great Physician, to drink deeper draughts of the water of life, to warm the numbed soul in the pure rays of the Sun of Righteousness. “If any man thirst, let him *come unto Me* and drink,”—not stay away, hewing out for himself broken cisterns which can hold no water. How many will not come to Christ for rest, until they have first tried in vain to rest their heads upon every hard stone and every thorny plant that the world has to offer! For the world can give no rest—only varieties of weariness are in its power to offer those who do not bring fresh hearts and eager eyes, as yet unwearied and unfilled. For those who do, it has gay music, and sparkling sweet wine, and gleaming gems of many a lovely hue: and they listen, and drink, and admire, and think there is no bliss beyond it. But when the eager eyes grow dim, and the ears are dulled, and the taste has departed, the tired heart demands rest, and the world has none for it. A worn-out worldling, whom the world has ceased to charm, is one of the most pitiable creatures alive.

Sir Godfrey Foljambe had not arrived at that point; he was in a condition less unhappy, but quite as perilous. To him the world had offered a fresh apple of Sodom, and he had grasped it as eagerly as the first. The prodigal son was in a better condition when he grew weary of the strange country, than while he was spending his substance on riotous living. Sir Godfrey had laid aside the riotous living, but he was not weary of the strange country. On the contrary, when he ran short of food, he tried the swine’s husks, and found them very palatable—decidedly preferable to going home. He put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. The liberty wherewith Christ would have made him free was considered as a yoke of bondage, while the strong chains in which Satan held him were perfect freedom in his estimation.

It was not with any hope that he would either understand or grant her request that Perrote made a last application to her lady’s gaoler. It was only because she felt the matter of such supreme importance, the time so short, and the necessity so imperative, that no fault of hers should be a hindrance. Perhaps, too, down in those dim recesses of the human heart which lie so open to God, but scarcely read by man himself, there was a mustard-seed of faith—a faint “Who can tell?” which did not rise to hope—and certainly a love ready to endure all if it might gain its blessed end.

“Sir,” said Perrote, “I entreat a moment’s speech of you.”

Sir Godfrey, who was sauntering under the trees in the garden, stopped and looked at her. Had he spoken out his thoughts, he would have said, “What on earth does this bothering old woman want?” As it was, he stood silent, and waited for her to proceed.

“Sir, my Lady is full sick.”

“Well! let Father Jordan see her.”

“He hath seen her, Sir, and full little can he do.”

“What would you? No outer physician can be called in.”

“Ah, Sir, forgive me, but I am thinking rather of the soul than the body: it is the worsor of the twain.”

“Verily, I guess not how, for she should be hard put to it to commit mortal sin, when mewed for eight years in one chamber. Howbeit, if so be, what then? Is not Father Jordan a priest? One priest is full as good as another.”

“Once more, forgive me, Sir! For the need that I behold, one priest is not as good as another. It is not a mass that my

Lady needeth to be sung; it is counsel that she lacketh.”

“Then let Father Jordan counsel her.”

“Sir, he cannot.”

“Cannot! What for, trow? Hath he lost his wits or his tongue?”

“No, he hath lost nothing, for that which he lacketh I count he never had, or so little thereof that it serveth not in this case. Man cannot sound a fathom with an inch-line. Sir, whether you conceive me or not, whether you allow me or no, I do most earnestly entreat you to suffer that my Lady may speak with one of the poor priests that go about in frieze coats bound with leather girdles. They have whereof to minister to her need.”

Sir Godfrey thought contemptuously that there was no end to the fads and fancies of old women. His first idea of a reply was to say decidedly that it was not possible to trust any outsider with the cherished secret of the Countess's hiding-place; his next, that the poor priests were in tolerably high favour with the great, that the King had commanded the prisoner to be well treated, that the priest might be sworn to secrecy, and that if the Countess were really near her end, little mischief would be done. Possibly, in his inner soul, too, a power was at work which he was not capable of recognising.

“Humph!” was all he said; but Perrote saw that she had made an impression, and she was too wise to weaken it by adding words. Sir Godfrey, with his hands in the pockets of his *haut-de-chausses*, took a turn under the trees, and came back to the suppliant. “Where be they to be found?”

“Sir, there is well-nigh certain to be one or more at Derby. If it pleased you to send to the Prior of Saint Mary there, or to your own Abbey of Darley, there were very like to be one tarrying on his way, or might soon come thither; and if, under your good leave, the holy Father would cause him to swear secrecy touching all he might see or hear, no mischief should be like to hap by his coming.”

“Humph!” said Sir Godfrey again. “I'll meditate thereon.”

“Sir, I give you right hearty thanks,” was the grateful answer of Perrote, who had taken more by her motion than she expected.

As she passed from the inner court to the outer on her way to the hall, where supper would shortly be served, she heard a little noise and bustle of some sort at the gate. Perrote stopped to look.

Before the gate, on a richly-caparisoned mule, sat the Abbot of Darley, with four of his monks, also mounted on those ecclesiastical animals. The porter, his keys in his hand, was bowing low in reverential awe, for an abbot was only a step below a bishop, and both were deemed holy and spiritual men. Unquestionably there were men among them who were both spiritual and holy, but they were considerably fewer than the general populace believed. The majority belonged to one of four types—the dry-as-dust scholar, the austere ascetic, the proud tyrant, or the jovial *ton vivant*. The first-class, which was the best, was not a large one; the other three were much more numerous. The present Abbot of Darley was a mixture of the two last-named, and could put on either at will, the man being jovial by nature, and the abbot haughty by training. He had now come to spend a night at Hazelwood on his way from Darley to Leicester; for the Foljambes were lords of Darley Manor, and many of them had been benefactors to the abbey in their time. It was desirable, for many reasons, that Sir Godfrey and the Abbot should keep on friendly terms. Perrote stepped back to tell the knight who stood at his gate, and he at once hastened forward with a cordial welcome.

The Abbot blessed Sir Godfrey by the extension of two priestly fingers in a style which must require considerable practice, and, in tones which savoured somewhat more of pride than humility, informed him that he came to beg a lodging for himself and his monks for one night. Sir Godfrey knew, he said, that poor monks, who abjured the vanities of the world, were not accustomed to grandeur; a little straw and some coarse rugs were all they asked. Had the Abbot been taken at his word, he would have been much astonished; but he well knew that the best bedchambers in the Manor House would be thought honoured by his use of them. His Reverence alighted from his mule, and, followed by the four monks, was led into the hall, his bareheaded and obsequious host preceding them. The ladies, who were assembling for supper, dropped on their knees at the sight, and also received a priestly blessing. The Abbot was conducted to the seat of honour, on Sir Godfrey's right hand.

The servers now brought in supper. It was a vigil, and therefore meat, eggs, and butter were forbidden; but luxury, apart from these, being unforbidden to such as preferred the letter to the spirit, the meal was sufficiently appetising, notwithstanding this. Beside some fishes whose names are inscrutable, our ancestors at this time ate nearly all we habitually use, and in addition, whelks, porpoises, and lampreys. There were soups made of apples, figs, beans, peas, gourds, rice, and wheat. Fish pies and fruit pies, jellies, honey cakes and tarts, biscuits of all descriptions, including maccaroons and gingerbread, vegetables far more numerous than we use, salads, cucumbers, melons, and all fruits in season, puddings of semolina, millet, and rice, almonds, spices, pickles—went to make up a *menu* by no means despicable.

Supper was half over when Sir Godfrey bethought himself of Perrote's appeal and suggestion.

“Pray you, holy Father,” said he, “have you in your abbey at this season any of them called the poor priests, or know you where they may be found?”

The Abbot's lips took such a setting as rather alarmed his host, who began to wish his question unasked.

“I pray you of pardon if I ask unwisely,” he hastily added. “I had thought these men were somewhat in good favour in high place at this time, and though I desire not at all to—”

"Wheresoever is my Lady Princess, there shall the poor priests find favour," said the Abbot, with a slight shrug of his shoulders. "The King, too, is not ill-affected toward them. But I forewarn you, my son, that they be not over well liked of the Church and the dignitaries thereof. They go about setting men by the ears, bringing down to the minds of the commoner sort high matters that are not meet for such to handle, and inciting them to chatter and gabble over holy things in unseemly wise. Whereso they preach, 'tis said, the very women will leave their distaffs, and begin to talk of sacred matter—most unbecoming and scandalous it is! I advise you, my son, to have none ado with such, and to keep to the wholesome direction of your own priest, which shall be far more to your profit."

"I cry you mercy, reverend Father! Truly it was not of mine own motion that I asked the same. 'Twas a woman did excite me thereto, seeing—"

"That may I well believe," said the Abbot, contemptuously. "Women be ever at the bottom of every ill thing under the sun."

Poor man! he knew nothing about them. How could he, when he was taught that they were unclean creatures with whom it was defilement to converse? And he could not remember his mother—the one womanly memory which might have saved him from the delusion.

Sir Godfrey, in his earnest anxiety to get out of the scrape into which Perrote had brought him, hastily introduced a fresh topic as the easiest means of doing so.

"Trust me, holy Father, I will suffer nought harmful to enter my doors, nor any man disapproved by your Lordship. Is there news abroad, may man wit?"

"Ay, we had last night an holy palmer in our abbey," responded the Abbot, with a calmer brow. "He left us this morrow on his way to Jesmond. You wist, doubtless, that my Lord of York is departed?"

"No, verily—my Lord of York! Is yet any successor appointed?"

"Ay, so 'tis said—Father Neville, as men say."

Amphillis looked up with some interest, on hearing her own name.

"Who is he, this Father Neville?"

"Soothly, who is he?" repeated the Abbot, with evident irritation. "Brother to my Lord Neville of Raby; but what hath he done, trow, to be advanced thus without merit unto the second mitre in the realm? Some meaner bishop, or worthy abbot, should have been far fitter for the preferment."

"The worthy Abbot of Darley in especial!" whispered Agatha in the ear of Amphillis.

"What manner of man is he, holy Father, by your leave?"

"One of these new sectaries," replied the Abbot, irascibly. "A man that favours the poor priests of whom you spake, and swears by the Rector of Ludgarshall, this Wycliffe, that maketh all this bruit. Prithee, who is the Rector of Ludgarshall, that we must all be at his beck and ordering? Was there no truth in the whole Church Catholic, these thirteen hundred years, that this Dan John must claim for to have discovered it anew? Pshaw! 'tis folly."

"And what other tidings be there, pray you, holy Father?"

"Scarce aught beside of note, I think," answered the Abbot, meditatively—"without it be the news from Brittany of late—'tis said all Brittany is in revolt, and the King of France aiding the same, and the Duke is fled over hither to King Edward, leaving my Lady Duchess shut up in the Castle of Auray, which 'tis thought the French King shall besiege. Man reckons he comes for little—I would say, that our King shall give him little ado over that matter, without it were to ransom my Lady, should she be taken, she being step-daughter unto my Lord Prince."

"The Lord King, then, showeth him no great favour?"

"Favour enough to his particular (to himself personally); but you will quickly judge there is little likelihood of a new army fitted out for Brittany, when you hear that his Grace writ to my Lord Archbishop of Canterbury that he should in no wise submit to the tax laid on the clergy by my Lord Cardinal of Cluny, that came o'er touching those affairs, and charged the expenses of his journey on the clergy of England. The King gave promise to stand by them in case they should resist, and bade them take no heed of the censure of the said Nuncio, seeing the people of England were not concerned touching matters of Brittany; and where the cause, quoth he, is so unjust, the curse must needs fall harmless."

"Brave words, in good sooth!" said young Godfrey.

"Ay, our Lord the King is not he that shall suffer man to ride roughshod over him," added his father.

"The which is full well in case of laymen," said the Abbot, a little severely; "yet it becometh even princes to be buxom and reverent to the Church, and unto all spiritual men."

"If it might please you, holy Father, would you do so much grace as tell me where is my Lord Duke at this present?"

It was Perrote who asked the question, and with evident uneasiness.

The Abbot glanced at her, and then answered carelessly. She was only one of the household, as he saw. What did her

anxiety matter to my Lord Abbot of Darley?

“By my Lady Saint Mary, that wis I little,” said he. “At Windsor, maybe, or Woodstock—with the King.”

“The palmer told us the King was at Woodstock,” remarked one of the hitherto silent monks.

The Abbot annihilated him by a glance.

“Verily, an’ he were,” remarked Sir Godfrey, “it should tell but little by now, when he may as like as not be at Winchester or Norwich.”

Our Plantagenet sovereigns were perpetual travellers up and down the kingdom, rarely staying even a fortnight in one place, though occasionally they were stationary for some weeks; but the old and infirm King who now occupied the throne had moved about less than usual of late years.

Perrote was silent, but her face took a resolute expression, which Sir Godfrey had learned to his annoyance. When the “bothering old woman” looked like that, she generally bothered him before he was much older. And Sir Godfrey, like many others of his species, detested being bothered.

He soon found that fate remembered him. As he was going up to bed that night, he found Perrote waiting for him on the landing.

“Sir, pray you a word,” said she.

Sir Godfrey stood sulkily still.

“If my Lord Duke be now in England, should he not know that his mother is near her end?”

“How am I to send to him, trow?” growled the custodian. “I wis not where he is.”

“A messenger could find out the Court, Sir,” answered Perrote. “And it would comfort her last days if he came.”

“And if he refused?”

Perrote’s dark eyes flashed fire.

“Then may God have mercy on him!—if He have any mercy for such a heartless wretch as he should so be.”

“Keep a civil tongue in your head, Perrote de Carhaix,” said Sir Godfrey, beginning to ascend the upper stair. “You see, your poor priests are no good. You’d better be quiet.”

Perrote stood still, candle in hand, till he disappeared.

“I will be silent towards man,” she said, in a low voice; “but I will pour out mine heart as water before the face of the Lord. The road toward Heaven is alway open: and they whom men beat back and tread down are the most like to win ear of Him. Make no tarrying, O my God!”

Chapter Twelve.

Wherein Sundry People act Foolishly.

“Why for the dead, who are at rest?
Pray for the living, in whose breast
The struggle between right and wrong
Is raging terrible and strong.”

Longfellow.

Amphillis Neville was a most unsuspecting person. It never occurred to her to expect any one to do what, in his place, she would not have done; and all that she would have done was so simple and straightforward, that scheming of every sort was an impossible idea, until suggested by some one else. She was consequently much surprised when Perrote said one evening—

“Phyllis, I could find in mine heart to wish thy cousin had tarried hence.”

The discovery of Ricarda’s deception was the only solution of this remark which presented itself to Amphillis, but her natural caution stood her in good stead, and she merely inquired her companion’s meaning.

“Hast not seen that she laboureth to catch Master Hylton into her net?”

Thoughts, which were not all pleasant, chased one another through the mind of Amphillis. If Ricarda were trying to win Norman Hylton, would she be so base as to leave him under the delusion that she was a Neville, possibly of the noble stock of the Lords of Raby? Mr Hylton’s friends, if not himself, would regard with unutterable scorn the idea of marriage with a confectioner’s daughter. He would be held to have demeaned himself to the verge of social extinction. And somehow, somewhere, and for some reason—Amphillis pushed the question no further than this—the thought of assisting, by her silence, in the ruin of Norman Hylton, seemed much harder to bear than the prospect of being hated by Ricarda Altham, even though it were for ever and ever. When these meditations had burned within

her for a few seconds, Amphyllis spoke.

"Mistress Perrote, wit you how my cousin came hither?"

"Why, by reason my Lady Foljambe sent to thine uncle, to ask at him if thou hadst any kin of the father's side, young maids of good birth and breeding, and of discreet conditions, that he should be willing to put forth hither with thee."

Amphyllis felt as if her mind were in a whirl. Surely it was not possible that Mr Altham had known, far less shared, the dishonesty of his daughter? She could not have believed her uncle capable of such meanness.

"Sent to mine uncle?" seemed all that she could utter.

"Ay, but thine uncle, as I heard say, was away when the messenger came, and he saw certain women of his house only."

"Oh, then my uncle was not in the plot!" said Amphyllis to herself with great satisfaction.

"Maybe I speak wrongly," added Perrote, reflectively; "I guess he saw but one woman, a wedded cousin of thine, one Mistress Winkfield, who said she wist of a kinswoman of thine on the father's side that she was secure her father would gladly prefer, and she would have her up from Hertfordshire to see him, if he would call again that day week."

How the conspiracy had been managed flashed on Amphyllis at once. Mr Altham was always from home on a Wednesday, when he attended a meeting of his professional guild in the city. That wicked Alexandra had done the whole business, and presented her own sister to the messenger as the cousin of Amphyllis, on that side of her parentage which came of gentle blood.

"Mistress, I pray you tell me, if man know of wrong done or lying, and utter it not, hath he then part in the wrong?"

"Very like, dear heart. Is there here some wrong-doing? I nigh guessed so much from thy ways. Speak out, Phyllis."

"Soothly, Mistress, I would not by my good will do my kinswoman an ill turn; yet either must I do so, or else hold my peace at wrong done to my Lady Foljambe, and peradventure to Master Hylton. My cousin Ricarda is not of my father's kin. She is daughter unto mine uncle, the patty-maker in the Strand. I know of no kin on my father's side."

"Holy Mary!" cried the scandalised Perrote. "Has thine uncle, then, had part in this wicked work?"

"I cry you mercy, Mistress, but I humbly guess not so. Mine uncle, as I have known him, hath been alway an honest and honourable man, that should think shame to do a mean deed. That he had holpen my cousins thus to act could I not believe without it were proven."

"Then thy cousin, Mistress Winkfield?"

"Alexandra? I said not so much of her."

"Phyllis, my Lady Foljambe must know this."

"I am afeard, Mistress, she must. Mistress, I must in mine honesty confess to you that these few days I have wist my cousin had called her by the name of Neville; but in good sooth, I wist not if I ought to speak or no, till your word this even seemed to show me that I must. My cousins have been somewhat unfriends to me, and I held me back lest I should be reckoned to revenge myself." Perrote took in the situation at a glance. "Poor child!" she said. "It is well thou hast spoken. I dare guess, thou sawest not that mischief might come thereof."

"In good sooth, Mistress, that did I not until this even. I never thought of no such a thing."

"Verily, I can scarce marvel, for such a thing was hardly heard of afore. To deceive a noble lady! to 'present herself as of gentle blood, when she came but of a trading stock! 'Tis horrible! I can scarce think of worsor deed, without she had striven to deceive the priest himself in confession."

The act of Ricarda Altham was far more shocking in the eyes of a lady in the fourteenth century than in the nineteenth. The falsehood she had told was the same in both cases; or rather, it would weigh more heavily now than then. But the nature of the deception—that what they would have termed "a beggarly tradesman's brat" should, by deceiving a lady of family, have forced herself on terms of comparative equality into the society of ladies—was horrible in the extreme to their eclectic souls. Tradesmen, in those days, were barely supposed, by the upper classes, to have either morals or manners, except an awe of superior people, which was expected to act as a wholesome barrier against cheating their aristocratic customers. In point of fact, the aristocratic customers were cheated much oftener than they supposed, on the one side, and some of the "beggarly tradesfolk" were men of much higher intellect and principle than they imagined, on the other. Brains were held to be a prerogative of gentle blood, extra intelligence in the lower classes being almost an impertinence. The only exception to this rule lay with the Church. She was allowed to develop a brain in whom she would. The sacredness of her tonsure protected the man who wore it, permitting him to exhibit as much (or as little) of manners, intellect, and morals, as he might think proper.

Perrote's undressing on that evening was attended with numerous shakes of the head, and sudden ejaculations of mingled astonishment and horror.

"And that Agatha!" was one of the ejaculations.

Amphyllis looked for enlightenment.

"Why, she is full hand in glove with Ricarda. The one can do nought that the other knows not of. I dare be bound she is helping her to draw poor Master Norman into her net—for Agatha will have none of him; she's after Master Matthew."

"Lack-a-day! I never thought nobody was after anybody!" said innocent Amphyllis.

"Keep thy seliness (simplicity), child!" said Perrote, smiling on her. "Nor, in truth, should I say 'poor Master Norman,' for I think he is little like to be tangled either in Ricarda's web or Agatha's meshes. If I know him, his eyes be in another quarter—wherein, I would say, he should have better content. Ah me, the folly of men! and women belike—I leave not them out; they be oft the more foolish of the twain. The good God assoil (forgive) us all! Alack, my poor Lady! It doth seem as if the Lord shut all doors in my face. I thought I was about to win Sir Godfrey over—and hard work it had been—and then cometh this Abbot of Darley, and slams the door afore I may go through. Well, the Lord can open others, an' He will. 'He openeth, and none shutteth; He shutteth, and none openeth;' and blessed be His holy Name, He is easilier come at a deal than men. If I must tarry, it is to tarry His leisure; and He knows both the hearts of men, and the coming future; and He is secure not to be too late. He loves our poor Lady better than I love her, and I love her well-nigh as mine own soul. Lord, help me to wait Thy time, and help mine unbelief!"

The ordeal of telling Lady Foljambe had to be gone through the next morning. She was even more angry than Perrote had anticipated, and much more than Amphyllis expected. Ricarda was a good-for-nought, a hussy, a wicked wretch, and a near relative of Satan, while Amphyllis was only a shade lighter in the blackness of her guilt. In vain poor Amphyllis pleaded that she had never guessed Lady Foljambe's intention of sending for her cousin, and had never heard of it until she saw her. Then, said Lady Foljambe, unreasonable in her anger, she ought to have guessed it. But it was all nonsense! Of course she knew, and had plotted it all with her cousins.

"Nay, Dame," said Perrote; "I myself heard you to say, the even afore Ricarda came, that it should give Phyllis a surprise to see her."

If anything could have made Lady Foljambe more angry than she was, it was having it shown to her that she was in the wrong. She now turned her artillery upon Perrote, whom she scolded in the intervals of heaping unsavoury epithets upon Amphyllis and Ricarda, until Amphyllis thought that everything poor Perrote had ever done in her life to Lady Foljambe's annoyance, rightly or wrongly, must have been dragged out of an inexhaustible memory to lay before her. At last it came to an end. Ricarda was dismissed in dire disgrace; all that Lady Foljambe would grant her was her expenses home, and the escort of one mounted servant to take her there. Even this was given only at the earnest pleading of Perrote and Amphyllis, who knew, as indeed did Lady Foljambe herself, that to turn a girl out of doors in this summary manner was to expose her to frightful dangers in the fourteenth century. Poor Ricarda was quite broken down, and so far forgot her threats as to come to Amphyllis for help and comfort. Amphyllis gave her every farthing in her purse, and desired the servant who was to act as escort to convey a conciliatory message to her uncle, begging forgiveness for Ricarda for her sake. She sent also an affectionate and respectful message to her new aunt, entreating her to intercede with her husband for his daughter.

"Indeed, Rica, I would not have told if I could have helped it and bidden true to my trust!" was the farewell of Amphyllis.

"O Phyllis, I wish I'd been as true as you, and then I should never have fallen in this trouble!" sobbed the humbled Ricarda. "I shouldn't have thought of it but for Saundrina. But there, I've been bad enough! I'll not lay blame to other folks. God be wi' thee! if I may take God's name into my lips; but, peradventure, He'll be as angry as my Lady."

"I suppose He is alway angered at sin," said Amphyllis. "But, Rica, the worst sinner that ever lived may take God's name into his lips to say, 'God, forgive me!' And we must all alike say that. And Mistress Perrote saith, if we hide our stained souls behind the white robes of our Lord Christ, God the Father is never angered with Him. All that anger was spent, every drop of it, upon the cross on Calvary; so there is none left now, never a whit, for any sinner that taketh refuge in Him. Yea, it was spent on Him for this cause, that all souls taking shelter under His wing unto all time might find there only love, and rest, and peace."

"O Phyllis, thou'rt a good maid. I would I were half as good as thou!"

"If I am good at all, dear Rica, Jesu Christ hath done it; and He will do it for thee, for the asking."

So the cousins parted in more peace than either of them would once have thought possible.

For some hours Amphyllis was in serious doubt whether she would not share the fate of her cousin. Perrote pleaded for her, it seemed, in vain; even Mrs Margaret added her gentle entreaties, and was sharply bidden to hold her tongue. But when, on the afternoon of that eventful day, Amphyllis went, as was now usual, to mount guard in the Countess's chamber, she was desired, in that lady's customary manner—

"Bid Avena Foljambe come and speak with me."

Amphyllis hesitated an instant, and her mistress saw it.

"Well? Hast an access (a fit of the gout), that thou canst not walk?"

"Dame, I cry your Grace mercy. I am at this present ill in favour of my Lady Foljambe, and I scarce know if she will come for my asking."

The Countess laughed the curt, bitter laugh which Amphyllis had so often heard from her lips.

"Tell her she may please herself," she said; "but that if she be not here ere the hour, I'll come to her. I am not yet so

sick that I cannot crawl to the further end of the house. She'll not tarry to hear that twice, or I err."

Amphillis locked the door behind her, as she was strictly ordered to do whenever she left that room, unless Perrote were there, and finding Lady Foljambe in her private boudoir, tremblingly delivered the more civil half of her message. Lady Foljambe paid no heed to her.

"Dame," said poor Amphillis, "I pray you of mercy if I do ill; but her Grace bade me say also that, if you came not to her afore the clock should point the hour, then would she seek you."

Lady Foljambe allowed a word to escape her which could only be termed a mild form of swearing—a sin to which women no less than men, and of all classes, were fearfully addicted in the Middle Ages—and, without another look at Amphillis, stalked upstairs, and let herself with her own key into the Countess's chamber.

The Countess sat in her large chair of carved walnut, made easy by being lined with large, soft cushions. There were no easy chairs of any other kind. She was in her favourite place, near the window.

"Well, Avena, good morrow! Didst have half my message, or the whole?"

"I am here, Dame, to take your Grace's orders."

"I see, it wanted the whole. 'To take my Grace's orders!' Soothly, thou art pleasant. Well, take them, then. My Grace would like a couch prepared on yonder lawn, and were I but well enough, a ride on horseback; but I misdoubt rides be over for me. Go to: what is this I hear touching the child Amphillis?—as though thou wentest about to be rid of her."

"Dame, I have thought thereupon."

"What for? Now, Avena, I will know. Thou dost but lose thy pains to fence with me."

In answer, Lady Foljambe told the story, with a good deal of angry comment. The Countess was much amused, a fact which did not help to calm the narrator.

"*Ha, jolife!*" said she, "but I would fain have been in thy bower when the matter came forth! Howbeit, I lack further expounding thereanentis. Whereof is Phyllis guilty?"

Lady Foljambe, whose wrath was not up at the white heat which it had touched in the morning, found this question a little difficult to answer. She could not reasonably find fault with Amphillis for being Ricarda's cousin, and this was the real cause of her annoyance. The only blame that could be laid to her was her silence for a few days as to the little she knew. Of this crime Lady Foljambe made the most.

"Now, Avena," said the Countess, as peremptorily as her languor permitted, "hearken me, and be no more of a fool than thou canst help. If thou turn away a quiet, steady, decent maid, of good birth and conditions, for no more than a little lack of courage, or maybe of judgment—and thou art not a she-Solomon thyself, as I give thee to wit, but thou art a fearsome thing to a young maid when thou art angered; and unjust anger is alway harder, and sharper, and fierier than the just, as if it borrowed a bit of Satan, from whom it cometh—I say, if thou turn her away for this, thou shalt richly deserve what thou wilt very like get in exchange—to wit, a giddy-pate that shall blurt forth all thy privy matter (and I am a privy matter, as thou well wist), or one of some other ill conditions, that shall cost thee an heartbreak to rule. Now beware, and be wise. And if it need more, then mind thou"—and the tone grew regal—"that Amphillis Neville is my servant, not thine, and that I choose not she be removed from me. I love the maid; she hath sense, and she is true to trust; and though that keeps me in prison, yet can I esteem it when known. 'Tis a rare gift. Now go, and think on what I have said to thee."

Lady Foljambe found herself reluctantly constrained to do the Countess's bidding, so far, at least, as the meditation was concerned. And the calmer she grew, the more clearly she saw that the Countess was right. She did not, however, show that she felt she had been in the wrong. Amphillis was not informed that she was forgiven, nor that she was to retain her place, but matters were allowed to slide silently back into their old groove. So the winter came slowly on.

"The time drew near the birth of Christ," that season of peace and good-will to men which casts its



soft sunshine even over the world, bringing absent relatives together, and suggesting general family amnesties. Perrote determined to make one more effort with Sir Godfrey. About the middle of December, as that gentleman was mounting his staircase, he saw on the landing that “bothering old woman,” standing, lamp in hand, evidently meaning to waylay some one who was going up to bed. Sir Godfrey had little doubt that he was the destined victim, and he growled inwardly. However, it was of no use to turn back on some pretended errand; she was sure to wait till his return, as he knew. Sir Godfrey growled again inaudibly, and went on to meet his fate in the form of Perrote.

“Sir, I would speak with you.”

Sir Godfrey gave an irritable grunt.

“Sir, the day of our Lord’s birth is very nigh, when men be wont to make up old quarrels in peace. Will you not yet once entreat of my Lord Duke, being in England, to pay one visit to his dying mother?”

“I wis not that she is dying. Folks commonly take less time over their dying than thus.”

Perrote, as it were, waved away the manner of the answer, and replied only to the matter.

“Sir, she is dying, albeit very slowly. My Lady may linger divers weeks yet. Will you not send to my Lord?”

“I did send to him,” snapped Sir Godfrey.

“And he cometh?” said Perrote, eagerly for her.

“No.” Sir Godfrey tried to pass her with that monosyllable, but Perrote was not to be thus baffled. She laid a detaining hand upon his arm.

“Sir, I pray you, for our Lord’s love, to tell me what word came back from my Lord Duke?”

Our Lord’s love was not a potent factor in Sir Godfrey’s soul. More powerful were those pleading human eyes—and yet more, the sentiment which swayed the unjust judge—“Because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her.” He turned back.

“Must you needs wit? Then take it: it shall do you little pleasure. My Lord writ that he was busily concerned touching the troubles in Brittany, and ill at ease anentis my Lady Duchess, that is besieged in the Castle of Auray, and he could not spare time to go a visiting; beside which, it might be taken ill of King Edward, whose favour at this present is of high import unto him, sith without his help he is like to lose his duchy. So there ends the matter. No man can look for a prince to risk the loss of his dominions but to pleasure an old dame.”

“One only, Sir, it may be, is like to look for it; and were I my Lord Duke, I should be a little concerned touching another matter—the account that he shall give in to that One at the last day. In the golden balances of Heaven I count a dying mother’s yearning may weigh heavy, and the risk of loss of worldly dominion may be very light. I thank you, Sir. Good-night. May God not say one day to my Lord Duke, ‘Thou fool!’”

Perrote disappeared, but Sir Godfrey Foljambe stood where she had left him. Over his pleasure-chilled, gold-hardened conscience a breath from Heaven was sweeping, such a breath as he had often felt in earlier years, but which very rarely came to him now. Like the soft toll of a passing bell, the terrible words rang in his ears with their accent of hopeless pity—“Thou fool! Thou fool!” Would God, some day, in that upper world, say that to *him*?

The sound was so vivid and close that he actually glanced round to see if any one was there to hear but himself. But he was alone. Only God had heard them, and God forgets nothing—a thought as dreadful to His enemies as it is warmly comforting to His children. Alas, for those to whom the knowledge that God has His eye upon them is only one of terror!

Yet there is one thing that God does forget. He tells us that He forgets the forgiven sin. “As far as the sun-rising is from the sun-setting (Note 1), so far hath He removed our transgressions from us”—“Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” But as it has been well said, “When God pardons sin, He drops it out of His memory into that of the pardoned sinner.” We cannot forget it, because He has done so.

For Sir Godfrey Foljambe the thought of an omniscient eye and ear was full of horror. He turned round, went downstairs, and going to a private closet in his own study, where medicines were kept, drank off one of the largest doses of brandy which he had ever taken at once. It was not a usual thing to do, for brandy was not then looked on as a beverage, but a medicine. But Sir Godfrey wanted something potent, to still those soft chimes which kept saying, “Thou fool!” Anything to get away from God!

Note 1. This is really the Hebrew of Psalm 103, verse 12. The infidel objection, therefore, that since “east” and “west” meet, the verse has no meaning, is untenable as concerns the inspired original. It is only valid as a criticism on the English translation.

Chapter Thirteen.

My Lord Elect of York.

“She only said,—‘The day is dreary,
He will not come,’ she said:
She wept,—‘I am aweary, weary,—
O God, that I were dead!’”

Tennyson.

“What, ho! Gate, ho! Open unto my Lord elect of York!”

The cry startled the porter at Hazelwood Manor from an afternoon nap. He sprang up and hurried out, in utter confusion at his negligence. To keep a priest waiting would have been bad manners enough, and an abbot still worse; but an archbishop was, in the porter’s estimate, a semi-celestial being. True, this Archbishop was not yet consecrated, nor had he received his pallium from Rome, both which considerations detracted from his holiness, and therefore from his importance; but he was the Archbishop of the province, and the shadow of his future dignity was imposing to an insignificant porter. Poor Wilkin went down on his knees in a puddle, as soon as he had got the gate open, to beg the potentate’s pardon and blessing, and only rose from them summarily to collar Colle, who had so little notion of the paramount claims of an archbishop that he received the cavalcade with barks as noisy as he would have bestowed on any worldly pedlar. Nay, so very unmannerly was Colle, that when he was let go, he marched straight to the Archbishop, and after a prolonged sniff at the archiepiscopal boots, presumed so far as to wag his very secular tail, and even to give an uninvited lick to the archiepiscopal glove. The Archbishop, instead of excommunicating Colle, laid his hand gently on the dog’s head and patted him; which so emboldened that audacious quadruped that he actually climbed up the prelate, with more decided wagging than before.

“Nay, my son!” said the Archbishop, gently, to an officious young priest in his suite, who would have dragged the dog away—“grudge me not my welcome. Dogs be honest creatures, and dissemble not. Hast thou never heard the saw, that ‘they be ill folks that dogs and children will not go withal’?”

And with another pat of Colle’s head, the Archbishop dismissed him, and walked into the hall to meet a further welcome from the whole family and household, all upon their knees. Blessing them in the usual priestly manner, he commanded them to rise, and Sir Godfrey then presented his sons and squire, while Lady Foljambe did the same for the young ladies.

“Mistress Margaret Foljambe, my son’s wife, an’ it please your Grace; and Mistress Perrote de Carhaix, my head chamberer. These be my bower-women, Agatha de La Beche and Amphillis Neville.”

“Neville!” echoed the Archbishop, instantly. “Of what Nevilles comest thou, my maid?”

“Please it you, holy Father,” said the confused Amphillis, more frightened still to hear a sharp “your Grace!” whispered from Lady Foljambe; “I know little of my kin, an’ it like your Grace. My father was Walter Neville, and his father a Ralph, but more know I not, under your Grace’s pleasure.”

“How comes it thou wist no more?”

“May it please your Grace, my father dwelt in Hertfordshire, and he wedded under his estate, so that his family cast him off, as I have heard,” said Amphillis, growing every moment more hot and confused, for it was no light ordeal for one in her position to be singled out for conversation by an archbishop, and she sorely feared an after ebullition of Lady Foljambe’s wrath.

“My child!” said the Archbishop with great interest, and very gently, “did thy father wed one Margery Altham, of London, whose father dwelt in the Strand, and was a baker?”

"He did so, under your Grace's pardon," said poor Amphyllis, blushing for the paternal shortcomings; "but, may it please your Grace, he was a master-pastiller, not a baker."

A little smile of amusement at the delicate distinction played about the Archbishop's lips.

"Why, then, Cousin Amphyllis, I think thy cousin may ask thee for a kiss," said he, softly touching the girl's cheek with his lips. "My Lady Foljambe, I am full glad to meet here so near a kinswoman, and I do heartily entreat you that my word may weigh with you to deal well with this my cousin."

Lady Foljambe, with a low reverence, assured his Grace that she had been entirely unaware, like Amphyllis herself, that her bower-woman could claim even remote kindred with so exalted a house and so dignified a person; and that in future she should assume the position proper to her birth. And to her astonishment, Amphyllis was passed by her Ladyship up the table, above Agatha, above even Perrote—nay, above Mistress Margaret—and seated, not by any means to her comfort, next to Lady Foljambe herself. From that day she was no more addressed with the familiar *thou*, but always with the *you*, which denoted equality or respect. When Lady Foljambe styled her Mistress Amphyllis, she endured it with a blush. But when Perrote substituted it for the affectionate "Phyllis" usual on her lips, she was tearfully entreated not to make a change.

The Archbishop was on his way south for the ceremony of consecration, which required a dispensation if performed anywhere outside the Cathedral of Canterbury, unless bestowed by the Pope himself. His visit set Sir Godfrey thinking. Here was a man who might safely be allowed to visit the dying Countess—being, of course, told the need for secrecy—and if he requested it of him, Perrote must cease to worry him after that. No poor priest, nor all the poor priests put together, could be the equivalent of a live Archbishop.

He consulted Lady Foljambe, and found her of the same mind as himself. It would be awkward, she admitted, if the Countess died, to find themselves censured for not having supplied her with spiritual ministrations proper for her rank. Here was a perfect opportunity. It would be a sin to lose it.

It was, indeed, in a different sense to that in which she used the words, a perfect opportunity. The name of Alexander Neville has come down to us as that of the gentlest man of his day, one of the most lovable that ever lived. Beside this quality, which rendered him a peculiarly fit ministrant to the sick and dying, he was among the most prominent Lollards; he had drunk deep into the Scriptures, and, therefore, while not free from superstition—no man then was—he was very much more free than the majority. Charms and incantations, texts tied round the neck, and threads or hairs swallowed in holy water, had little value to the masculine intellect of Alexander Neville. And along with this masculine intellect was a heart of feminine tenderness, which would enable him to enter, so far as it was possible for a celibate priest to enter, into the sad yearnings of the dying mother, whose children did not care to come to her, and held aloof even in the last hour of her weary life. In those times, when worldliness had eaten like a canker into the heart of the Church, almost as much as in our own—when preferment was set higher than truth, and Court favour was held of more worth than faithfulness, one of the most unworldly men living was this elect Archbishop. The rank of his penitent would weigh nothing with him. She would be to him only a passing soul, a wronged woman, a lonely widow, a neglected mother.

After supper, Sir Godfrey drew the Archbishop aside into his private room, and told him, with fervent injunctions to secrecy, the sorrowful tale of his secluded prisoner. As much sternness as was in Archbishop Neville's heart contracted his brows and drew his lips into a frown.

"Does my Lord Duke of Brittany know his mother's condition?"

"Ay, if it please your Grace." Sir Godfrey repeated the substance of the answer already imparted to Perrote.

"Holy saints!" exclaimed the Archbishop. "And my Lady Basset, what saith she?"

"An' it like your Grace, I sent not unto her."

"But wherefore, my son? An' the son will not come, then should the daughter. I pray you, send off a messenger to my Lady Basset at once; and suffer me to see your prisoner. Is she verily nigh death, or may she linger yet a season?"

"Father Jordan reckoneth she may yet abide divers weeks, your Grace; in especial if the spring be mild, as it biddeth fair. She fadeth but full slow."

Sir Godfrey's tone was that of an injured man, who was not properly treated, either by the Countess or Providence, through this very gradual demise of the former. The Archbishop's reply—"Poor lady!" was in accents of unmitigated compassion.

Lady Foljambe was summoned by her husband, and she conducted the prelate to the turret-chamber, where the Countess sat in her chair by the window, and Amphyllis was in attendance. He entered with uplifted hand, and the benediction of "Christ, save all here!"

Amphyllis rose, hastily gathering her work upon one arm. The Countess, who had heard nothing, for she had been sleeping since her bower-maiden returned from supper, looked up with more interest than she usually showed. The entrance of a complete stranger was something very unexpected and unaccountable.

"Christ save you, holy Father! I pray you, pardon me that I arise not, being ill at ease, to entreat your blessing. Well, Avena, what has moved thee to bring a fresh face into this my dungeon, prithee? It should be somewhat of import."

"Madame, this is my Lord's Grace elect of York, who, coming hither on his way southwards, mine husband counted it good for your Grace's soul to shrive you of his Grace's hand. My Lord, if your Grace have need of a crucifix, or of holy

water, both be behind this curtain. Come, Mistress Amphyllis. His Grace will be pleased to rap on the door, when it list him to come forth; and I pray you, abide in your chamber, and hearken for the same."

"I thank thee, Avena," said the Countess, with her curt laugh. "Sooth to say, I wist not my soul was of such worth in thine eyes, and still less in thine husband's. I would my body weighed a little more with the pair of you. So I am to confess my sins, forsooth? That shall be a light matter, methinks; I have but little chance to sin, shut up in this cage. Truly, I should find myself hard put to it to do damage to any of the Ten Commandments, hereaway. A dungeon's all out praisable for keeping folks good—nigh as well as a sick bed. And when man has both together, he should be marvellous innocent. There, go thy ways; I'll send for thee when I lack thee."

Lady Foljambe almost slammed the door behind her, and, locking it, charged Amphyllis to listen carefully for the Archbishop's knock, and to unlock the door the moment she should hear it.

The Archbishop, meanwhile, had seated himself in the only chair in the room corresponding to that of the Countess. A chair was an object of consequence in the eyes of a mediaeval gentleman, for none but persons of high rank might sit on a chair; all others were relegated to a form, styled a bench when it had a back to it. Stools, however, were allowed to all. That certain formalities or styles of magnificence should have been restricted to persons of rank may be reasonable; but it does seem absurd that no others should have been allowed to be comfortable. "The good old times" were decidedly inconvenient for such as had no handles to their names.

"I speak, as I have been told, to the Lady Marguerite, Duchess of Brittany, and mother to my Lord Duke?" inquired the Archbishop.

"And Countess of Montfort," was the answer. "Pray your Grace, give me all my names, for nought else is left me to pleasure me withal—saving a two-three ounces of slea-silk and an ell of gold fringe."

"And what else would you?"

"What else?" The question was asked in passionate tones, and the dark flashing eyes went longingly across the valley to the Alport heights. "I would have my life back again," she said. "I have not had a fair chance. I have done with my life not that I willed, but only that which others gave leave for me to do. Six and twenty years have I been tethered, and fretted, and limited, granted only the semblance of power, the picture of life, and thrust and pulled back whensoever I strained in the least at the leash wherein I was held. No dog has been more penned up and chained than I! And now, for eight years have I been cabined in one chamber, shut up from the very air of heaven whereunto God made all men free—shut up from every face that I knew and loved, saving one of mine ancient waiting-maids—verily, if they would use me worsen than so, they shall be hard put to it, save to thrust me into my coffin and fasten down the lid on me. I want my life back again! I want the bright harvest of my youth, which these slugs and maggots have devoured, which I never had. I want the bloom of my dead happiness which men tare away from me. I want my dead lord, and mine estranged children, and my lost life! Tell me, has God no treasury whence He pays compensation for such wrongs as mine? Must I never see my little child again, the baby lad that clung to me and would not see me weep? My pillow is wet now, and no man careth for it—nay, nor God Himself. I was always true woman; I never wronged human soul, that I know. I paid my dues, and shrived me clean, and lived honestly. Wherefore is all this come upon me?"

"Lady Marguerite, if you lost a penny and gained a gold noble, would you think you were repaid the loss or no?"

"In very deed I should," the sick woman replied, languidly; the fire had spent itself in that outburst, and the embers had little warmth left in them.

"Yet," said the Archbishop, significantly, "you would not have won the lost thing back."

"What matter, so I had its better?"

"We will return to that. But first I have another thing to ask. You say you never wronged man to your knowledge. Have you always paid all your dues to Him that is above men?"

"I never robbed the Church of a penny!"

"There be other debts than pence, my daughter. Have you kept, to the best of your power, all the commandments of God?"

"In very deed I have."

"You never worshipped any other God?"

"I never worshipped neither Jupiter nor Juno, nor Venus, nor Diana, nor Mars, nor Mercury."

"That can I full readily believe. But as there be other debts than money, so there be other gods than Jupiter. Honoured you no man nor thing above God? Cared you alway more for His glory than for the fame of Marguerite of Flanders, or the comfort of Jean de Bretagne?"

"Marry, you come close!" said the Countess, with a laugh. "Fame and ease be not gods, good Father."

"They be not God," was the significant answer. "'Ye are servants to him whom ye obey,' saith the apostle, and man may obey other than his lawful master. Whatsoever you set, or suffer to set himself, in God's place, that is your god. What has been your god, my daughter?"

"I am never a bit worse than my neighbours," said the Countess, leaving that inconvenient question without answer,

and repairing, as thousands do, to that very much broken cistern of equality in transgression.

“You must be better than your neighbours ere God shall suffer you in His holy Heaven. You must be as good as He is, or you shall not win thither. And since man cannot be so, the only refuge for him is to take shelter under the cross of Christ, which wrought righteousness to cover him.”

“Then man may live as he list, and cover him with Christ’s righteousness?” slyly responded the Countess, with that instant recourse to the Antinomianism inherent in fallen man.

“‘If man say he knoweth Him, and keepeth not His commandments, he is a liar,’” quoted the Archbishop in reply. “‘He that saith he abideth in Him, ought to walk as He walked.’ Man cannot abide in Christ, and commit sin, for He hath no sin. You left unanswered my question, Lady: what has been your god?”

“I have paid due worship to God and the Church,” was the rather stubborn answer. “Pass on, I pray you. I worshipped no false god; I took not God’s name in vain no more than other folks; I always heard mass of a Sunday and festival day; I never murdered nor stole; and as to telling false witness, beshrew me if it were false witness to tell Avena Foljambe she is a born fool, the which I have done many a time in the day. Come now, let me off gently, Father. There are scores of worsen women in this world than me.”

“God will not judge you, Lady, for the sins of other women; neither will He let you go free for the goodness of other. There is but One other for whose sake you shall be suffered to go free, and that only if you be one with Him in such wise that your deeds and His be reckoned as one, like as the debts of a wife be reckoned to her husband, and his honours be shared by her. Are you thus one with Jesu Christ our Lord?”

“In good sooth, I know not what you mean. I am in the Church: what more lack I? The Church must see to it that I come safe, so long as I shrive me and keep me clear of mortal sin: and little chance of mortal sin have I, cooped up in this cage.”

“Daughter, the Church is every righteous man that is joined with Christ. If you wist not what I mean, can you be thus joined? Could a woman be wedded to a man, and not know it? Could two knights enter into covenant, to live and die each with other, and be all unsure whether they had so done or no? It were far more impossible than this, that you should be a member of Christ’s body, and not know what it meaneth so to be.”

“But I am in Holy Church!” urged the Countess, uneasily.

“I fear not so, my daughter.”

“Father, you be marvellous different from all other priests that ever spake to me. With all other, I have shrived me and been absolved, and there ended the matter. I had sins to confess, be sure; and they looked I should so have, and no more. But you—would you have me perfect saint, without sin? None but great saints be thus, as I have been taught.”

“Not the greatest of saints, truly. There is no man alive that sinneth not. What is sin?”

“Breaking the commandments, I reckon.”

“Ay, and in especial that first and greatest—‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.’ Daughter, hast thou so loved Him—so that neither ease nor pleasure, neither fame nor life, neither earth nor self, came between your love and Him, was set above Him, and served afore Him? Speak truly, like the true woman you are. I wait your answer.”

It was several moments before the answer came.

“Father, is that sin?”

“My daughter, it is the sin of sins: the sin whence all other sins flow—this estrangement of the heart from God. For if we truly loved God, and perfectly, should we commit sin?—could we so do? Could we desire to worship any other than Him, or to set anything before Him?—could we bear to profane His name, to neglect His commands, to go contrary to His will? Should we then bear ill-will to other men who love Him, and whom He loveth? Should we speak falsely in His ears who is the Truth? Should we suffer pride to defile our souls, knowing that He dwelleth with the lowly in heart? Answer me, Lady Marguerite.”

“Father, you are sore hard. Think you God, that is up in Heaven, taketh note of a white lie or twain, or a few cross words by nows and thens? not to name a mere wish that passeth athwart man’s heart and is gone?”

“God taketh note of sin, daughter. And sin is *sin*—it is rebellion against the King of Heaven. What think you your son would say to a captain of his, which pleaded that he did but surrender one little postern gate to the enemy, and that there were four other strong portals that led into the town, all whereof he had well defended?”

“Why, the enemy might enter as well through the postern as any other. To be in, is to be in, no matter how he find entrance.”

“Truth. And the lightest desire can be sin, as well as the wickedest deed. Verily, if the desire never arose, the deed should be ill-set to follow.”

“Then God is punishing me?” she said, wistfully.

“God is looking for you,” was the quiet answer. “The sheep hath gone astray over moor and morass, and the night is

dark and cold, and it bleateth piteously: and the Shepherd is come out of the warm fold, and is tracking it on the lonely hills, and calling to it. Lady, will the sheep answer His voice? will it bleat again and again, until He find it? or will it refuse to hear, and run further into the morass, and be engulfed and fully lost in the dark waters, or snatched and carried into the wolf's den? God is not punishing you now; He is loving you; He is waiting to see if you will take His way of escape from punishment. But the punishment of your sins must be laid upon some one, and it is for you to choose whether you will bear it yourself, or will lay it upon Him who came down from Heaven that He might bear it for you. It must be either upon you or Him."

The face lighted up suddenly, and the thin weak hands were stretched out.

"If God love me," she said, "let Him give me back my children! He would, if He did. Let them come back to me, and I shall believe it. Without this I cannot. Father, I mean none ill; I would fain think as you say. But my heart is weak, and my life ebbs low, and I cannot bleat back again. O God, for my children!—for only one of them! I would be content with one. If Thou lovest me—if I have sinned, and Thou wouldst spare me, give me back my child! 'Thou madest far from me friend and neighbour'—give me back *one*, O God!"

"Daughter, we may not dictate to our King," said the Archbishop, gently. "Yet I doubt not there be times when He stoops mercifully to weakness and misery, and helps our unbelief. May He grant your petition! And now, I think you lack rest, and have had converse enough. I will see you again ere I depart. *Benedicite!*"

Chapter Fourteen.

Posting a Letter.

"Whose fancy was his only oracle;
Who could buy lands and pleasure at his will,
Yet slighted that which silver could not win."

Rev. Horatius Bonar, D.D.

The Archbishop rapped softly on the door of the chamber, and Amphillis sprang to let him out. She had to let herself in, so he passed her with only a smile and a blessing, and going straight to his own chamber, spent the next hour in fervent prayer. At the end of that time he went down to the hall, and asked for writing materials.

This was a rather large request to make in a mediaeval manor house. Father Jordan was appealed to, as the only person likely to know the whereabouts of such scarce articles.

"Well, of a surety!" exclaimed the old priest, much fluttered by the inquiry. "Methinks I may find the inkhorn,—and there *was* some ink in it,—but as for writing-paper!—and I fear there shall be never a bit of parchment in the house. Wax, moreover—Richard, butler, took the last for his corks. Dear, dear! only to think his Grace should lack matter for writing! Yet, truly, 'tis not unnatural for a prelate. Now, whatever shall man do?"

"Give his Grace a tile and a paint-brush," said careless Matthew.

"Cut a leaf out of a book," suggested illiterate Godfrey.

Father Jordan looked at the last speaker as if he had proposed to cook a child for dinner. Cut a leaf out of a book! Murder, theft, and arson combined, would scarcely have been more horrible in his eyes.

"Holy saints, deliver us!" was his shocked answer.

Norman Hylton came to the rescue.

"I have here a small strip of parchment," said he, "if his Grace were pleased to make use thereof. I had laid it by for a letter to my mother, but his Grace's need is more than mine."

The Archbishop took the offered gift with a smile.

"I thank thee, my son," said he. "In good sooth, at this moment my need is great, seeing death waiteth for no man."

He sat down, and had scarcely remembered the want of ink, when Father Jordan came up, carrying a very dilapidated old inkhorn.

"If your Grace were pleased to essay this, and could serve you withal," suggested he, dubiously; "soothly, there is somewhat black at the bottom."

"And there is alegal in the house, plenty," added Matthew.

The Archbishop looked about for the pen.

"Unlucky mortal that I am!" cried Father Jordan, smiting himself on the forehead. "Never a quill have I, by my troth!"

"Have you a goose? That might mend matters," said Matthew. "Had we but a goose, there should be quills enow."

"*Men culpa, mea culpa!*" cried poor Father Jordan, as though he were at confession, to the excessive amusement of the young men.

Norman, who had run upstairs on finding the pen lacking, now returned with one in his hand.

"Here is a quill, if your Grace be pleased withal. It is but an old one, yet I have no better," he said, modestly.

"It shall full well serve me, my son," was the answer; "and I thank thee for thy courtesy."

For his day the Archbishop was a skilful penman, which does not by any means convey the idea of covering sheet after sheet of paper with rapid writing. The strip of parchment was about fourteen inches by four. He laid it lengthwise before him, and the letters grew slowly on it, in the old black letter hand, which took some time to form. Thus ran his letter:—

"Alexander, by Divine sufferance elect of York, to the Lady Basset of Drayton wisheth peace, health, and the blessing of God Almighty.

"Very dear Lady,—

"Let it please you to know that the bearer hereof hath tidings to deliver of serious and instant import. We pray you full heartily to hear him without any delay, and to give full credence to such matter as he shall impart unto you: which having done, we bid you, as you value our apostolical blessing, to come hither with all speed, and we charge our very dear son, your lord, that he let not nor hinder you in obeying this our mandate. The matter presseth, and will brook no delay: and we affy ourself in you, Lady, as a woman obedient to the Church, that you will observe our bidding. And for so doing this shall be your warrant. Given at Hazelwood Manor, in the county of Derby, this Wednesday after Candlemas."

The Archbishop laid down his pen, folded his letter, and asked for silk to tie it. Matthew Foljambe ran off, returning in a moment with a roll of blue silk braid, wherewith the letter was tied up. Then wax was needed.

"*Ha, chétife!*" said Father Jordan. "The saints forgive me my sins! Never a bit of wax had I lacked for many a month, and I gave the last to Richard, butler."

"Hath he used it all?" asked Matthew.

"Be sure he so did. He should have some left only if none needed it," responded his brother.

A search was instituted. The butler regretfully admitted that all the wax supplied, to him was fastening down corks upon bottles of Alicant and Osey. Sir Godfrey had none; he had sent for some, but had not yet received it. Everybody was rather ashamed; for wax was a very necessary article in a mediaeval household, and to run short of it was a small disgrace. In this emergency Matthew, usually the person of resources, came to the rescue.

"Hie thee to the cellar, Dick, and bring me up a two-three bottles of thy meanest wine," said he. "We'll melt it off the corks."

By this ingenious means, sufficient wax was procured to take the impress of the Archbishop's official seal, without which the letter would bear no authentication, and the recipient could not be blamed if she refused obedience. It was then addressed—"To the hands of our very dear Lady, the Lady Joan Basset, at Drayton Manor, in the county of Stafford, be these delivered with speed. Haste, haste, for thy life, haste!"

All nobles and dignitaries of the Church in 1374 used the "we" now exclusively regal.

Having finished his preparations, the Archbishop despatched young Godfrey to ask his father for a private interview. Sir Godfrey at once returned to the hall, and ceremoniously handed the Archbishop into his own room.

All large houses, in those days, contained a hall, which was the general meeting-place of the inhabitants, and where the family, servants, and guests, all took their meals together. This usually ran two storeys high; and into it opened from the lower storey the offices and guard-chambers, and from the upper, into a gallery running round it, the private apartments of the family, a spiral stair frequently winding down in the corner. The rooms next the hall were private sitting-rooms, leading to the bedchambers beyond; and where still greater secrecy was desired, passages led out towards separate towers. Every bedroom had its adjoining sitting-room. Of course in small houses such elaborate arrangements as these were not found, and there were no sitting-rooms except the hall itself; while labourers were content with a two-roomed house, the lower half serving as parlour and kitchen, the upper as the family bedchamber.

Young Godfrey carried a chair to his father's room. An Archbishop could not sit on a form, and there were only three chairs in the house, two of which were appropriated to the Countess. The prelate took his seat, and laid down his letter on a high stool before Sir Godfrey.

"Fair Sir, may I entreat you of your courtesy, to send this letter with all good speed to my Lady Basset of Drayton, unto Staffordshire?"

"Is it needful, holy Father?"

"It is in sooth needful," replied the Archbishop, in rather peremptory tones, for he plainly saw that Sir Godfrey would not do this part of his duty until he could no longer help it.

"It shall put her Ladyship to great charges," objected the knight.

"The which, if she defray unwillingly, then is she no Christian woman."

"And be a journey mighty displeasent, at this winter season."

"My answer thereto is as to the last."

"And it shall blurt out the King's privy matters."

"In no wise. I have not writ thereof a word in this letter, but have only prayed her Ladyship to give heed unto that which the bearer thereof shall make known to her privily."

"Then who is to bear the same?"

"I refer me thereon, fair Sir, to your good judgment. Might one of your own sons be trusted herewith?"

Sir Godfrey looked dubious. "Godfrey should turn aside to see an horse, or to tilt at any jousting that lay in his path; and Matthew, I cast no doubt, should lose your Grace's letter in a snowdrift."

"Then have you brought them up but ill," said the Archbishop. "But what hindereth that you go withal yourself?"

"I, holy Father! I am an old man, and infirm, an' it like your Grace."

"Ay, you were full infirm when the tilting was at Leicester," replied the Archbishop, ironically. "My son, I enjoin thee, as thine Archbishop, that thou send this letter. Go, or send a trusty messenger, as it liketh thee best; and if thou have no such, then shall my secretary, Father Denny, carry the same, for he is full meet therefor; but go it must."

Poor Sir Godfrey was thus brought to the end of all his subterfuges. He could only say ruefully that his eldest son should bear the letter. The Archbishop thereupon took care to inform that young gentleman that if his missive should be either lost or delayed, its bearer would have to reckon with the Church, and might not find the account quite convenient to pay.

Godfrey was ready enough to go. Life at Hazelwood was not so exciting that a journey, on whatever errand, would not come as a very welcome interlude. He set forth that evening, and as the journey was barely forty miles, he could not in reason take longer over it than three days at the utmost. Sir Godfrey, however, as well as the Archbishop, had confided his private views to his son. He charged him to see Lord Basset first, and to indoctrinate him with the idea that it was most desirable Lady Basset should not receive the prelate's message. Could he find means to prevent it?

Lord Basset was a man of a type not uncommon in any time, and particularly rife at the present day. He lived to amuse himself. Of such things as work and duty he simply had no idea. In his eyes work was for the labouring class, and duty concerned the clergy; neither of them applied at all to him. He was, therefore, of about as much value to the world as one of the roses in his garden; and if he would be more missed, it was because his temper did not at all times emulate the sweetness of that flower, and its absence would be felt as a relief. This very useful and worthy gentleman was languidly fitting on the jesses of a hawk, when young Godfrey was introduced into the hall. Lady Basset was not present, and Godfrey seized the opportunity to initiate her husband into the part he was to play. He found to his annoyance that Lord Basset hesitated to perform the task assigned to him. Had the letter come from an insignificant layman, he would have posted it into the fire without more ado; but Lord Basset, who was aware of sundry habits of his own that he was not able to flatter himself were the fashion in Heaven, could not afford to quarrel with the Church, which, in his belief, held the keys of that eligible locality.

"Nay, verily!" said he. "I cannot thwart the delivering of his Grace's letter."

"Then will my Lady go to Hazelwood, and the whole matter shall be blazed abroad. It is sure to creep forth at some corner."

"As like as not. Well, I would not so much care—should it serve you if I gave her strict forbiddance for to go?"

"Would she obey?"

Lord Basset laughed. "That's as may be. She's commonly an easy mare to drive, but there be times when she takes the bit betwixt her teeth, and bolts down the contrary road. You can only try her."

"Then under your leave, may I deliver the letter to her?"

"Here, De Sucherche!" said Lord Basset, raising his voice. "Bid Emeriarde lead this gentleman to thy Lady; he hath a privy word to deliver unto her."

Emeriarde made her appearance in the guise of a highly respectable, middle-aged upper servant, and led Godfrey up the staircase from the hall to Lady Basset's ante-chamber, where, leaving him for a moment, while she announced a visitor to her mistress, she returned and conducted him into the presence of the Princess of Bretagne.

He saw a woman of thirty-six years of age, tall and somewhat stately, only moderately good-looking, and with an expression of intense weariness and listlessness in her dark eyes. The face was a true index to the feelings, for few lonelier women have ever shut their sorrows in their hearts than the Princess Jeanne of Bretagne. She had no child; and her husband followed the usual rule of people who spend life in amusing themselves, and who are apt to be far from amusing to their own families. His interest, his attractions, and his powers of entertainment were kept for the world outside. When his wife saw him, he was generally either vexed, and consequently irritable, or tired and somewhat sulky. All the sufferings of reaction which fell to him were visited on her. She was naturally a woman of strong but silent character; a woman who locked her feelings, her sufferings, and her thoughts in her own breast, and having found no sympathy where she ought to have found it, refrained from seeking it elsewhere.

Lord Basset would have been astonished had he been accused of ill-using his wife. He never lifted his hand against her, nor even found fault with her before company. He simply let her feel as if her life were not worth living, and

there was not a soul on earth who cared to make it so. If, only now and then, he would have given her half an hour of that brilliance with which he entertained his guests! if he would occasionally have shown her that he cared whether she was tired, that it made any difference to his happiness whether she was happy! She was a woman with intense capacity for loving, but there was no fuel for the fire, and it was dying out for sheer want of material. Women of lighter character might have directed their affections elsewhere; women of more versatile temperament might have found other interests for themselves; she did neither. Though strong, her intellect was neither quick nor of great range; it was deep rather than wide in its extent. It must be remembered, also, that a multitude of interests which are open to a woman in the present day, were quite unknown to her. The whole world of literature and science was an unknown thing; and art was only accessible in the two forms of fancy work and illumination, for neither of which had she capacity or taste. She could sew, cook, and act as a doctor when required, which was not often; and there the list of her accomplishments ended. There was more in her, but nobody cared to draw it out, and herself least of all.

Lady Basset bowed gravely in reply to Godfrey's courtesy, broke the seal of the letter, and gazed upon the cabalistic characters therein written. Had they been Chinese, she would have learned as much from them as she did. She handed back the letter with a request that he would read it to her, if he possessed the art of reading; if not, she would send for Father Collard.

For a moment, but no more, the temptation visited Godfrey to read the letter as something which it was not. He dismissed it, not from any conscientious motive, but simply from the doubt whether he could keep up the delusion.

"Good!" said Lady Basset, when the letter had been read to her; "and now what is that you are to tell me?"

"Dame, suffer me first to say that it is of the gravest moment that there be no eavesdroppers about, and that your Ladyship be pleased to keep strait silence thereupon. Otherwise, I dare not utter that wherewith his Grace's letter hath ado."

"There be no ears at hand save my bower-woman's, and I will answer for her as for myself. I can keep silence when need is. Speak on."

"Then, Lady, I give you to know that the Duchess' Grace, your mother, is now in ward under keeping of my father, at Hazelwood Manor, and—"

Lady Basset had risen to her feet, with a strange glow in her eyes.

"My mother!" she said.

"Your Lady and mother, Dame; and she—"

"My mother!" she said, again. "My mother! I thought my mother was dead and buried, years and years ago!"

"Verily, no, Lady; and my Lord Archbishop's Grace doth most earnestly desire your Ladyship to pay her visit, she being now near death, and your Lord and brother the Duke denying to come unto her."

The glow deepened in the dark eyes.

"My Lord my brother refused to go to my mother?"

"He did so, Dame."

"And she is near death?"

"Very near, I am told, Lady."

"And he wist it?"

"He wist it."

Lady Basset seemed for a moment to have forgotten everything but the one.

"Lead on," she said. "I will go to her—poor Mother! I can scarce remember her; I was so young when taken from her. But I think she loved me once. I will go, though no other soul on earth keep me company."

"Lady," said Godfrey, saying the exact reverse of truth, "I do right heartily trust your Lord shall not let you therein."

"What matter?" she said. "If the Devil and all his angels stood in the way, I would go to my dying mother."

She left the room for a minute, and to Godfrey's dismay came back attired for her journey, as if she meant to set out there and then.

"But, Lady!" he expostulated.

"You need not tarry for me," she said, calmly. "I can find the way, and I have sent word to bid mine horses."

This was unendurable. Godfrey, in his dismay, left the room with only a courtesy, and sought Lord Basset in the hall.

"Ah! she's taken the bit betwixt her teeth," said he. "I warrant you'd best leave her be; she'll go now, if it be on a witch's broom. I'll forbid it, an' you will, but I do you to wit I might as well entreat yon tree not to wave in the wind. When she doth take the bit thus, she's—"

An emphatic shake of Lord Basset's head finished the sentence. He rose as if it were more trouble than it was reasonable to impose, walked into his wife's room, and asked her where she was going that winter day.

"You are scarce wont to inquire into my comings and goings," she said, coldly. "But if it do your Lordship ease to wit the same, I am going to Hazelwood Manor, whence yonder young gentleman is now come."

"How if I forbid it?"

"My Lord, I am sent for to my dying mother. Your Lordship is a gentleman, I believe, and therefore not like to forbid me. But if you so did, yea, twenty times twice told, I should answer you as now I do. Seven years have I done your bidding, and when I return I will do it yet again. But not now. Neither you, nor Satan himself, should stay me this one time."

"Your Ladyship losengeth," (flatters) was the careless answer. "Fare you well. I'll not hinder you. As for Satan, though it pleaseth you to count me in with him, I'll be no surety for his doings. Master Foljambe, go you after this crack-brained dame of mine, or tarry you here with me and drink a cup of Malvoisie wine?"

Godfrey would very much have preferred to remain with Lord Basset; but a wholesome fear of his father and the Archbishop together restrained him from doing so. He was exceedingly vexed to be made to continue his journey thus without intermission; but Lady Basset was already on a pillion behind her squire, and Emeriarde on another behind the groom, a few garments having been hastily squeezed into a saddle-bag carried by the latter. This summary way of doing things was almost unheard of in the fourteenth century; and Godfrey entertained a private opinion that "crack-brained" was a truthful epithet.

"Needs must," said he; "wherefore I pray your Lordship mercy. Her Ladyship shall scanty make good road to Hazelwood without I go withal. But—*ha, chétife!*"

Lord Basset slightly laughed, kissed his hand to his wife, lifted his hat to Godfrey with a shrug of his shoulders, and walked back into Drayton Manor House.

Chapter Fifteen.

Too Little.

"God's very kindest answers to our prayers
Come often in denials or delays."

S.W. Partridge.

Lord Basset turned back into his house with a sensation akin to relief. Not that he allowed the thought of his wife's unhappiness to deter him from any course on which he had set his heart, but that he felt the pressure of her atmosphere, and could not enjoy his transgressions with the full *abandon* which he would have liked. Her stately, cold, unbending reserve was like a constant chill and blight. How much more happy they might have been if they had chosen! The world held many a worse man than Lord Basset; he was rather idle and careless than wicked, though idleness and carelessness are very often the seed of wickedness, when left to go to flower. If she would only have dropped that haughty coldness, he thought, he could have felt interest in her, and have taken some pleasure in her society; while her conviction was that if he would only have shown some interest, she could have loved him and returned it. Would both have done it together, the result might have been attained.

Mr Godfrey Foljambe was meditating, not on this, but on his own personal wrongs, as he led the little cavalcade in an easterly direction. First, he had been deprived of that glass of Malvoisie—which would probably have been plural rather than singular—and of a conversation with Lord Basset, which might have resulted in something of interest: and life was exceedingly devoid of interest, thought Mr Godfrey, in a pessimistic spirit. He had not discovered that, to a great extent, life is to every man what he chooses to make it; that he who keeps his eyes fixed on street mud need not expect to discover pearls, while he who attentively scans the heavens is not at all unlikely to see stars. Let a man set himself diligently to hunt for either his misfortunes or his mercies, and he will find plenty of the article in request. Misfortunes were the present object of Mr Godfrey's search, and he had no difficulty in discovering them. He was disgusted with the folly of Lady Basset in thus setting off at once, and making him set off, without so much as an hour's rest. It was just like a woman! Women never had a scrap of patience. This pleasing illusion that all patience was masculine was kept up in popular literature just so long as men were the exclusive authors; when women began to write, otherwise than on kingly sufferance of the nobler half of creation, it was seen that the feminine view of that and similar subjects was not quite so restricted. Last and worst to young Godfrey was the expectation of his father's displeasure. Sir Godfrey's anger was no passing cloud, as his son well knew. To be thought to have failed in his mission—as assuredly he would be—by his own fault, would result in considerable immediate discomfort, and might even damage his worldly prospects in future. He would gladly have prolonged the journey; for his instinct always led him to put off the evil day rather than to face it and put it behind him—which last is usually the wiser course; but Lady Basset would brook no delay, and on the afternoon of the second day after leaving Drayton they rode up to Hazelwood Manor.

Godfrey hastily despatched the porter's lad to inform his mother of Lady Basset's arrival; and Lady Foljambe met her on the steps of the hall. The latter was scandalised to find that the former saw no need for secrecy, or at any rate had no intention of preserving it.

"Dame," said Lady Foljambe, "I am honoured by your Ladyship's visit. Pray you, suffer me to serve you with hypocras and spice in your privy chamber."

This was intended as a gentle hint to the visitor that secrets were not to be talked in the hall; but the hint was not accepted.

"How fares my Lady and mother?" was the response.

"Dame, much worse than when my son departed," said Lady Foljambe, in a fluttered manner.

"Then I pray you to break my coming, and lead me to her forthwith," said Lady Basset, in her style of stately calm.

A curtain was drawn aside, and Perrote came forward.

"Damoiselle Jeanne!" she said, greeting Lady Basset by the old youthful title unheard for years. "My darling, mine own dear child!"

A smile, not at all usual there, quivered for a moment on the calm fixed lips.

"Is this mine ancient nurse, Perrote de Carhaix?" she said. "I think I know her face."

The smile was gone in a moment, as she repeated her wish to be taken immediately to the Countess.

Lady Foljambe felt she had no choice. She led the way to the chamber of the royal prisoner, requesting Lady Basset to wait for a moment at the door.

The Countess sat no longer in her cushioned chair by the window. She was now confined to her bed, where she lay restlessly, moaning at intervals, but always on one theme. "My children! my lost children! Will not God give me back *one*?"

Lady Foljambe signed to Perrote—she scarcely knew why—to break the news to the suffering mother.

"Lady, the Lord hath heard your moaning, and hath seen your tears," said Perrote, kneeling by the bed. "He hath given you back—"

"My son?"

The cry was a pitiful one. Then, as ever, the boy was the dearest to his mother's heart.

"Very dear Lady, no. Your daughter."

It was painful to see how the sudden gleam died out of the weary eyes.

"Ah, well!" she said, after an instant's pause. "Well! I asked but for one, and when man doth that, he commonly gets the lesser of the twain. Well! I shall be glad to see my Jeanne. Let her come in."

Lady Basset came forward and bent over the dying woman.

"Dame!" she said.

"Come, now!" was the answer. "There be folks enough call me Dame. Only two in all this world can call me Mother."

"Mother!" was the response, in a tremulous voice. And then the icy stateliness broke up, and passionate sobs broke in, mingled with the sounds of "O Mother! Mother!"

"That's good, little lass," said the Countess. "It's good to hear that, but once, *ma fillette*. But wherefore tarrieth thy brother away? It must be King Edward that will not suffer him to come."

It was piteous to hear her cling thus to the old illusion. All the time of her imprisonment, though now and then in a fit of anger she could hurl bitter names at her son, yet, when calm, she had usually maintained that he was kept away from her, and refused to be convinced that his absence was of his own free will. The longer the illusion lasted, the more stubbornly she upheld it.

"'Tis not always the best-loved that loveth back the best," said Perrote, gently, "without man's best love be, as it should be, fixed on God. And 'tis common for fathers and mothers to love better than they be loved; the which is more than all other true of the Father in Heaven."

"Thou mayest keep thy sermons, old woman, till mass is sung," said the Countess, in her cynical style. "Ah me! My Jean would come to the old, white-haired mother that risked her life for his—he would come if he could. He must know how my soul hungereth for the sight of his face. I want nothing else. Heaven would be Purgatory to me without him."

"Ah, my dear Lady!" tenderly replied Perrote. "If only I might hear you say that of the Lord that laid down His life for you!"

"I am not a nun," was the answer; "and I shall not say that which I feel not."

"God forbid you should, Lady! But I pray Him to grant you so to feel."

"I tell thee, I am not a nun," said the Countess, rather pettishly.

Her idea was that real holiness was impossible out of the cloister, and that to love God was an entirely different type

of feeling from the affection she had for her human friends. This was the usual sentiment in the Middle Ages. But Perrote had been taught of God, and while her educational prejudices acted like coloured or smoked glass, and dimmed the purity of the heavenly light, they were unable to hide it altogether.

"Very dear Lady," she said, "God loveth sinners; and He must then love other than nuns. Shall they not love Him back, though they be not in cloister?"

"Thou hadst better win in cloister thyself, when thou art rid of me," was the answer, in a tone which was a mixture of languor and sarcasm. "Thou art scarce fit to tarry without, old woman."

"I will do that which God shall show me," said Perrote, calmly. "Dame, were it not well your Grace should essay to sleep?"

"Nay, not so. I have my Jeanne to look at, that I have not seen for five-and-twenty years. I shall sleep fast enough anon. Daughter, art thou a happy woman, or no?"

Lady Basset answered by a shake of the head. "Why, what aileth thee? Is it thy baron, or thy childre?"

"I have no child, Mother."

The Countess heard the regretful yearning of the tone.

"Thank the saints," she said. "Thou wert better. Soothly, to increase objects for love is to increase sorrow. If thou have no childre, they'll never be torn from thee, nor they will never break thine heart by ill behaving.



And most folks behave ill in this world. *Ha, chétife!* 'tis a weary, dreary place, this world, as ever a poor woman was in. Hast thou a good man to thy baron, child?"

"He might be worseser," said Lady Basset, icily.

"That's true of an handful of folks," said the Countess. "And I reckon he might be better, eh? That's true of most. Good lack, I marvel wherefore we all were made. Was it by reason God loved or hated us? Say, my Predicant Friaress."

"Very dear Lady, the wise man saith, 'God made a man rightful, and he meddled himself with questions without, number.' (Ecclesiastes eight, verse 29.) And Saint Paul saith that 'God commendeth His charity in us, for when we were sinners, Christ was dead for us.' (Romans five, verse 8.) Moreover, Saint John—"

"Hold! There be two Scriptures. Where is the sermon?"

"The Scriptures, Lady, preach a better sermon than I can."

"That's but a short one. Man's ill, and God is good; behold all thine homily. That man is ill, I lack no preaching friar to tell me. As to God being good, the Church saith so, and there I rest. Mary, Mother! if He were good, He would bring my Jean back to me."

"Very dear Lady, God is wiser than men, and He seeth the end from the beginning."

"Have done, Perrotine! I tell thee, if God be good, He will bring my Jean to me. There I abide. I'll say it, if He do. I would love any man that wrought that: and if He will work it, I will love Him—and not otherwise. Hold! I desire no

more talk.”

The Countess turned her face to the wall, and Perrote retired, with tears in her eyes.

“Lord, Thou art wise!” she said in her heart; “wiser than I, than she, than all men. But never yet have I known her to depart from such a word as that. Oh, if it be possible,—if it be possible!—Thou who camest down from Heaven to earth, come down once more to the weak and stubborn soul of this dying woman, and grant her that which she requests, if so she may be won to love thee! Father, the time is very short, and her soul is very dark. O fair Father, Jesu Christ, lose not this soul for which Thou hast died!”

Perrote’s next move was to await Lady Basset’s departure from her mother’s chamber, and to ask her to bestow a few minutes’ private talk on her old nurse. The Princess complied readily, and came into the opposite chamber where Amphyllis sat sewing.

“Damoiselle Jeanne,” said Perrote, using the royal title of Lady Basset’s unmarried days; “may I pray you tell me if you have of late seen the Lord Duke your brother?”

“Ay, within a year,” said Lady Basset, listlessly.

“Would it please you to say if King Edward letteth his coming?”

“I think not so.”

“Would he come, if he were asked yet again, and knew that a few weeks—maybe days—would end his mother’s life?”

“I doubt it, Perrotine.”

“Wherefore? He can love well where he list.”

“Ay, where he list. But I misdoubt if ever he loved her—at the least, sithence she let him from wedding the Damoiselle de Ponteallen.”

“Then he loved the Damoiselle very dearly?”

“For a month—ay.”

“But wherefore, when the matter was by—”

Lady Basset answered with a bitter little laugh, which reminded Perrote of her mother’s.

“Because he loved Jean de Montfort, and she thwarted *him*, not the Damoiselle. He loved Alix de Ponteallen passionately, and passion dies; ’tis its nature. It is not passionately, but undyingly, that he loves himself. Men do; ’tis their nature.”

Perrote shrewdly guessed that the remark had especial reference to one man, and that not the Duke of Bretagne.

“Ah, that is the nature of all sinners,” she said, “and therefore of all men and women also. Dame, will you hearken to your old nurse, and grant her one boon?”

“That will I, Perrotine, if it be in my power. I grant not so many boons, neither can I, that I should grudge one to mine old nurse. What wouldst?”

“Dame, I pray you write a letter to my Lord Duke, the pitifullest you may pen, and send one of your men therewith, to pray him, as he loveth you, or her, or God, that he will come and look on her ere she die. Tell him his old nurse full lovingly entreateth him, and if he will so do, I will take veil when my Lady is gone hence, and spend four nights in the week in prayer for his welfare. Say I will be his bedes-woman for ever, in any convent he shall name. Say anything that will bring him!”

“I passed thee my word, and I will keep it,” said Lady Basset, as she rose. “But if I know him, what I should say certainly to bring him would be that Sir Oliver de Clisson lay here in dungeon, and that if he would come he should see his head strake off in yonder court. He is a fair lover, my brother; but he is a far better hater.”

Perrote sighed.

“Amphyllis!” came faintly up the stairs and along the gallery. “Am-phil-lis!”

“Go, child,” said Perrote, replying to a look from Amphyllis. “’Tis Agatha calling thee. What would the foolish maid?”

Amphyllis left her work upon the bench and ran down.

“Well, it is merry matter to catch hold of thee!” said Agatha, who was waiting at the foot of the stairs, and who never could recollect, unless Lady Foljambe were present, that Amphyllis was to be addressed with more reverence than before. “Here be friends of thine come to visit thee.”

“Friends!—of mine!” exclaimed Amphyllis, in surprise. “Why, I haven’t any friends.”

“Well, enemies, then,” said Agatha, with a giggle. “Come, go into hall and see who they be, and then tell me.”

Amphyllis obeyed, and to her still greater surprise, found herself in the presence of Mr Altham and Regina.

"Ah, here she cometh!" was her uncle's greeting. "Well, my maid, I am fain to see thee so well-looking, I warrant thee. Can'st love a new aunt, thinkest?"

"That am I secure," replied Amphyllis, smiling, and kissing the goldsmith's daughter.

"And an old uncle belike?" pursued Mr Altham, kissing her in his turn.

"Assuredly, dear Uncle; but I pray, how came you hither?"

"Dat shall I tell you," said Mrs Altham, "for oderwise you shall not know what good uncle you have. He promise to take me to mine own home in Dutchland, to see my greatmoder and mine aunts; and when we nigh ready were, he say, 'See you, now! shall we not go round by Derbyshire, to see Amphyllis, and sail from Hull?' So we come round all dis way; he miss you so, and want to make him sure you be well and kindly used. See you?"

"How kind and good are you both!" said Amphyllis, gratefully. "Pray you, good Aunt Regina, came Ricarda home safe?"

"She came safe, and she had but de scold well, tanks to your message; if not, she had de beat, beat, I ensure you, and she deserve dat full well. She was bad girl, bad. Said I not to you, De mans is bad, and de womans is badder? It is true."

"She's a weary hussy!" said Mr Altham; "but she's been a sight better maid sithence she came back. She saith 'tis thy doing, Phyllis."

"Mine?" exclaimed Amphyllis.

"She saith so. I wis not how. And art happy here, my maid? Doth thy dame entreat thee well? and be thy fellows pleasant company? Because if no, there's room for thee in the patty-shop, I can tell thee. Saundrina's wed, and Ricarda looks to be, and my wife and I should be full fain to have thee back for our daughter. Howbeit, if thou art here welsome and comfortable, we will not carry thee off against thy will. What sayest?"

"Truly, dear Uncle, I am here full welsome, saving some small matters of little moment; and under your good pleasure, I would fain not go hence so long as one liveth that is now sore sick in this house, and nigh to death. Afterward, if it like you to dispose of me otherwise, I am alway at your bidding."

"Well said. But what should best like thee?"

Amphyllis felt the question no easy one. She would not wish to leave Perrote; but if Perrote took the veil, that obstacle would be removed; and even if she did not, Amphyllis had no certain chance of accompanying her wherever she might go, which would not improbably be to Drayton Manor. To leave the rest of her present companions would be no hardship at all, except—

Amphyllis's heart said "except," and her conscience turned away and declined to pursue that road. Norman Hylton had shown no preference for her beyond others, so far as she knew, and her maidenly instinct warned her that even her thoughts had better be kept away from him. Before she answered, a shadow fell between her and the light; and Amphyllis looked up into the kindly face of Archbishop Neville.

The Archbishop had delayed his further journey for the sake of the dying Countess, whom he wished to see again, especially if his influence could induce her son to come to her. He now addressed himself to Mr Altham.

"Master Altham, as I guess?" he asked, pleasantly.

Mr Altham rose, as in duty bound, in honour to a priest, and a priest who, as he dimly discerned by his canonicals, was not altogether a common one.

"He, and your humble servant, holy Father."

"You be uncle, I count, of my cousin Amphyllis here?"

"Sir! Amphyllis your cousin!"

"Amphyllis is my cousin," was the quiet answer; "and I am the Archbishop of York."

To say that Mr Altham was struck dumb with amazement would be no figure of speech. He stared from the Archbishop to Amphyllis, and back again, as if his astonishment had fairly paralysed his powers, that of sight only excepted; and had not Regina roused him from his condition of helplessness by an exclamation of "*Ach, heilige, Maria!*" there is no saying how long he might have stood so doing.

"Ay, Uncle," said Amphyllis, with a smile; "this is my Lord elect of York, and he is pleased to say that my father was his kinsman."

"And if it serve you, Master Altham," added the Archbishop, "I would fain have a privy word with you touching this my cousin."

Mr Altham's reply was two-fold. "Saints worshipped might they be!" was meant in answer to Amphyllis. Then, to the Archbishop, he hastily continued, "Sir, holy Father, your Grace's most humble servant! I hold myself at your Grace's bidding, whensoever it shall please your Grace."

"That is well," said the Archbishop, smiling. "We will have some talk this evening, if it serve you."

Chapter Sixteen.

The Request Granted.

"It is not love that steals the heart from love: 'Tis the hard world, and its perplexing cares; Its petrifying selfishness, its pride, its low ambition, and its paltry aims."

Caroline Bowles.

Lady Basset fulfilled her promise of writing to her brother, and sent her own squire with the letter. It was uncertain where the Duke might be, and consequently how long the journey might take. The messenger was instructed to seek him first at Windsor, and to be guided in his further movements by what he might hear there. No time was lost, for the squire set out on his journey that very evening.

About the time of his departure, the Archbishop and Mr Altham held their little conference. Regina was at work in the window-seat, by her husband's contrivance. Theoretically, he took the popular view of the condign inferiority of the female intellect; while practically he held his Regina in the highest reverence, and never thought of committing himself on any important subject without first ascertaining her opinion. And the goldsmith's daughter deserved his esteem; for she possessed a warm heart and a large reserve of quiet good sense. They were both highly delighted to see that the Archbishop seemed inclined to show kindness to the young cousin whose relationship he, at least, was not too proud to acknowledge.

"Nor should he not be," said Regina, whose tiny bobbins were flying about on her lace-cushion, too fast for the eye to follow. "Did we not come, all, from von man and von woman? I tink Adam was not too proud to speak to Abel: and if Cain would not talk, he was bad man, and we should not take de pattern after de bad mans. Ach! if dere was none but good mans and good womans, what better of a world it should be!"

Regina had too much tact and sense of propriety to thrust herself into the conversation between the Archbishop and her husband; she sat silently listening and working, and the sprigs of lace flowers grew rapidly under her skilful fingers.

"I would fain speak with you, Mr Altham," said the Archbishop, "touching the disposing of my cousin Amphillis. I cannot but feel that the maid hath been somewhat wronged by her father's kin; and though, thanks be to God, I never did her nor him any hurt, yet, being of his kindred, I would desire you to suffer me a little to repair this wrong. She seemeth me a good maid and a worthy, and well bred in courtesy; wherefore, if my word might help her to secure a better settlement, I would not it were lacking. I pray you, therefore, to count me as your friend and hers, and tell me how you think to order her life. She hath, I take it, none other guardian than you?"

"My Lord, your Grace doth us great honour. 'Tis true, the maid hath none other guardian than I; and her mother was mine only sister, and I held her dear: and seeing she had none other to give an helping hand, I was in the mind to portion her with mine own daughters. I gave to the two, and shall give to the other, five pound apiece to their marriages, and likewise their wedding gear; and seeing she is a good, decent maid, and a credit to her kin, I would do the same by Amphillis."

"Therein do you act full nobly, Master Altham," said the Archbishop; for the sum named was a very handsome one for a girl in Mr Altham's station of life at that time. Only a tradesman very well-to-do could have afforded to portion his daughter so highly, with an amount equivalent in the present day to about 80 pounds. "Go to, then: will you suffer me that I endow my young kinswoman with the like sum, and likewise find her in an horse for her riding?"

In days when public conveyances of all kinds were totally unknown, a horse was almost a necessity, and only the very poor were without one at least. The price of such a horse as would be considered fit for Amphillis was about thirty shillings or two pounds. The offer of the Archbishop therefore struck Mr Altham as a most generous one, and his thanks were profuse accordingly.

"Have you taken any thought for her disposal?" inquired the prelate.

"No, in very deed," replied the worthy patty-maker, with some hesitation. "There be nigh me divers youths of good conditions, that I dare be bound should be fain to wed with a maid of good lineage and decent 'haviour, with a pretty penny in her pocket; but I never brake my mind to any, and—" here Mr Altham glanced at Regina, and received an optic telegram across the bobbins—"if your Grace were pleased to think of any that you had a favour for, I would not in no wise stand in the way thereto."

"Methinks," said the Archbishop, "under your leave, worthy Master Altham, my cousin might look somewhat higher. Truly, I mean not to cast scorn on any good and honest man; we be all sons of Adam: but—in a word, to speak out straightway, I have one in my mind that I reckon should not make an ill husband for Amphillis, and this is Sir Godfrey Foljambe his squire, Master Norman Hylton, that is of birth even with her, and I believe a full worthy young man, and well bred. If it may suit with your reckoning, what say you to breaking your mind to him thereupon, and seeing if he be inclined to entertain the same?"

"My Lord," replied Master Altham, after exchanging another telegram with his Mentor, "in good sooth, both Phyllis and I are much beholden unto you, and I will full gladly so do."

"Yet, Master Altham, I would desire you to be satisfied touching this young man's conditions, ere you do fix your mind upon him. I hear well of him from all that do know him—indeed, I am myself acquaint with some of his near kin—with

twain of his uncles and a brother—yet I would fain have you satisfied therewith no less than myself.”

Optic telegrams would not answer this time, for Regina’s eyes were not lifted from the lace-cushion. Mr Altham hesitated a moment, murmured a few words of thanks, and at last came out openly with—“What sayest, sweetheart?”

“He will do,” was Regina’s answer. “He is good man. He have clear eyes, he look you in de face; he pray in de chapel, and not run his eyes all round; he laugh and chatter-patter not wid other damsels; he is sad, courteous, and gent. He will do, husband.”

Little idea had Amphyllis that her future was being thus settled for her downstairs, as she sat in the Countess’s chamber, tending her sick lady. The Countess was slowly sinking. Father Jordan thought she might live perhaps for another month; it was only a question of time. Perrote said that the soul was keeping the body alive. The old fiery flashes of passion were never seen now; she showed a little occasional irritability and petulance, but usually her mood was one of listless, languid weariness, from which nothing aroused her, and in which nothing interested her. The one burning, crying desire of her heart was to see her son. She did not know of the fruitless application which had been already made to him; still less of the renewed appeal, to which no answer could be returned for some days at least. Her belief was that Sir Godfrey would not permit any message to be sent, and that if he did, King Edward would not allow the Duke, who was his vassal, to obey it. To the least hint that the Duke might or could himself decline, she refused to listen so decidedly that no one had the heart to repeat it. More plaintive, day by day, grew the dying mother’s yearning moans for her best-loved child. In vain Perrote tried to assure her that human love was inadequate to satisfy the cravings of her immortal soul; that God had made her for Himself, and that only when it reached and touched Him could the spirit which He had given find rest.

“I cannot hearken to thee, old woman,” said the dying prisoner. “My whole soul is set on my lad, and is bent to see him before I die. Let God grant me that, and I will listen to Him after—I will love the good God then. I cannot rest, I cannot rest without my lad!”

The days wore on, and the snows of February passed into the winds of March. Lady Basset remained at Hazelwood, but her squire had not returned. The Countess was very weak now.

The Archbishop of York had delayed his departure too. He would answer for it, he said, both to his superior of Canterbury and to the King. In his own heart he was not satisfied with the ministrations of kindly, ignorant Father Jordan, who was very desirous to soothe the perturbed soul of the Countess, and had not the least idea how to do it. He thought he might yet be of service to the dying Princess.

Very cautiously Mr Altham ventured with some trepidation to sound Norman Hylton as to his feelings towards Amphyllis. Notwithstanding the Archbishop’s countenance and solid help, he was sorely afraid of being snubbed and sat upon for his presumption. He was therefore proportionately relieved when Norman assured him he wished no better fate to overtake him, but that he was unable to see how he could possibly afford to marry.

“Verily, Master Altham, I do you to wit, I have but five possessions—myself, my raiment, mine harness (armour was termed harness up to the seventeenth century), mine horse, and my book. Not a yard of land have I, nor look to have: nor one penny in my plack, further than what I earn. How then can I look to keep a wife? Well I wot that Mistress Amphyllis were fortune in herself to him that is so lucky as to win her; but in good sooth, no such thing is there as luck, and I should say, that hath so much favour of. God, seeing the wise man saith that ‘a prudent wife is given properly of the Lord.’ Yet I reckon that the wisest in the world can scarce keep him warm of a winter day by lapping him in his wisdom; and the fairest and sweetest lady shall lack somewhat to eat beside her own sweetness. Could I see my way thereto, trust me, I would not say you nay; but—”

“But how, Master Hylton, if she carried her pocket full of nobles?”

“Ah, then it were other matter. I would stand to it gladly if so were.”

“Well, for how much look you? Amphyllis should bring you a portion of ten pound beside her wedding gear, and an horse.”

“Say you so? Methinks we were made, then, could we win into some great house to serve the lord and lady thereof.”

“I cast no doubt, if he had the opportunity, my Lord’s Grace of York should help you at that pinch. He seems full ready to do his young kinswoman all the good he may.”

“May I but see my way afore me, Master Altham, nought should make me gladder than to fulfil this your behest.”

Mr Altham laid the case before the Archbishop.

“Tell Master Hylton he need give himself not so much thought thereon as a bee should pack in his honey-bag,” was the smiling reply. “I will warrant, so soon as it is known in the Court that I lack place for a newly-wedded cousin and her husband, there shall be so many warm nests laid afore me, that I shall have but to pick and choose. If that be all the bar to my cousin’s wedding, I may bless it to-morrow.”

It was evident that there was no other difficulty, from the glad light in Norman Hylton’s eyes when he was told the Archbishop’s answer. The matter was settled at once. Only one small item was left out, considered of no moment—the bride-elect knew nothing about the transaction. That was a pleasure to come. That it would, should, might, or could, be anything but a pleasure, never occurred either to the Archbishop or to Mr Altham. They would not have belonged to their century if it had done so.

It was the afternoon of the ninth of March. No answer had been received from the Duke, and Perrote had almost lost hope. The Countess petulantly declined to allow any religious conversation in her chamber. She was restless and evidently miserable, Perrote thought more so than merely from the longing desire to see her son; but some strange and unusual reserve seemed to have come over her. Physically, she sank day by day: it would soon be hour by hour.

Amphillis was off duty for the moment, and had seated herself with her work at the window of her own room, which looked into the outer court, and over the walls towards Derby. She kept upstairs a good deal at this time. There were several reasons for this. She wished to be close at hand if her services were needed; she had no fancy for Agatha's rattle; and—she had not asked herself why—she instinctively kept away from the company of Norman Hylton. Amphillis was not one of those girls who wear their hearts upon their sleeves; who exhibit their injuries, bodily or mental, and chatter freely over them to every comer. Her instinct was rather that of the wounded hart, to plunge into the deepest covert, away from every eye but the Omniscient.

Mr and Mrs Altham had pursued their journey without any further communication to Amphillis. It was Lady Foljambe's prerogative to make this; indeed, a very humble apology had to be made to her for taking the matter in any respect out of her hands. This was done by the Archbishop, who took the whole blame upon himself, and managed the delicate affair with so much grace, that Lady Foljambe not only forgave the Althams, but positively felt herself flattered by his interference. She would inform Amphillis, after the death of the Countess, how her future had been arranged.

The maiden herself, in ignorance of all arrangements made or imagined, was indulging in some rather despondent meditations. The state of the Countess, whom she deeply pitied; the probably near parting from Perrote, whom she had learned to love; and another probable parting of which she would not let herself think, were enough to make her heart sink. She would, of course, go back to her uncle, unless it pleased Lady Foljambe to recommend (which meant to command) her to the service of some other lady. And Amphillis was one of those shy, intense souls for whom the thought of new faces and fresh scenes has in it more fear than hope. She knew that there was just a possibility that Lady Foljambe might put her into Ricarda's place, which she had not yet filled up, three or four different negotiations to that end having failed to effect it; and either this or a return to her uncle was the secret hope of her heart. She highly respected and liked her new Aunt Regina, and her Uncle Robert was the only one of her relatives on the mother's side whom she loved at all. Yet the prospect of a return to London was shadowed by the remembrance of Alexandra, who had ever been to Amphillis a worry and a terror.

As Amphillis sat by the window, she now and then lifted her head to look out for a moment; and she did so now, hearing the faint ring of a horn in the distance. Her eyes lighted on a party of horsemen, who were coming up the valley. They were too far away to discern details, but she saw some distant flashes, as if something brilliant caught the sunlight, and also, as she imagined, the folds of a banner floating. Was it a party of visitors coming to the Manor, or, more likely, a group of travellers on their way to Chesterfield from Derby? Or was it—oh, was it possible!—the Duke of Bretagne?

Amphillis's embroidery dropped on the rushes at her feet, as she sprang up and watched the progress of the travellers. She was pretty sure presently that the banner was white, then that some of the travellers were armed, then that they were making for Hazelwood, and at last that the foremost knight of the group wore a helmet royally encircled. She hardly dared to breathe when the banner at last showed its blazon as pure ermine; and it scarcely needed the cry of "Notre Dame de Gwengamp!" to make Amphillis rush to the opposite room, beckon Perrote out of it, and say to her in breathless ecstasy—

"The Duke! O Mistress Perrote, the Lord Duke!"

"Is it so?" said Perrote, only a little less agitated than Amphillis. "Is it surely he? may it not be a messenger only?"

"I think not so. There is an ermine pennon, and the foremost knight hath a circlet on his helm."

"Pray God it so be! Phyllis, I will go down anon and see how matters be. Go thou into our Lady's chamber—she slept but now—and if she wake, mind thou say not a word to her hereupon. If it be in very deed my Lord Duke, I will return with no delay."

"But if she ask?"

"Parry her inquiries as best thou mayest."

Amphillis knew in her heart that she was an exceedingly bad hand at that business; but she was accustomed to do as she was told, and accordingly she said no more. She was relieved to find the Countess asleep, the cry for admission not having been loud enough to wake her. She sat down and waited.

Perrote, meanwhile, had gone down into the hall, where Lady Foljambe sat at work with Agatha. Sir Godfrey was seated before the fire, at which he pointed a pair of very straight and very lengthy legs; his hands were in his pockets, and his look conveyed neither contentment nor benevolence. In a recess of the window sat young Matthew, whistling softly to himself as he stroked a hawk upon his gloved wrist, while his brother Godfrey stood at another window, looking out, with his arms upon the sill. The only person who noticed Perrote's entrance was Agatha, and she pulled a little face by way of relief to her feelings. Lady Foljambe worked on in silence.

"Sir," said Perrote, addressing herself to the master of the house, "Phyllis tells me a party be making hither, that she hath seen from the window; and under your good pleasure, I reckon, from what the maid saw, that it be my Lord's Grace of Bretagne and his meynie."

Sir Godfrey struggled to his feet with an exclamation of surprise. His elder son turned round from the window; the younger said, "*Ha, jolife!* Now, Gille, go on thy perch, sweet heart!" and set the falcon on its perch. Agatha's work

went down in a moment. Lady Foljambe alone seemed insensible to the news. At the same moment, the great doors at the end of the hall were flung open, and the seneschal, with a low bow to his master and mistress, cried—

“Room for the Duke’s Grace of Brittany!”

As the new arrivals entered the hall, Lady Basset came in from the opposite end. The Duke, a fine, rather stern-looking man, strode forward until he reached the daïs where the family sat; and then, doffing his crowned helmet, addressed himself to Sir Godfrey Foljambe.

“Sir, I give you good even. King Edward your Lord greets you by me, and bids you give good heed to that which you shall find herein.”

At a motion from the Duke, quick and peremptory, one of his knights stepped forth and delivered the royal letter.

Sir Godfrey took it into his hands with a low reverence, and bade his seneschal fetch Father Jordan, without whose assistance it was impossible for him to ascertain his Sovereign’s bidding.

Father Jordan hastened in, cut the silken string, and read the letter.

“Messire,—Our will and pleasure is, that you shall entertain in your Manor of Hazelwood, for such time as shall be his pleasure, our very dear and well-beloved son, John, Duke of Brittany and Count de Montfort, neither letting nor deferring the said Duke from intercourse with our prisoner his mother, Margaret, Duchess of Brittany, but shall suffer him to speak with her at his will. And for so doing this shall be your warrant. By the King. At our Castle of Winchester, the morrow of Saint Romanus.”

Lady Foljambe turned to the Duke and inquired when it would be his pleasure to speak with the prisoner.

“When her physician counts it meet,” said he, with a slight movement of his shapely shoulders, which did not augur much gratification at the prospect before him. “By my faith, had not King Edward my father insisted thereon, then had I never come on so idle a journey. When I looked every morrow for news from Bretagne, bidding me most likely thither, to trot over half England for an old dame’s diversion were enough to try the patience of any knight on earth! I shall not tarry long here, I do ensure you, his Highness’ bidding fulfilled; and I trust your physician shall not long tarry me.”

Sir Godfrey and Lady Foljambe were full of expressions of sympathy. Lady Basset came forward, and spoke in a slightly cynical tone.

“Good morrow, my Lord,” said she to her brother. “You came not to see me, I think, more in especial as I shall one of these days be an old woman, when your Grace’s regard for me shall perish. Father Jordan, I pray you, let it not be long ere you give leave for this loving son to have speech of his mother. ’Twere pity he should break his heart by tarrying.”

Father Jordan nervously intimated that if the Countess were not asleep, he saw no reason why his Grace’s visit should be delayed at all.

“Nay, but under your leave, my good host, I will eat first,” said the Duke; “were it but to strengthen me for the ordeal which waiteth me.”

Lady Foljambe disappeared at once, on hospitable thoughts intent, and Sir Godfrey was profuse in apologies that the suggestion should have needed to come from the Duke. But the only person in the hall who, except his sister, was not afraid of the Duke, stepped forth and spoke her mind.

Chapter Seventeen.

Satisfied at last.

“I am not eager, bold,
Nor strong—all that is past:
I’m ready *not* to do,
At last—at last.

“My half-day’s work is done,
And this is all my part;
I give a patient God
My patient heart.

“And grasp His banner still,
Though all its blue be dim:
These stripes, no less than stars,
Lead after Him.”

“Fair Lord,” said Perrote de Carhaix, in the native tongue of both herself and the Duke, “I am your old nurse, who held you in her arms as a babe, and who taught your infant lips to speak. I taught you the Ten Commandments of God; have you forgotten them? or do you call such words as you have spoken honouring your mother? Is this the reward you pay her for her mother-love, for her thousand anxieties, for her risked life? If it be so, God pardon you as He may! But when you too reach that point which is the common lot of all humanity—when you too lie awaiting the

dread summons of the inevitable angel who shall lead you either into the eternal darkness or the everlasting light, beware lest your dearest turn away from you, and act by you as you have done by her!"

The Duke's black eyes shot forth fire. He was an exceedingly passionate man.

"Mademoiselle de Carhaix, do you know that you are my subject?"

"I am aware of it, my Lord."

"And that I could order your head struck off in yonder court?"

"You could, if yonder court were in Bretagne. In the realm of another sovereign, I scarcely think so, under your gracious pleasure. But do you suppose I should be silent for that? When God puts His words into the lips of His messengers, they must speak them out, whatever the result may be."

"Mademoiselle considers herself, then, an inspired prophetess?" was the contemptuous response.

"The Lord put His words once into the mouth of an ass," replied Perrote, meekly. "I think I may claim to be an ass's equal. I have spoken, fair Lord, and I shall add no more. The responsibility lies now with you. My message is delivered, and I pray God to give you ears to hear."

"Sir Godfrey Foljambe, is this the manner in which you think it meet that one of your household should address a Prince?"

"Most gracious Lord, I am deeply distressed that this gentlewoman should so far have forgotten herself. But I humbly pray your Grace to remember that she is but a woman; and women have small wit and much spitefulness."

"In good sooth, I have need to remember it!" answered the Duke, wrathfully. "I never thought, when I put myself to the pains to journey over half England to satisfy the fancies of a sick woman, that I was to be received with insult and contumely after this fashion. I pray you to send this creature out of my sight, as the least reparation that can be offered for such an injury."

"You need not, Sir," was the immediate reply of Perrote. "I go, for mine errand is done. And for the rest, may God judge between us, and He will."

The Duke sat down to the collation hastily spread before him, with the air of an exceedingly injured man. He would not have been quite so angry, if his own conscience had not been so provoking as to second every word of Perrote's reprimand. And as it is never of the least use for a man to quarrel with his conscience, he could do nothing but make Perrote the scape-goat, unless, indeed, he had possessed sufficient grace and humility to accept and profit by the rebuke:—which in his eyes, was completely out of the question. Had the Archbishop of York been the speaker, he might possibly have condescended so far. But the whims of an old nurse—a subject—a woman—he told himself, must needs be utterly beneath the notice of any one so exalted. The excellence of the medicine offered him could not even be considered, if it were presented in a vessel of common pottery, chipped at the edges.

Notwithstanding his wrath, the Duke did sufficient justice to the collation; and he then demanded, if it must be, to be taken to his mother at once. The sooner the ordeal was over, the better, and he did not mean to remain at Hazelwood an hour longer than could be helped.

Lady Foljambe went up to prepare the Countess for the interview. In her chamber she found not only Amphillis, who was on duty, but the Archbishop also. He sat by the bed with the book of the Gospels in his hands—a Latin version, of course—from which he had been translating a passage to the invalid.

"Well, what now, Avena?" faintly asked the Countess, who read news in Lady Foljambe's face.

There was no time to break it very gradually, for Lady Foljambe knew that the Duke's impatience would not brook delay.

"Dame," she said, shortly, "my Lord your son—"

"Bring him in!" cried the Countess, in a voice of ecstasy, without allowing Lady Foljambe to finish her sentence. How it was to end she seemed to have no doubt, and the sudden joy lent a fictitious strength to her enfeebled frame. "Bring him in! my Jean, my darling, my little lad! Said I not the lad should never forsake his old mother? Bring him in!"

Lady Foljambe drew back to allow the Duke to enter, for his step was already audible. He came in, and stood by the bed—tall, upright, silent.

"My Jean!" cried the dying mother.

"Madame!" was the answer, decorous and icy.

"Kiss me, my Jean! Why dost thou not kiss me? Lad, I have not seen thee all these weary years!"

The Duke, in a very proper manner, kissed the weak old hand which was stretched out towards him. His lips were warm, but his kiss was as cold as a kiss well could be.

"Madame," said the Duke, mindful of the proprieties, "it gives me indescribable grief to find you thus. I am also deeply distressed that it should be impossible for me to remain with you. I expect news from Bretagne every day—"

almost every hour—which I hope will summon me back thither to triumph over my rebellious subjects, and to resume my throne in victory. You will, therefore, grant me excuse if it be impossible for me to do more than kiss your hand and entreat your blessing.”

“Not stay, my Jean!” she said, in piteous accents. “Not stay, when thou hast come so far to see me! Dost thou know that I am dying?”

“Madame, I am infinitely grieved to perceive it. But reasons of state are imperative and paramount.”

“My Lord will pardon me for observing,” said the Archbishop’s voice, “with a royal kinsman of his own, that God may grant him many kingdoms, but he can never have but one mother.”

The Duke’s answer was in his haughtiest manner. “I assure you of my regret, holy Father. Necessity has no law.”

“And no compassion?”

“Jean, my Jean! Only one minute more—one minute cannot be of importance. My little lad, my best-loved! lay thy lips to mine, and say thou lovest thine old mother, and let me bless thee, and then go, if it must be, and I will die.”

Amphillis wondered that the piteous passion of love in the tones of the poor mother did not break down entirely the haughty coldness of the royal son. The Duke did indeed bend his stately knee, and touch his mother’s lips with his, but there was no shadow of response to her clinging clasp, no warmth, however faint, in the kiss into which she poured her whole heart.

“Jean, little Jean! say thou lovest me?”

“Madame, it is a son’s duty. I pray your blessing.”

“I bless thee with my whole heart!” she said. “I pray God bless thee in every hour of thy life, grant thee health, happiness, and victory, and crown thee at last with everlasting bliss. Now go, my dear heart! The old mother will not keep thee to thy hurt. God be with thee, and bless thee!”

Even then he did not linger; he did not even give her, unsolicited, one last kiss. She raised herself on one side, to look after him and listen to him to the latest moment, the light still beaming in her sunken eyes. His parting words were not addressed to her, but she heard them.

“Now then, Du Chatel,” said the Duke to his squire in the corridor, “let us waste no more time. This irksome duty done, I would be away immediately, lest I be called back.”

The light died out of the eager eyes, and the old white head sank back upon the pillow, the face turned away from the watchers. Amphillis approached her, and tenderly smoothed the satin coverlet.

“Let be!” she said, in a low voice. “My heart is broken.”

Amphillis, who could scarcely restrain her own sobs, glanced at the Archbishop for direction. He answered her by pressing a finger on his lips. Perrote came in, her lips set, and her brows drawn. She had evidently overheard those significant words. Then they heard the tramp of the horses in the courtyard, the sound of the trumpet, the cry of “Notre Dame de Gwengamp!” and they knew that the Duke was departing. They did not know, however, that the parting guest was sped by a few exceedingly scathing words from his sister, who had heard his remark to the squire. She informed him, in conclusion, that he could strike off her head, if he had no compunction in staining his spotless ermine banner with his own kindly blood. It would make very little difference to her, and, judging by the way in which he used his dying mother, she was sure it could make none to him.

The Duke flung himself into his saddle, and dashed off down the slope from the gate without deigning either a response or a farewell.

As the Archbishop left the Countess’s chamber, he beckoned Amphillis into the corridor.

“I tarry not,” said he, “for I can work no good now. This is not the time. A stricken heart hath none ears. Leave her be, and leave her to God. I go to pray Him to speak to her that comfort which she may receive alone from Him. None other can do her any help. To-morrow, maybe—when the vexed brain hath slept, and gentle time hath somewhat dulled the first sharp edge of her cruel sorrow—then I may speak and be heard. But now she is in that valley of the shadow, where no voice can reach her save that which once said, ‘Lazarus, come forth!’ and which the dead shall hear in their graves at the last day.”

“God comfort her, poor Lady!” said Amphillis. “Ay, God comfort her!” And the Archbishop passed on.

He made no further attempt to enter the invalid chamber until the evening of the next day, when he came in very softly, after a word with Perrote—no part of any house was ever closed against a priest—and sat down by the sufferer. She lay much as he had left her. He offered no greeting, but took out his Evangelistarium from the pocket of his cassock, and began to read in a low, calm voice.

“‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, for He hath anointed Me; He hath sent Me to evangelise the poor, to heal the contrite in heart, to preach liberty to the captives and sight to the blind, to set the bruised at liberty, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of retribution.’” (Luke four, verses 18, 19, Vulgate version.)

There was no sound in answer. The Archbishop turned over a few leaves.

“‘Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you.’ (Matthew nine, verse 28.) ‘And God shall dry all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor clamour, nor shall there be any more pain.’ (Revelations twenty-one, verse 4.) ‘Trouble not your heart: believe in God, and believe in Me.’ ‘Peace I bequeath to you, My peace I give to you: not as the world giveth, give I to you. Trouble not your heart, neither be it afraid.’ (John fourteen, verses 1, 27.) ‘Whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth; and whippeth also every son whom He receiveth.’” (Hebrews twelve, verse 6.)

He read or quoted from memory, as passages occurred to him. When he had reached this point he made a pause. A deep sigh answered him, but no words.

“‘And he looked round about on them which sat about Him, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother.’”

“‘I dare say He kissed His mother!’ said the low plaintive voice. She evidently knew of whom the reader spoke. “‘The world giveth not much peace. ‘Heavy-laden!’ ay, heavy-laden! ‘Thou hast removed from me friend and neighbour.’ I have lost my liberty, and I am losing my life; and now—God have mercy on me!—I have lost my son.”

“‘Dame, will you take for your son the Lord that died for you? He offers Himself to you. ‘The same is My mother.’ He will give you not love only, but a son’s love, and that warm and undying. ‘With perpetual charity I delighted in thee,’ He saith; ‘wherefore, pitying, I drew thee to Me.’ Oh, my daughter, let Him draw thee!”

“‘What you will, Father,” was the low answer. “‘I have no bodily strength; pray you, make not the penance heavier than I can do. Elsewise, what you will. My will is broken; nothing matters any more now. I scarce thought it should have so been—at the end. Howbeit, God’s will be done. It must be done.”

“‘My daughter, ‘this is the will of God, your sanctification.’ The end and object of all penances, of all prayers, is that you may be joined to Christ. ‘For He is our peace,’ and we are ‘in Him complete.’ In Him—not in your penances, nor in yourself. If so were that my Lord Basset had done you grievous wrong, it might be you forgave him fully, not for anything in him, but only because he is one with your own daughter, and you could not strike him without smiting her; his dishonour is her dishonour, his peace is her peace, to punish him were to punish her. So is it with the soul that is joined to Christ. If He be exalted, it must be exalted; if it be rejected, He is rejected also. And God cannot reject His own Son.”

The Archbishop was not at all sure that the Countess was listening to him. She kept her face turned away. He rose and wished her good evening. The medicine must not be administered in an overdose, or it might work more harm than good.

He came again on the following evening, and gave her a little more. For three days after he pursued the same course, and, further than courtesy demanded, he was not answered a word. On the fourth night he found the face turned. A pitiful face, whose aspect went to his heart—wan, white, haggard, unutterably pathetic. That night he read the fourteenth chapter of Saint John’s Gospel, and added few words of his own. On leaving her, he said—

“‘My daughter, God is more pitiful than men, and His love is better than theirs.”

“‘It had need be so!’” were the only words that replied. In the corridor he met Father Jordan. The Archbishop stopped.

“‘How fareth she in the body?’”

“‘As ill as she may be, and live. Her life is counted by hours.”

The Archbishop stood at the large oriel of stained glass at the end of the corridor, looking out on the spring evening—the buds just beginning to break, the softened gold of the western sky. His heart was very full.

“‘O Father of the everlasting age!’” he said aloud, “‘all things are possible unto Thee, and Thou hast eternity to work in. Suffer not this burdened heart to depart ere Thou hast healed it with Thine eternal peace! Grant Thy rest to the heavy-laden, Thy mercy to her on whom man hath had so little mercy! Was it not for this Thou earnest, O Saviour of the world? Good Shepherd, wilt Thou not go after this lost sheep until Thou find it?’”

The next night the silence was broken.

“‘Father,” she said, “‘tell me if I err. It looks to me, from the words you read, as if our Lord lacketh not penances and prayers, and good works; He only wants *me*, and that by reason that He loveth me. And why all this weary life hath been mine, He knoweth, and I am content to leave it so, if only He will take me up in His arms as the shepherd doth the sheep, and will suffer me to rest my weariness there. Do I err, Father?’”

“‘My daughter, you accept the gospel of God’s peace. This it is to come to Him, and He shall give you rest.”

The work was done. The proud spirit had stooped to the yoke. The bitter truth against which she had so long fought and struggled was accepted at the pierced hands which wounded her only for her healing. That night she called Lady Basset to her.

“‘My little girl, my Jeanne!’” she said, “‘I was too hard on thee. I loved thy brother the best, and I defrauded thee of the love which was thy due. And now thou hast come forty miles to close mine eyes, and he turneth away, and will have none of me. Jeanette, darling, take my dying blessing, and may God deal with thee as thou hast dealt by the old mother, and pay thee back an hundredfold the love thou hast given me! Kiss me, sweet heart, and forgive me the past.”

Two days later, the long journey by the way of the wilderness was over. On the 18th of March, 1374, Perrote folded

the aged, wasted hands upon the now quiet breast.

“All was ended now, the hope, and the fear, and the sorrow,
All the aching of heart, the restless, unsatisfied longing,
All the dull, deep pain, and the constant anguish of patience!
And as she pressed once more the lifeless head to her bosom,
Meekly she bowed her own, and murmured, ‘Father, I thank Thee!’”

The fate which had harassed poor Marguerite in life pursued her to the very grave. There was no sumptuous funeral, no solemn hearse, no regal banners of arms for her. Had there been any such thing, it would have left its trace on the Wardrobe Rolls of the year. There was not even a court mourning. It was usual then for the funerals of royal persons to be deferred for months after the death, in order to make the ceremony more magnificent. But now, in the twilight of the second evening, which was Monday, a quiet procession came silently across from the Manor House to the church, headed by Father Jordan; twelve poor men bore torches beside the bier; the Mass for the Dead was softly sung, and those beautiful, pathetic words which for ages rose beside the waiting coffin:—

“King of awful majesty,
By Thy mercy full and free,
Fount of mercy, pardon me!

“Think, O Saviour, in what way
On Thine head my trespass lay;
Let me not be lost that day!

“Thou wert weary seeking me;
On Thy cross Thou mad’st me free;
Lose not all Thine agony!”

Then they prayed for her everlasting rest—not joy. The thought of active bliss could hardly be associated with that weary soul. “Jesus, grant her Thine eternal rest!” And the villagers crept round with bared heads, and whispered to one another that they were burying the White Lady—that mysterious prisoner whom no one ever saw, who never came to church, nor set foot outside the walls of her prison; and they dimly guessed some thousandth part of the past pathos of that shadowed life, and they joined in the Amen. And over her grave were set up no sculptured figure and table tomb, only one slab of pure white marble, carved with a cross, and beneath it, the sole epitaph of Marguerite of Flanders, the heroine of Hennebon,—“Mercy, Jesu!” So they left her to her rest.

Ten years later, in a quiet Manor House near Furness Abbey, a knight’s wife was telling a story to her three little girls.

“And you called me after her, Mother!” said little fair-haired Margaret.

“But what became of the naughty man who didn’t want to come and see his poor mother when she was so sick and unhappy, Mother?” asked compassionate little Regina.

“Naughty man!” echoed Baby Perrotine.

Lady Hylton stroked her little Margaret’s hair.

“He led not a happy life, my darlings; but we will not talk about him. Ay, little Meg, I called thee after the poor White Lady. I pray God thou mayest give thine heart to Him earlier than she did, and not have to walk with weary feet along her wilderness way. Let us thank God for our happy life, and love each other as much as we can.”

A hand which she had not known was there was laid upon her head.

“Thinkest thou we can do that, my Phyllis, any better than now?” asked Sir Norman Hylton.

“We can all try,” said Amphyllis, softly. “And God, our God, shall bless us.”

Appendix.

Marguerite of Flanders, Countess of Montfort, was the only daughter of Loys de Nevers, eldest surviving son of Robert the First, Count of Flanders (who predeceased his father), and of Marie or Jeanne, daughter of the Count de Rethel. She had one brother, Count Loys the First of Flanders, who fell at Crecy. Many modern writers call her Jeanne; but her name in the contemporary public records of England is invariably Margareta. Her birth probably took place about 1310, and it may have been about 1335 that she married Jean of Bretagne, Count de Montfort, a younger son of Duke Arthur the Second.

Duke Arthur, the son of Beatrice of England, had been twice married—to Marie of Limoges and Violette of Dreux, Countess of Montfort in her own right. With other issue who are not concerned in the story, he had by Marie two sons, Duke Jean the Third and Guyon; and by Violette one, Jean Count of Montfort, the husband of Marguerite. On the childless death of Jean the Third in 1341, a war of succession arose between the daughter of his deceased brother Guyon, and his half-brother the Count of Montfort. The daughter, Jeanne la Boiteuse, claimed the right to represent her father Guyon, while Montfort stood by the law of non-representation, according to which no deceased prince could be represented by his child, and the younger brother even by the half-blood was considered a nearer relative than the child of the elder. The King of France took the part of Jeanne and her husband, Charles de Blois; he captured the Count of Montfort, and imprisoned him in the Louvre. The Countess Marguerite, “who had the heart of a lion,” thenceforth carried on the war on behalf of her husband and son. In the spring of 1342 she obtained the help of King

Edward the Third of England, which however was fitfully rendered, as he took either side in turn to suit his own convenience. Some account of her famous exploits is given in the story, and is familiar to every reader of Froissart's Chronicle. Shortly after this the Countess brought her son to England, and betrothed him to the King's infant daughter Mary; but she soon returned to Bretagne. In 1345 the Count of Montfort escaped from his prison in the disguise of a pedlar, and arrived in England: but the King was not at that time disposed to assist him, and Montfort took the refusal so much to heart that—probably combined with already failing health—it killed him in the following September. When the war was reopened, the Countess took captive her rival Charles de Blois, and brought him to England. The King appointed her residence in Tickhill Castle, granting the very small sum of 15 pounds per annum for her expenses “there or wherever we may order her to be taken, while she remains in our custody.” (Patent Roll, 25 Edward the Third, Part 3.) It is evident that while treated overtly as a guest, the Countess was in reality a prisoner: a fact yet more forcibly shown by an entry in December, 1348, recording the payment of 60 shillings expenses to John Burdon for his journey to Tickhill, “to bring up to London the Duchess of Bretagne and the knight who ran away with her.” This seems to have been an attempt to free the prisoner, to whom, as the upholder of her husband's claim on the throne of Bretagne, the King of course accorded the title of Duchess. The testimony of the records henceforward is at variance with that of the chroniclers, the latter representing Marguerite as making sundry journeys to Bretagne in company with her son and others, and as being to all intents at liberty. The Rolls, on the contrary, when she is named, invariably speak of her as a prisoner in Tickhill Castle, in keeping of Sir John Delves, and after his death, of his widow Isabel. That the Rolls are the superior authority there can be no question.

The imprisonment of Charles de Blois was very severe. He offered a heavy ransom and his two elder sons as hostages; King Edward demanded 400,000 deniers, and afterwards 100,000 gold florins. In 1356 Charles was released, his sons Jean and Guyon taking his place. They were confined first in Nottingham Castle, and in 1377 were removed to Devizes, where Guyon died about Christmas 1384. In 1362 Edward and Charles agreed on a treaty, which Jeanne refused to ratify, alleging that she would lose her life, or two if she had them, rather than relinquish her claims to young Montfort. Two years later Charles was killed at the battle of Auray, and Jeanne thereon accepted a settlement which made Montfort Duke of Bretagne, reserving to herself the county of Penthievre, the city of Limoges, and a sum of ten thousand *livres Tournois*.

The only authority hitherto discovered giving any hint of the history of Marguerite after this date, is a contemporary romance, *Le Roman de la Comtesse de Montfort*, which states that she retired to the Castle of Lucinio, near Vannes, and passed the rest of her life in tranquillity. Even Mrs Everett Green, in her *Lives of the Princesses of England*, accepted this as a satisfactory conclusion. It was, indeed, the only one known. But two entries on the public records of England entirely dissipate this comfortable illusion. On 26th September 1369, the Patent Roll states that “we allowed 105 pounds per annum to John Delves for the keeping of the noble lady, the Duchess of Bretagne; and we now grant to Isabel his widow, for so long a time as the said Duchess shall be in her keeping, the custody of the manor of Walton-on-Trent, value 22 pounds,” and 52 pounds from other lands. (Patent Roll, 43 Edward the Third, Part 2.) The allowance originally made had evidently been increased. The hapless prisoner, however, was not left long in the custody of Isabel Delves. She was transferred to that of Sir Godfrey Foljambe, whose wife, Avena Ireland, was daughter of Avena de Holand, aunt of Joan Duchess of Bretagne, the second wife of young Montfort. Lastly, a Post Mortem Inquisition, taken in 1374, announces that “Margaret Duchess of Bretagne died at Haselwood, in the county of Derby, on the 18th of March, 48 Edward the Third, being sometime in the custody of Godfrey Foljambe.” (Inquisitions of Exchequer, 47-8 Edward the Third, county Derbyshire).

It is therefore placed beyond question that the Countess of Montfort died a prisoner in England, at a date when her son had been for ten years an independent sovereign, and though on friendly terms with Edward the Third, was no longer a suppliant for his favour. Can it have occurred without his knowledge and sanction? He was in England when she died, but there is no indication that he ever went to see her, and her funeral, as is shown by the silence of the Wardrobe Rolls, was without any ceremony. Considering the character of the Duke—“violent in all his feelings, loving to madness, hating to fury, and rarely overcoming a prejudice once entertained”—the suspicion is aroused that all the early sacrifices made by his mother, all the gallant defence of his dominions, the utter self-abnegation and the tender love, were suffered to pass by him as the idle wind, in order that he might revenge himself upon her for the one occasion on which she prevented him from breaking his pledged word to King Edward's daughter, and committing a *mésalliance* with Alix de Ponteallen. For this, or at any rate for some thwarting of his will, he seems never to have forgiven her.

Marguerite left two children—Duke Jean the Fourth, born 1340, died November 1, 1399: he married thrice,—Mary of England, Joan de Holand, and Juana of Navarre—but left no issue by any but the last, and by her a family of nine children, the eldest being only twelve years old when he died. Strange to say, he named one of his daughters after his discarded mother. His sister Jeanne, who was probably his senior, was originally affianced to Jean of Blois, the long-imprisoned son of Charles and Jeanne: she married, however, Ralph, last Lord Basset of Drayton, and died childless, November 8, 1403.

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