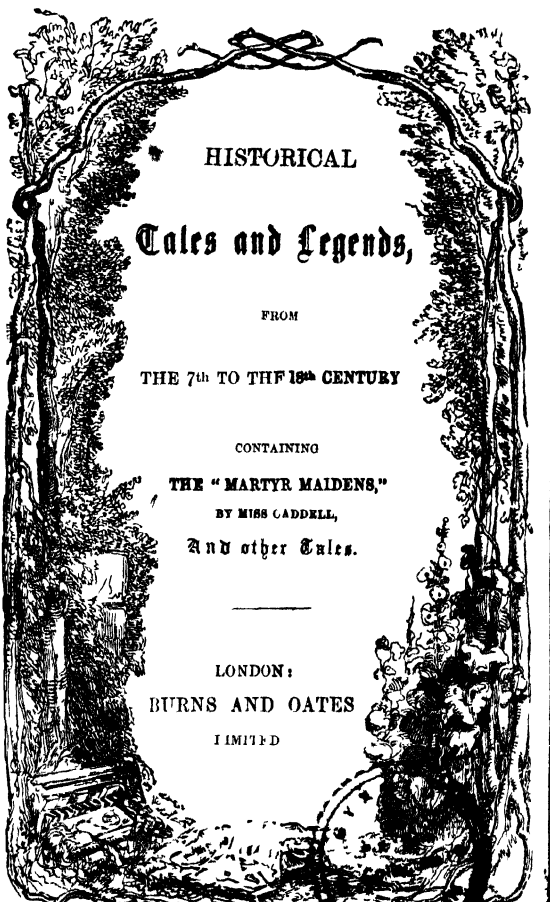


HISTORICAL

Tales and Legends,

FROM

THE 7th TO THE 18th CENTURY

CONTAINING

THE "MARTYR MAIDENS,"

BY MISS CADDELL,

And other Tales.

LONDON:

BURNS AND OATES

LIMITED

CONTENTS

Tales and Legends,

ETC.

GONSALVO OF AMARANTA.

IN the hilly country which lies between the two rivers Douro and Minho, in the north of Portugal, a little village may be seen, whose vine-covered houses, and poor, unpretending church, offer little claim to the attention of the traveller, save in the wild and romantic beauty which they share with so many other similar scenes in the southern peninsula. Yet the village of San Pajo has one association which gives it a dignity and an interest above that which attaches to many a lovelier and more important place; for once it was the residence of a Saint. Few changes probably have passed over it, as it lies in its green nest among the rocky arms of the Sierra de Gerez; and we may fancy how those winding paths that lead up to the mountains among the silver olive-groves that cluster round their sides, were trodden by the very feet of him who, six hundred years ago, was its parish-priest. He came here very young, a

towards which all Christian hearts were yearning. Travelling was a different thing then to what it now is; and yet men thought it little to cross the seas, and find their way over pathless rugged mountains, and perhaps to beg their way through a foreign and hostile country, that they might lay their pilgrim's-staff beside the sepulchre of their Lord. It was the great work of penance of those days; and the twelve centuries that had passed away had destroyed nothing of the tenderness of that tie which bound the heart of Christendom to the tomb of Christ. Gonsalvo rose with a clear purpose in his soul, and with a hope more buoyant than he had felt for many months, that he should find the thing his heart had so long been seeking in a pilgrimage to the holy shrine.

A very short time sufficed for his preparations; they were less for himself than for the comfort of his people in his absence, for his courage failed him a little at the thought of leaving them; and but for the deep conviction that he was but following a Divine call, he could scarcely have found the strength to abandon them. One human tie of kindred had been granted him, which had a close hold on his heart. The death of an elder brother had left him in charge of his only child, to whom he had given the care and affection of a father. He had received holy orders at an early age; and it was to him that Gonsalvo determined, with the permission of the Bishop, to intrust the care of his parish, in the hopes that his presence might keep alive in the hearts of his flock the influence and remembrance of their absent pastor. And now he stood at his wicket-gate, with the rough habit and staff that formed the pilgrim's garb, and lingered a little before he turned his back on scenes that had made till now his only world. His nephew was by his side; and they both stood looking over the village, as it lay with its vines and pastures bathed in the dew of an early summer morning.

"Antonio," said his uncle, "I leave these few

sheep in the wilderness with a heavy heart: and thou art but young to feed them; yet was I not older than thyself when first I came among them."

"And I, good father, have dwelt among them since a child," replied the youth, "and have grown up on your own teaching, even as though I were your son. It seems to me as though all things here were so familiar with the thought of you, that it will be as if you were still present in the old places, and I shall not feel alone or without a guide."

"Child," returned Gonsalvo, "thou thinkest so now; yet, who can tell? It may be, a year hence thou wilt not desire other guide than thine own will; and as yet thou canst scarcely tell where that may lead. Perchance thou thinkest it much to be master here, and order all things as thou wilt; yet, if thou hast had happy days among these hills, it were well for thee to remember the secret of their happiness,—for they were ever seasoned to thee by poverty and prayer."

"You doubt me, father," said Antonio, a little hastily; but Gonsalvo laid his hand on his shoulder, and looked at him with a glance of trust and affection which seemed to shame him for the thought.

"I do not doubt you, my son," he said; "I was but thinking that till now the priest's house of San Pajo has been termed 'the Beggar's Home,' and I doubted how the title might suit the ears of its new master. But I did thee wrong for even that mistrust; thou wilt surely care for the poor wanderers better than I have done, and not the less for the thought of thine uncle, who may chance to be begging his bread from a strange hand in a like manner, and it may be will one day lie unknown at his own door, like the holy Alexis."

Antonio fell at his feet with tears and many a protest of fidelity to his trust; and having given him his blessing for the last time, Gonsalvo at length set out on the mountain-road that was to lead him across the Spanish frontier.

Time passed on; and though at first Antonio missed

the guidance of the hand which till now had so tenderly supported him, by degrees Gonsalvo's parting words seemed to find their fulfilment. There was a pleasure in the new feeling of freedom and the gratification of his own will, which stole on him insensibly; and when at the year's end Gonsalvo's return was still delayed, and no tidings concerning him reached San Pajo, his prolonged absence caused a secret satisfaction to the heart of his nephew, even whilst he would fain have persuaded himself that it filled him with regret. Then the revenues of the parish, and those attached to the canon's stall of Braga, which Gonsalvo held, came pouring in, and Antonio discovered with surprise that his uncle was a wealthy man. And he began to look at the bare ruinous walls of his little house with a contemptuous surprise, to think how one who could have lived so well and easily should have chosen instead a peasant's farm and dwelling; and the title of "the Beggar's Home" was getting every day more and more distasteful to his ears. Another year, and still no news of Gonsalvo; and Antonio was getting used to think of the parish as his own, and to form for the spending of his revenues plans, alas! which were all for his own pleasure, and wherein the poor, whom Gonsalvo had been wont to make his bankers, had now but little share. Another and another year rolled on; men had almost forgotten Gonsalvo's name; the poor humble master of the Beggar's Home stood little chance of being remembered by the side of the gay Abbé of San Pajo, as Antonio was now universally styled. Yet, so long as he felt that title was his own by courtesy only, he felt his position might any day be changed; and full of this tormenting thought, he constantly revolved in his mind how he could place himself above the chance of a reverse which would deprive him of all his present means of ease and enjoyment. Gonsalvo's lengthened absence gave a ready suggestion, on which he was not long in profiting. A rumour began to circulate of his death; and letters, it was said, had been received from

Palestine which confirmed the tale, and furnished every particular. The archbishop himself was deceived, and prepared to fill the vacant benefice; and it seemed but a fitting testimony of respect to his venerable memory to choose as his successor one who had stood to him in the relation of a son. In short, before the termination of the fourth year from Gonsalvo's departure, his nephew had been solemnly inducted into the benefice, which it was said had been left vacant by the death of its late saintly occupant, and Antonio's utmost wishes were fulfilled. The thirteenth century (at which period the circumstances of which we are speaking took place) was a miserable time for Portugal. Long civil wars, followed by the reign of a weak and incapable prince, Sancho II., had left the kingdom a prey to innumerable factions, amid which all law was disregarded, and every part of society became infected by the universal corruption. In this general decay of morals, the new Abbé of San Pajo found plenty to countenance him in the career of license and extravagance to which he now abandoned himself. The patrimony which formerly had supported widows and orphans was now lavished on dogs, horses, and falcons. The little cottage was replaced by a luxurious dwelling, from whose door the poor were thrust away; and as things grew daily worse and worse, the people ceased not to deplore the loss of their old pastor, whom, in common with the rest of the world, they mourned as dead.

Fourteen years had passed since Antonio's settlement at San Pajo, when one evening a pilgrim was seen coming down the mountain-road that led to the village,—no unusual spectacle in old times, when the priest's house offered a sure shelter to all such travellers, yet one not often seen of late; for the reputation of the new abbé had made them shy of the road that passed his inhospitable door. And this one was from the Holy Land; his broad hat bore the palmer's shell, his feet were bare, and worn with long journeyings, and the lines of his pale and wasted face were those rather of

austerity than of age. Fourteen years of penance and pilgrimage had left too great a change on Gonsalvo's appearance to make him easily recognised; and those who passed him as he stood leaning on his staff on the brow of the hill, looking with swimming eyes over the house which lay below, never gave the ragged dusty stranger a second glance. What kind of thoughts were in his heart as he stood there, calling to mind, as though it were but yesterday, the morning when, not far from that very spot, he had given his parting blessing to Antonio, and set out on his long and weary journey? How many a sick longing after home had there been amid the hours of captivity and delay that had come on him since then! And the peace of his soul still wanting, the desire as great and as unsatisfied as ever, the whisper of that voice making itself heard louder and louder in every sacred spot and holy shrine; neither home nor pilgrimage had yet given him the reply; and as he slowly descended the hill towards his old dwelling, something rose within him like a warning, that it was not there he should find it, and that his resting-place was still, as ever, "a little further on."

He stood before the house, which, indeed, had little but its situation by which he could recognise it as the same. "Is this the priest's house, good friend?" he inquired of a villager who was passing by.

"Surely it is so," was the reply; "yet were I in thy shoes, good palmer, I would think twice ere I touched the latch of yonder door. Its master has small love for men in thy garb; and thy scallop-shell will scarce make thy rags and alms-box the more welcome."

"And who is the abbé?" continued Gonsalvo; for the thought flashed across him that perhaps Antonio might be dead, and so the place had passed into the hands of an unworthy stranger.

"The *abbé*," answered the villager with a sneer, "likes better to be called Don Antonio de Souza. I warrant you he loves the huntsman's cap better than the priest's frock; and to speak truth, the one fits him

better than the other. There goes the Psalm-chant which finds most favour in his ears," he continued, as the loud bay of a hound was heard from within the enclosure; "there are rare pensioners now in the Beggar's Home."

Those familiar words shot into Gonsalvo's heart like an agony; and without reply he turned from the speaker, and raising the latch of the door without further ceremony, he stood within the entrance-hall. It was a moment he had often pictured to himself; but how strange a contrast to all his cherished fancies did he find the reality! A table stood in the middle of the hall covered with glasses and the remains of the evening meal, and round it sat several men whose dress and bearing inspired him with a feeling of disgust. Among them was one who seemed the master of the revels, and in whose countenance, despite of the alteration which had come from long habits of license and dissipation, Gonsalvo recognised with anguish the features of his nephew. He wore a huntsman's dress, and no vestige of his sacred calling was visible either in his appearance or manner. The entrance of Gonsalvo disturbed the company, who looked up with a lazy surprise: he did not advance further from the entrance; but stood leaning on his staff, and gazing at the scene before him with a sad and severe countenance.

"Whom have we here?" cried Antonio at length, after a stare at his new visitor. "There was small ceremony in your entrance, Sir Palmer; let there be as little in your departure. Get you gone, sirrah, and quickly too, ere I show you the way out with less of courtesy than you may chance to like."

But Gonsalvo never moved; he fixed his eyes on his nephew's face, and uttered but one word—"Antonio!" And the tone, soft and gentle as it was, fell on the abbé's ear like a thunderclap; for it was one he could not mistake. The sudden pallor of his cheek betrayed his agitation, as he started to his feet, exclaiming: "Who art thou, fellow, to make so free with

my name? Begone, I say, ere I teach thee manners with my stick!"

"Who am I, saidst thou?" replied Gonsalvo, as he came slowly into the circle; "I am the master of this house, and thine uncle, unhappy boy; and thou needest not have asked my name, for thou knewest it when first I spoke. How do I find thee, Antonio? The rags and palmer's hat do not change me as thou art changed, yea, in thy very soul, which once was pure and innocent as a child's, and now--"

"A pretty tale," interrupted Antonio, who had quickly determined on the part he should take; "Gonsalvo, my uncle, as all the world knows, has been dead for many years; thou art but a poor impostor, and hast scarcely learnt thy lesson right. Out, I say again, or the dogs shall hunt thee to cover;" and snatching up the hunting-whip that lay by his side, he whistled to two great bloodhounds who lay on the floor, and who at the sound raised their ears, and seemed ready to carry his threat into execution.

Gonsalvo paused: it was certainly no feeling of fear that made him hesitate; but something of a doubtful purpose seemed to mingle with the anguish of that moment. Then the doubt vanished, and he spoke again: "Antonio," he said, "I will give thee yet a chance; for my heart yearns after thee even still, and it may be thou findest it hard to part from house and lands which thou hast called thine own for fourteen years. Keep them, child, if such be thy will; but let me, ere I go, but once hear thee speak in thine old tone, and call me father."

"A rare father!" said one of the abbé's companions, who till now had been silent spectators of the scene. "Why, Antonio, I marvel you dally with the old vagrant; I would long ago have loosed the dogs at him, or have tried what a cut of the whip might have done in the matter. His paternity would move a little faster with Sebastian at his heels;" and at the sound of his name the dog uttered a low growl.

"Hast thou no answer, Antonio?" said his uncle sorrowfully, and without heeding the other's interruption; "the lands, yea, all that I have, are thine, so thou wilt give me back thy broken faith, thy perjured guilty soul, to be mine own again."

"Thou art too bold," exclaimed the abbé, who feared lest his companions might really suspect the truth of Gonsalvo's tale if he suffered the scene to last much longer. "Out, I say again, or I will hound thee from the village;" and whirling the long whip above his head, he let the lash fall with a terrific cut on the person of the pilgrim. A loud laugh from the others showed their approbation of the action; and coming to the aid of their companion with many an oath and word of blasphemy, they thrust him to the door; and flinging him over the threshold, Gonsalvo heard the bolts drawn, and felt that all hope of softening the heart of Antonio was at an end. What should he do? There was the Bishop; and it would not be difficult to prove his identity to him, and to get justice done him, and its righteous penalties inflicted on the worthless intruder. But no such thought was in Gonsalvo's mind, as he turned his back once more on the valley which but an hour since he had entered as his home. "Not there," he murmured to himself; "I thought not it would be thus, and yet I knew the rest would not be there; my foot is yet in the wilderness, and the promised land is far as ever from mine eyes."

Sunk in sad and bitter reflections he walked on, hardly knowing in what direction he was going; and night-fall overtook him in a wild and desolate region about three leagues from the banks of the Douro. No sign of human habitation was near, the barren heights of the Sierra rose on every side; but the valley in which he stood was green and beautiful, being watered by the river Tamaga, which flowed from the mountains and joined the larger stream of the Douro further down. The rocks at the base of the mountain were broken, and in some places hollowed into caves; and in one of

these Gonsalvo resolved to take up his lodging for the night. But it was scarcely to sleep: he lay on the mossy turf thinking over the events of the day, weeping bitterly when he thought of Antonio, and yet with something in his heart that told him it was not *his* hand alone that had driven him from the door. "The will of God was not there," he said, as his thoughts spoke half-aloud; "hath He not said, that some He will lead to the wilderness, and there speak to their hearts?" And as he listened to the quiet ripple of the mountain-stream, and the low night-wind sighing among the trees, their friendly voices sounded sweet and pleasant in his ears, and soothed away the echoes of those curses which had rung in them ever since he had turned from the doors of San Pajo. "The voice of God is in the waters," he murmured; "and it biddeth me rest awhile on the spot where He has led me. Here are no false hearts and broken faith of men; here will I abide: and it takes but little to change the pilgrim's habit to the hermit's coat."

As soon as day dawned, he set about the task of constructing a little cell where he might dwell; and in which he resolved to remain, without taking further steps to declare his return and prove the truth of his story. In a few weeks he had added to his hermitage a little chapel of the rudest construction, which he dedicated to the Mother of God; and it was not long before the news went round the neighbouring country, that a hermit of extraordinary sanctity had taken up his residence in the valley of the Tamaga. The sweetness of his new life grew on him day by day, and effaced the memory of his sufferings; the wilderness blossomed like a rose, for its solitude was full of God. Prayer, and the work which was necessary to obtain his scanty subsistence, divided his time; the echoes of the rocks gave back the sound of the Divine office which he chanted amid the silence, and his little chapel was blessed with the celebration of the Divine mysteries. In time he became so enamoured of his desert, that

the fate which had driven him from his home seemed no longer a hard one; and it seemed as though Gonsalvo were at last at rest. By degrees the fame of his sanctity drew numbers to visit him in his cell; the valley of Amaranta, as his retreat was called, became the resort of all who desired counsel or direction, and Gonsalvo saw his life of solitude gradually changed to one of apostolic labour. Obedient to the call which summoned him to duties he had never sought, he preached through the whole surrounding country; and the sweet odour of his charities and prayers, extending beyond the limits of his little wilderness, diffused their blessed influence over the whole region of the Tras os Montes, and vast numbers were converted to a life of penance and devotion.

We have seen Gonsalvo in many positions,—as parish-priest and as pilgrim, as hermit and apostle; but the end was not yet. Through all these changes that passed over his life, the same voice made itself heard as in old time; and he knew that even yet he was not brought into the haven where he should be. The hope so long deferred had brought with it a profound submission to the will of God; and yet he ceased not to implore a clearer light to know where that will would lead him on at last. One night, after many hours spent in prayer, he lay down to rest on the stone-floor of his little chapel before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, where stood a rude image of the Divine Mother, carved by his own hand out of the rock. He had scarcely fallen asleep when he was roused by a brilliant light, more dazzling than the sun; and starting to his feet, he beheld standing on the right of the altar the form of Mary herself, and her aspect was mild and gracious, as though she had come to be the messenger of peace.

Gonsalvo threw himself at her feet: "Lady of my soul," he said, "is the hour come at last?"

"It is come, Gonsalvo," said a voice whose music was sweeter far than the melodies of earth, and filled him with a flood of overwhelming joy; "the life thou

hast led here was but to prepare thee for the end, and I am come to call thee to the house where the will of God awaits thee. Know then, that thou shalt never find rest till thou art joined to an order dedicated to my service, which thou shalt know when thou hearest an office in my honour, which begins and ends with the *Ave Maria*. Go, then, and seek thy place of rest; and when thou hast found it, thou shalt have found the way in which thou mayest serve God perfectly until death."

The vision was gone, and Gonsalvo was alone again. When morning dawned, he laid aside his hermit's dress; and once more taking up his pilgrim's-staff, prepared to set out on his new wanderings in obedience to the command he had received. His life had been so peaceable and happy in his little hermitage, that it was not without a sigh he turned his back on the green and pleasant valley, and went out once more into the world that lay beyond his desert, "not knowing whither he went." Up and down the hills of Portugal he wandered for many a month, every night seeking a lodging from the hospitable doors of some of the many convents that then covered the face of the country; and with weary longing ears he listened to the recital of our Lady's Office, in the vain hope of catching those words which should be the signal to him of rest.

At length, one evening found him near Guimares, a town not far from his old hermitage; and according to his custom, he asked of a passer-by whether there were no monastery in the neighbourhood where he might ask shelter for the night. The man to whom he put the question seemed scarcely inclined for a very courteous reply: "We have no monks here," he answered, surlily; "unless you call the new-fashioned friars yonder by such a name."

"And who are they?" said Gonsalvo, who had been about to turn away in disappointment, but was recalled by the latter part of the sentence.

"The Friars of Mary some call them," said the

man; "friars-preachers, as they call themselves—friars beggars, I say, were a better name; and beggar treatment they should have, did I rule the land."

"Beggar!" thought Gonsalvo, and the word was full of home to his ears; "then I will surely try the beggars' home, whatever it may be. I would pray you to show me where I may find these friars' convent," he said aloud, addressing his companion; "I am a stranger here, and can scarce guess my way."

"Convent," said the man, with a contemptuous laugh; "why, look down yonder, where you see the grey mound by the river-side: some where among the stones and rubbish you will find the convent; a community, methinks, of bats and moles were the fittest for such a hole: and that patched habit," he added, eyeing the pilgrim with no very flattering glance, "may chance to suit their taste."

Gonsalvo looked in the direction pointed out, and saw indeed on the opposite bank of the river a rude heap of building, which presented a spectacle almost justifying the sneering description bestowed on it by the speaker. But the aspect of its almost squalid poverty, far from repelling him, attracted him with a wonderful power; and crossing the little bridge that separated him from the town, he in a few moments stood at the door of the strange convent. A ruinous house formed the centre of the building; but later additions had been made on either side, extending, however, no higher than the second story, the basement being formed of a narrow cloister, whilst the rooms that were ranged over it were rudely constructed of turf and stones cemented together with mud. The whole of the erection was scarcely superior in style to his own hermitage of Amaranta; and yet, poor and humble as it was, Gonsalvo felt there was something about its look which might inspire you with devotion. His signal soon brought the porter to the door; he wore a white tunic and scapular, such as Gonsalvo had never seen before, and his appearance corresponded

with the austere and simple character of the place "May it please you," said Gonsalvo, "I am a poor pilgrim, who would crave a night's lodging under your roof for the love of God. They told me yonder that the Friars of Mary were not wont to drive away the beggars from their door."

"You are welcome, brother," said the friar, to whom a single glance had revealed enough to persuade him that the pilgrim was worthy of his trust,—"that is, if you be content with hard fare and lodging; for the friars-preachers have little luxury to offer to their guests; but you must speak to the father-prior. A pilgrim, and, as I guess, from the Holy Land, has a sure claim on his hospitality."

As he spoke, he led Gonsalvo through the rough cloister into a room whose furniture consisted of a table and wooden bench, where a man sat writing, whose appearance riveted him at once, filling him with an emotion of reverence which induced him to kneel uncovered as he asked his blessing. And well might such a sentiment be aroused at the first sight of St. Peter Gonsalez, or, as he was then more commonly called, Saint Telmo, the Prior of Guimares. The nobility of his natural bearing made itself perceived even under the poor religious habit which he wore, whilst none could doubt that in him the humility of the saint mingled with the courageous firmness of a Christian hero. When Gonsalvo rose from his knees, the two gazed in one another's countenances long and earnestly; and the instinct of the Divine Spirit, with which both were so richly endowed, revealed to each the secrets of holiness which lay buried in the soul of his companion.

"Thou wilt lodge here to-night, good pilgrim," said the prior; "and the hour of Compline is even now at hand. In the morning we must meet again; for surely there is much whereof thou and I must speak before we part."

The cell to which Gonsalvo was conducted was in the dormitory above the cloister of which we have

spoken; it was scarcely four feet wide, and being nearly open to the dormitory, the least noise outside could be distinctly heard by its occupant. As Gonsalvo lay on the rough bed which formed nearly the only furniture of the cell, he could catch the sound of the brethren's feet as they assembled in the dormitory to recite the Little Office of Our Lady, as is the custom in the order before retiring to rest; and then, at last, the welcome words broke on his ear: "*Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.*" He listened, with a throbbing heart, till the recital should be finished; for he knew if the same salutation were repeated at its close, that the token given him by Mary was found, and his wanderings were at an end. And it was even so: Gonsalvo bowed his head in thankfulness, and murmured to himself, with inexpressible joy of heart, "*Hæc requies mea.*"

When next he appeared before the prior it was to solicit from him the holy habit of the order to which he had been so marvellously led,—a request which the Saint did not hesitate to grant when he learnt that the pilgrim, whose appearance had so attracted him the night before, was none other than the hermit Gonsalvo, whose saintly fame had long since reached the convent of Guimares. Another change therefore passed over his life; priest, pilgrim, and hermit, he saw himself enrolled among a community of brethren living in the first fervour of their institute, and under the guidance and government of a Saint. The perfection of his soul, trained in the school of suffering, soon became apparent to all; and a year after his profession in the order, it was determined to send him out to preach. The devotion of the people of Amaranta towards him, and the great fruit of souls which he had gained among them during his former residence, induced his superiors to choose that spot as the scene of his labours; and thus, after an absence of two years, he returned to his little hermitage, which continued his principal place of abode during the remainder of his life. The town of Amaranta which now

stands in the valley, which was then so sweet and lovely a wilderness, was first formed of the people who built huts and cottages round his grotto, that they might benefit from the neighbourhood of the Saint; and the bridge which spans the Tamaga, where it dashes over the high and precipitous rocks that rise round the valley, stands on the site of one which he built by the direction of an angel, and which cost him many years of incessant labour, in the course of which his miraculous powers were often displayed. On the 10th of January, 1259, voices were heard in all the country and villages round about, which said, "Arise, and go to the burial of the Saint." The people ran wondering through the streets, asking one another who was dead; and a common inspiration determined them to proceed to the hermitage of Amaranta, where indeed they found the venerable body of the aged man lying on the stone-floor surrounded by the community of Guimares, who had been called to witness his departure.

Such are the outlines of a history whose singular character makes us regret the imperfect details which have been preserved concerning one whose life exhibited by turns a picture of almost every religious vocation which we find separately in the lives of other Saints. And in all, we are told, "he lived without reproach"—well deserving, by the blind and childlike faith which guided him in his long and weary pilgrimages, of that sweet name at last by which it was then the privilege of the Dominican order to be popularly known—"The Friar of Mary."

THE VICTORY OF MURET.

DURING the year 1213 the south of France had been the scene of a long and weary struggle between the Counts of the House of Toulouse and their Catholic subjects. Both parties had at length exchanged negotiations and treaties for open and determined hostilities. The circumstances which gave rise to the celebrated war with the Albigenses are doubtless known to all our readers; one of the most brilliant of its events was the victory of Muret, gained, according to the universal belief of the age, by the prayers offered by the Catholics in the Rosary to the Blessed Virgin.

A short pause of hostilities had taken place in consequence of the efforts of the Holy See and the council which met at Lavaur in the beginning of the year; but the decision of that council had been unfavourable to the Count of Toulouse, and King Peter of Arragon, who had espoused his cause, determined to open a fresh campaign against the Catholic confederates, without waiting for the arrival of the papal legate, who was on the road, commissioned by Innocent III. to arrange new articles of peace. Simon de Montfort was the well-known leader of the Catholics; but he was without an army. A small body of men were with him at the town of Fangeaux, when the news was suddenly brought him that the king of Arragon had passed the Pyrenees, and, together with the Counts of Toulouse, Foix, and Comminges, had advanced against the strong fortress of Muret, a town occupied by the Catholics, and situated on the Garonne, about three leagues above Toulouse. The army of the Albigense chiefs consisted

of 40,000 foot and 2,000 horse, according to the lowest reckoning, while some affirm it to have amounted altogether to 100,000 men. The forces of the Catholics consisted of no more than 800 cavalry, and about an equal number of infantry; and with this handful of followers De Montfort instantly resolved to set out for the relief of the town. He was joined at Bolbonne by the Bishops of Toulouse, Uzès, and several others. One of them endeavoured to dissuade him from what seemed a mere madness; but he remained unmovable in his determination. "The King of Arragon," he said, "has come to fight to please a woman (meaning the daughter of the Count of Toulouse, affianced to his eldest son); but God Himself will fight for us." He entered the church of Bolbonne, and prayed for some time before the altar. Ungirding his sword and laying it there, he offered it to God; then as he took it back again, he said, "O Lord, who hast chosen me, all unworthy as I am, to do battle in Thy name, I this day take my sword from Thine altar, that I may receive it from Thee, since for Thee I am about to fight." Then he proceeded to Saverdun, where it was determined in a council of war to rest that night, and press on for Muret on the following morning.

That night was spent by all in prayer and preparation for death; they confessed their sins devoutly, and, as tradition tells us, united altogether in the devotion of the Rosary, then but just beginning to be propagated. The next day they proceeded on their march, in spite of the continued rain, which rendered the roads almost impassable; crossed the Garonne without opposition, and on the evening of the 11th of September found themselves behind the towers of Muret. The soldiers, full of ardour, demanded to be led instantly to meet the enemy; but De Montfort, seeing the horses tired out by their long and fatiguing journey, judged it better to enter the town at once, and to defer any hostile movement until the following day. The bishops meanwhile had despatched two religious to the camp of the King of

Arragon to propose conditions of peace; but they had been repulsed with the sarcastic answer, "That it was scarcely worth while to hold a conference for the sake of the handful of scoundrels whom they had brought with them." They did not, however, abandon their hopes of bringing about some terms of conciliation, and sent word to the king that on the following morning they should appear barefoot before him, and implore him to reconsider his answer; but he would listen to no proposals short of the instant surrender of the town, together with the whole Catholic army, to his discretion. Early on the following day they attempted to carry their design into effect, and sent a religious before them to announce their approach. De Montfort caused the gates to be opened for him to pass through; but as he did so, a band of the heretics fell on him, and at the same time a very storm of stones and arrows was directed against the house where the bishops were assembled. De Montfort soon repulsed his adversaries, and returning to the ecclesiastics, "Do you not see," he said, "that your negotiations avail nothing? It is time now to fight,—to conquer or to perish." He gave orders to his followers to arm themselves, and entered the church, where the Bishop of Uzès offered the Holy Sacrifice. As he knelt before the altar, he again consecrated himself and his cause to God, saying these words: "My God, I offer you the sacrifice of my body and my soul." Then he went down into the town, where all his gallant little company were now gathered together, with a small reinforcement which he had received the evening before from his countess. His forces now amounted to nearly 1,000 men; for the infantry were left to garrison the place, and he intended to meet the enemy with his horsemen alone. They were all men of tried valour and determination, and strong in a noble faith; strong also in that purity of conscience and readiness to die for God, which gave them something of the glory of the martyr. De Montfort placed himself at their head with a cheerful and gallant air

"Have you counted your people?" said one of his friends. "I count neither friends nor enemies," was his reply; "if God is for us, we are enough." As they stood waiting for the signal to move, the Bishops of Toulouse and Comminges approached to address to them some last words of exhortation, and to give them the solemn benediction. They carried a relic of the true cross, at the sight of which every man flung himself from his horse, and knelt in submissive reverence. One by one they went to the bishops' feet and kissed the holy relic, till the Bishop of Comminges, seeing the hour was growing late, and that Fulk of Toulouse was unable to address the troops from his deep agitation, took the crucifix from his hands, and going to a little eminence with it, harangued the army in a few encouraging words, and blessed them as they knelt. Then the ecclesiastics turned back into the church to pray, and the thousand devoted warriors rode out of the city-gate.

The besiegers had left their position to receive them, and were too confident of success to make any arrangement for securing it. They were already raising cries of mockery and insulting triumph over their handful of antagonists, when they were, as it were, stunned by the shock of a charge so terrible and impetuous that it bore all before it. Ere they knew what had happened, their first division was overthrown. De Montfort and his men-at-arms knew too well the disparity of numbers to trust to long manœuvering; their only hope was in a *coup-de-main*, and in the surprise which might result from the very audacity of the attack. As soon therefore as they were free from the gates, they ranged themselves in order of battle, and galloped against the ranks of the enemy. Dashing against them with irresistible fury, they broke through every obstacle; and before the advanced guard of the army had recovered from their disorder, riding through them with the impetuosity of a whirlwind, they fell on the Catalans, who were posted behind, under the command of the Count de Foix. The

whole affair took but a few minutes; for the Catholic warriors had never drawn bridle, or slackened their speed. They literally rode their opponents down by sheer force. Glancing around him, and seeing the advantage which this first success had given him, De Montfort resolved to pursue it ere his enemies had recovered their presence of mind. Leading his followers on in the same gallant and extraordinary style, he dashed forward to the very centre of the hostile army, where the royal standard of Arragon indicated the presence of the king. The Spaniards received him with a valour as determined as his own; and the terrible nature of the struggle for a few minutes is thus described by the younger Count of Toulouse, who was a spectator of the conflict. "The noise of that shock," he says, "was so violent, that it was like the sound of a multitude of woodcutters when they are hewing down the forest-trees with their axes." The fight was hand to hand, and the swords of the combatants were rattling on the helmets of their adversaries; but the struggle, fierce as it was, was very short. Something of supernatural power seemed to be given to the strokes of the Crusaders, and the Arragonese troops gave way. The voice of their chief might have rallied them, but he lay dead on the field; after a brave resistance he had been struck from his horse, and fell, together with the flower of his army and of his court, who had gathered round him for his defence. His death was the signal for a general flight, a panic seemed to spread through every rank; for it was felt that some more than human agency was fighting against them. As the citizens of Muret looked from their walls, they could see the whole plain without covered with fugitives. Some threw themselves into the Garonne, others fell like sheep before the knife of the butcher, and scarcely offered resistance to the swords of their opponents; whilst the flying troops were still pursued, until, weary of slaughter, the Crusaders turned their bridles, and rode back over the battle-field to consider the best means of securing their

victory. But a second battle remained to be fought, for whilst the cavalry of the two armies were engaged, the infantry of the heretic forces had made a furious assault on the town, which they hoped to carry whilst De Montfort was occupied in the pursuit. De Montfort turned against them another of those terrific charges, that swept them before his horse's feet, as stones before a mountain torrent; and the victory was gained: nearly 20,000 of the heretics fell in these two engagements. Of the Catholics we are assured, upon evidence we cannot doubt, that eight men only were missing when the day's work was over.

As De Montfort rode over the field of battle, his horse's feet stopped by the body of the King of Arragon. He drew his bridle; and descending from the saddle, he bent over his fallen foe with tears of generous compassion. It was a picture of the ages of chivalry,—that mixture of the fiercest valour and the tenderest emotions of pity. He kissed the bleeding wounds, and gave orders for his honourable burial; then, with the instinct of true Christian chivalry, he returned to Muret barefoot, and went first to the church to give thanks to God for the victory he had gained. His horse and arms were sold, and the money given to the poor.

The particulars of this battle are given in a letter drawn up by the bishops and others, who were present in Muret, and who, after stating the extraordinary circumstances of the whole affair, and the relative numbers lost on both sides, add, "We but attest that which we have seen and heard; and certify that all which we have related is true." Indeed, it was felt by all sides, that the success of the Catholics must be attributed to greater influence than mere valour; and the universal voice of the faithful declared that they owed it to the special patronage and favour of Mary, whom they had invoked in her holy Rosary. De Montfort himself was accustomed to speak of it in this way; and in the little chapel of the Rosary, erected in the same year within the church of Muret, the circumstances of the battle, and

the popular belief regarding it, are at once commemorated by the figures represented in the picture which hangs above the altar. In the middle is the Blessed Virgin, on one side the great St. Dominic, receiving the Rosary from her hand, whilst he grasps in his own a crucifix pierced with three arrows. On the other side are kneeling Fulk of Toulouse and the Count De Montfort. The same group recur in many paintings of the period, as if to keep alive the association of the victory with the devotion of the Rosary and the prayers of St. Dominic. And if we consider the extraordinary character of the battle, and the truly devoted and Christian spirit of those who won it, we shall not hesitate to rank Muret among one of the most distinguished of those heroic conflicts which have been fought for the faith, and gained under the invocation of "Our Lady of Victories."

THE DOMINICANS IN GHENT.

(1577.)

THE celebrated political act known under the name of *The Peace of Religion*, had in 1577 permitted the people of Ghent the free exercise of Catholic worship. In the mean time, Peter Dathenus, the most fiery and violent of the Calvinistic ministers of that period, in concert with Ryhone and Jean Hembyze, who at this time held jointly the reins of power in the capital of Flanders, sought in every possible way to prevent the carrying out of this treaty. The clergy had, it is true, resumed the solemn ceremonies of the ancient worship; the monks had returned to their convents; but a constant feeling of uneasiness and dread continued still to oppress their hearts. Incessantly pursued, watched, and threatened by magistrates whose greatest desire was to witness the triumph of the new doctrines; exposed every day to the caprices of an arbitrary government; subjected to the excesses of an undisciplined and barbarous soldiery,—they felt that the most futile pretexts would be seized upon, in order to deprive them on the first opportunity of the exercise of their time-honoured religion. But these priests,—these holy men who had been consecrated to the altar from their youth, and whose days had been passed in religious exercises, were men of singularly bold and determined hearts. As is always the case at the epoch of religious wars, when faith is watered and nourished by persecution, and supplies a supernatural courage, it happened that the more the violence of the enemy was shown in persecuting the servants of God,—disturbing

and harassing them even in the solitude of their holy asylums,—so much the more were they endued with perseverance and energy in defending the holy worship to which they were dedicated. It is a noble thing to witness a profound and lively belief in the verities of the faith struggling against the intolerant fanaticism of impiety. The sight of such firm conviction and strength of soul strikes the beholder with admiration, and inspires even the most indifferent with a feeling of respect for the dignity of the oppressed.

Don John of Austria, the moderate representative of Philip II., wished to restore the Flemish provinces to a better state; and his good intentions were a means of restraining the Prince of Orange, who sought to triumph over the King of Spain, by availing himself of the discontent excited by the cruelties of the Duke of Alva. The Prince would have liked a governor better who would have trod in the steps of the Spanish pro-consul: but circumstances had changed; time had proved that mildness and lenity were more effectual for good than persecution and the scaffold. The conduct of Don John induced the wisest men to rally round him; and this greatly disconcerted the plans of the Calvinistic leaders.

The *Peace of Religion* was unfavourable to their views; they considered that to crush for ever the Spanish dominion there was one infallible means, namely, the destruction of all that pertained to the Catholic worship. A public act, it is true, hindered them from putting their odious designs avowedly into execution; but there remained many secret means of oppression, which, without ostensibly violating this famous "peace," would nevertheless bring about the same result.

The year 1578 was especially remarkable for this kind of persecution, and for the recurrence of the horrible machinations devised by the Iconoclasts of 1566.

The Convent of the Dominicans was one of the monastic institutions of the town of Ghent which excited more than others, the malevolence of the Calvinists.

The reputation for sanctity and learning of these religious, their extensive possessions, their magnificent library, supplied sufficient reasons in the eyes of the Calvinists for the destruction of their establishment. Scandalous vices, political intrigues, crimes of every kind and degree, were charged upon the members of this unfortunate monastery. Meanwhile these holy religious lived on quietly, and in the peace of the Lord, occupying themselves in good works, praying and praising God, relieving the destitute, and employing their leisure hours in literary labours and in the study of the sciences.

It was on the Feast of Pentecost, 1578. High Mass was ended; and the brothers were still prostrate in the choir, when a dreadful tumult was heard at the doors of the church,—a confused noise of clamorous voices, mingled with oaths and the clashing of arms. Scarcely had the monks turned with anxious looks towards the door of the church, than they saw a troop of half-drunken soldiers enter, having at their head the famous leaguer De la Noue.

"Come, fellows," cried he, advancing towards the choir; "leave your prayers, and show us this instant your brother-prior, who is summoned to appear before M. de Ryhone, that he may answer for the plots and base practices towards the Calvinists of this town of which he is accused."

"What do you want with me?" asked the venerable Brother de Borggrave, advancing towards the soldiers. "I am the prior."

"It is you, is it? then follow me." And turning to his companions-in-arms, the ruffian said: "I have got possession of this madman prior; do you take these other fools." And while the captain led away the prior, the soldiers shut up the remaining fifty-two Dominicans in the refectory.

Brother Borggrave appeared before Ryhone.

"Accursed hypocrite," cried the furious tribune as he appeared before him, "I command you to confess

at once the crime of which you stand accused. We ordered fifty soldiers to be lodged in your house; two of them have suddenly died, and their companions assure me that you attempted to poison them all, but that the poison took effect only upon these two unfortunate men."

"Monsieur de Ryhone," answered the prior, calmly, "I can only say in one word that this infamous accusation is false. As for myself, I am in your hands; do with me what you will."

"Ah! you wish to hoodwink me by an appearance of boldness; consider well what you say, for by my faith it will be the worse for you!"

"I have never spoken against the truth, sir; and, God is my witness, I have no fear of unjust punishment."

"We shall see," cried Ryhone, furious at witnessing the courage displayed in the bearing of the holy man.

In an hour after this interview, the Prior de Borggrave was sent back to the Dominican convent; but pale and trembling, and with his limbs dislocated. They had put him to the torture; but happily the venerable religious, sustained by conscious innocence, had preserved an unshaken firmness; and nothing could induce him to confess a crime which he had not committed.

Scarcely had a few hours passed, when a commotion was heard in the church of the convent, apparently close to the refectory, some of the windows of which received a borrowed light from the nave of the church.

"My God! what has happened?" cried the affrighted monks; and at the same time, climbing up on the tables and chairs, they looked down into the church. The spectacle which presented itself to their eyes was a fearful one: a crowd of furious men were occupied in the destruction of all that hitherto had been honoured and revered. The altar was destroyed, the tabernacle broken, the pictures defaced; the vile soldiery were decking themselves out with the dalmatics and chasubles, and drinking wine from the sacred chalices; trampling under foot the Crucifix and the images of the Blessed Virgin, tearing in pieces the albs and surplices, and

making the vault of the church resound with blasphemous imprecations. It was enough to make the poor monks weep tears of blood. They remained with their pale countenances fastened, as it were, to the windows of the church; and but for their pious resignation, would have been ready to dash their heads against the bars which held them captive. Alas, they were prisoners, they were powerless; they could only invoke the mercy of God in this moment of fury and desolation.

The library of the convent, which adjoined the church, was soon likewise entered; and all the literary treasures which sixty years of toil, research, and expense had amassed, were hurled from the windows, scattered to the winds, or precipitated into the river Lys, which flowed behind the convent.

The work of destruction was ended; and the poor Dominicans believed that it only remained for them to die. They fell on their knees in the middle of the refectory, and piously chanted that expressive psalm: *Domine, ne in furore tuo arguas me!* Their chants had long ceased, night had arrived, and no other noise was heard in the convent but the dull and monotonous step of the two sentinels, who, with shouldered muskets, walked up and down before the bolted door of the refectory.

Meanwhile the excesses committed against the Dominican convents, in contempt of the "act of peace," had had the effect of exciting the indignation of the Catholics and of all men of moderate views; and for several days there had been a rumour of a projected outrage against the monks, the leaders alleging as a pretext for their violent proceedings, the pretended attempts of the Dominicans to poison the soldiers. Ryhone therefore feared every instant that an insurrection would take place in the town, and that the people would come to the succour of the religious so shamefully persecuted.

When the leader of the band of rioters had reported

to him the result of their expedition, he ordered him not to lose sight of the Dominicans, but to force them, in some way or other, to quit their monastery; hoping, no doubt, that their example would be followed by others, and that the monastic orders, terrified by these attempts, would one after another abandon their convents and retreat from the town. Meanwhile the Dominicans, shut up in total darkness, waited with anxiety for the decision of their fate.

It was just midnight when a fresh noise was heard; the door of the refectory was opened, and sixty men of ominous aspect, each carrying a lighted taper, entered the vast hall. With an ironical smile on their lips, they ordered the monks to take their places at the table: the latter obeyed; for all resistence was hopeless. They placed a taper before each religious, took their muskets in their hands, and aimed at the monks; waiting, as they said, only for a signal to launch them into eternity. Time, however, passed on, and no one appeared to put an end to this frightful suspense. Horrible imprecations issued from the mouths of the soldiers: they cursed the tardiness of their leader, and cried that they were going to fire without waiting for the order of their captain, when the door was opened a second time, and a new personage appeared. This time it was a man tall and thin, but powerfully made; he wore red-striped knee-breeches, his shirt-sleeves turned up above the elbow, and a scarlet hat without a feather on his head. He carried an enormous two-edged sabre, and had all the appearance of an executioner. "Back!" cried he as he entered, and cast a terrific glance around him; "back, soldiers, withdraw your muskets: it is I who am charged by M. de Ryhone with executing justice upon this monastery; only see that none make resistance. The noise of your firearms might rouse those who take the part of these rascally friars; I am ordered to adopt a more quiet method, and to cut off their heads with this sword. On your knees, accursed monks; your hour is come!"

"I am the Prior of the Dominicans; to me belong the first honours of martyrdom. But I ask one moment longer."

"Well, one moment; but make quick work of it."

"Brothers and friends," exclaimed the venerable prior, addressing himself to his companions, "Jesus Christ has died for our sins. Poor sinners as we are, let us prove that we are not unworthy of the sacrifice He has made for us of His life. Let us die with firmness and courage; let us praise the Lord for having reserved to us the martyrs' palm."

"Come, come, when will you have finished?" broke in the executioner with impatience. "I have no time to lose; remove your cowl, and kneel down before me."

"Adieu, my brothers; pardon me all the faults I have committed while I was your prior." And kneeling down on the bare flags of the refectory, Father Borggrave bowed his head, waiting for the fatal blow. The monks pressing his hand, also asked pardon for all they had done; and invoking heaven, they threw themselves on their knees and together chanted the *De profundis*. It was truly an awe-inspiring yet touching sight! this noble resignation of fifty men preparing to die, and thus calmly joining in the Church's prayers for the departed, presented a scene so grand and majestic, that it recalled to mind the first martyrs of the Christian faith.

The executioner himself appeared moved; for though he said bluffly to the monks, "Now, get ready; for I can't be kept waiting," there was something of irresolution in his voice, which betrayed an involuntary emotion.

The door of the refectory opened once more, and a man of savage appearance rushed into the hall. "Hold! stay!" cried he, addressing himself to the executioner. Then turning towards the monks, "I offer you one chance for your lives: quit the convent immediately, and leave the town."

"M. de Ryhone," replied the Prior, recognising the voice of the tribune of Ghent, "if our death can

be of service to the Catholic religion, we are ready to suffer. But if we are allowed to live and to follow freely the religion of our fathers, we will accept your offer,—we will depart."

Some hours after, the Dominican convent of Ghent was deserted; the good religious had abandoned the home to which they were not to return until six years later.

The terrible comedy we have described was played off for no other end than to force the monks to quit the capital of Flanders, where a few months later the cold and intolerant fanaticism of the Calvinists reigned supreme.

THE MARTYRS OF STONE.

WE are about, for a few moments, to draw the reader's attention away from the foreign lands which have hitherto formed the scenery of our stories, to place him amid a more familiar landscape; such as England once presented, when her beauty was undefaced by the havoc of modern civilisation, and of which traces are still left among us, to show what that beauty must once have been. We shall place him in a country where trade is now the busiest, and where commerce has even given a name to its geography; but in the time when the events of which we speak took place, the smoky country of the Potteries was a wide and noble forest, and formed part of the dominions of the Saxon kings of Mercia.

What the English forest-lands were, which covered the greater portion of the island in the earlier period of its history, we may judge in some degree by the remains still left of some of them. Any one who is familiar with the royal chases of Hampshire or Herefordshire knows what beauty of greenwood scenery is to be found in their recesses; what a glorious light struggles through the tracery of the tangled branches, and chequers the broad lawns that lie under their shadow with a broken light of golden green, that has a quivering richness in it like the rays from a cathedral window. They know the sweet wood-music that stirs among the boughs, and can learn to distinguish all its changes and flexions, from the low dirge that sighs through the melancholy pine to the quick glad rustle

of the oak-leaves as they move and dance joyfully to the morning breeze. All this they know, and many another of the secrets of the sciences which Nature teaches to the eye and ear of her votaries; but if they would complete the picture of an English forest as it stood 1200 years ago, they must add some features which do not exist now-a-days. For, first, there was danger; not the danger of a snake or an angry deer, but the danger of a time when the land was still half-barbarous, and the Christian faith militant against heathenism. And so in the hidden nooks of these forests you might chance to come on the rude cell of a hermit, who had fled into the wilderness that he might worship God in peace; and this was the second feature which distinguished an English forest of those days: you could scarce go far, in Saxon times, without falling on traces of that faith which, though it had not as yet made entire conquest of the country, had nevertheless covered it with monasteries and churches, and honoured its barbarous nomenclature with a glorious calendar of saints. It was in one of these forests, that extended in the seventh century over the wide valley watered by the Trent, that a royal hunting-train might be seen winding through the woody glades, with its usual equipment of hounds and horsemen. Doubtless it would seem a strange sight to our modern sportsman; for the huntsmen were armed with pike and javelin, and the dogs were of a breed that Leicestershire has never seen, —the strong old British hounds, that were even in Strabo's days exported to foreign countries, being reckoned excellent "both for the hunt and war." Indeed a hunt in those days was not very dissimilar to war, in the preparation that attended it and the disasters which often befell men in its pursuit; for English woods had robbers as well as deer, and other denizens beside. "Very near to the north," says a writer, describing London in the days of Henry II., "there lieth a large forest, in which are woody groves of wild beasts; in the coverts whereof do lurk bucks and does, wild-boars

and bulls;" to which catalogue, at the time of which we write, there might be added wolves, and even bears. The hunting-train of the Mercian prince, therefore, which was threading the windings of the Trentham Forest, had a gallant, and something of a warlike appearance. The men who composed it were not those who would be likely to fear much from wolf or boar; they were rude and ferocious in their bearing, and of almost gigantic stature. Some were on foot, having long staves to beat the game from the bushes where it might be lurking; but the greater number were mounted, and rode with a bold and fearless air.

A little ahead of the company, there might, however, be seen one whose aspect was very different from those of the men by whom he was surrounded. To judge by his face, he seemed scarcely more than eighteen; and his slight figure and delicate features presented a singular contrast to the fierce and herculean forms of his companions. It was Wulfhad, the eldest son of the Mercian king Wulfhere, for whose pleasure this hunting expedition had that morning set out from the royal palace in the neighbourhood. Even a passing observer would probably have declared that the owner of that countenance could scarcely have been a pagan. There was a mildness in his soft blue eye, and a gentleness in his whole demeanour, that could never have been found in one addicted to the bloody superstition of the Saxon heathens; and yet, were the critic one well skilled in such a study, he might equally have hesitated in pronouncing him a Christian. Let it not be thought fanciful if we say that no sentiment ever stamped its mark on the human countenance with a surer and clearer line than does the gift of faith. Without it there may be refinement, or even devotion; but there is always the look of unsatisfied restlessness, and the sadness of an unanswered question; and this was the feeling that breathed over every feature of the pale and beautiful countenance of the Mercian prince.

Nor will this be difficult to explain, when we under-

stand the position of young Wulfhad. His father was a Christian by name only, having professed the faith in order to receive the hand of Erminilda, the daughter of King Ercombest of Kent, in whom centered the blood, not only of all the Saxon kings, but yet more of their most glorious saints. Her ancestry might be reckoned on the calendar; her mother, her sisters, and her aunts were saints, and in God's providence, saints also were destined to be her children. On her marriage with the king he had received baptism, and pledged himself to destroy idolatry throughout his kingdom; a promise, however, he found it inconvenient to fulfil, as the people were still much attached to their pagan superstitions. Erminilda, therefore, though permitted in the exercise of her own religion, was compelled to do so under restrictions; nor had she, as yet, ventured to secure the baptism of any of her children, except her only daughter Wereburga. Yet her sons felt in her gentle and beautiful character the influence of a religion which as yet they did not know. They were trained in the practice of Christian manners before they knew the Christian faith; and Wulfhad had learnt a disgust for the impiety of paganism, whilst his soul was filled with an insatiable longing to find its resting-place in some purer creed. His mind was preyed upon by doubt, or rather by its own emptiness of belief; and it was to lull its disquietude by the diversion of animal exercise, rather than for any real pleasure he took in the amusement, that he often led his followers to the forest, and spent the day in the fierce excitement of the chase. Near to him, and seemingly holding the first station among his attendants, rode one whose appearance was as forbidding and suspicious as that of the young prince was prepossessing; it was Werebode, the favourite knight of King Wulfhere, and himself a ferocious pagan.

It was not long before a deer was started from the thicket, and the chase began. The dew lay fresh upon the grass, for it was still early morning, and the scent was good; so Wulfhad was roused for a while from

the pensiveness which seemed to have absorbed him, and followed with unusual spirit upon the track of the hounds. Whether it were that the recklessness of a mind that was ill at ease added boldness to his riding, or indeed that some higher influence was directing the course of that morning's hunt, he soon left his followers far behind him; nay, the very dogs lagged off one by one, and he was left alone with his own faithful hound, who, like himself, kept on untiringly on the traces of the unfortunate doe. He had ridden thus for some hours without being conscious that he had outstripped his companions, until he suddenly observed that no one was near him, and that he had been led into a part of the forest he had never seen before. The dog too seemed at fault, as if he had lost the scent; and Wulf-had began to think his ride would be without purpose, and that he would do best to find the way back to the remainder of his party. This, however, was not so easy; the place was strange to him, and he had not observed the path by which he came. As he looked about him, it seemed even as if it were seldom that any human step could have penetrated into the recess where he now found himself; for the forest was wild and tangled, and bore no trace of human cultivation or abode. He wound his horn; but the only answer to the sound was the echo cast back by the rocks that rose in the distance; and tying his horse to a tree, he resolved to dismount, and search if he could find out some road which should conduct him to a more frequented part. He was not long before he heard the pleasant sound of running water; and knowing that did he but follow the windings of the stream it could scarcely fail to lead him safely, he took his horse by the bridle, and proceeded to make his way towards the quarter whence the sound proceeded. He had not gone far before the thick heavy foliage of the trees seemed to open and admit a flood of light; the smooth grass of a green and beautiful forest lawn stretched beneath his feet, the stream whose ripple he had heard

was to be seen flowing gently over its rocky bed, and the whole scene was one of singular and surpassing beauty. But what was Wulfhad's surprise to see in this lonely and unfrequented spot the form of something like a human habitation? It was but a rude kind of dwelling, scooped, as it seemed, out of the rock, and overshadowed by the trees that hung above its entrance. Wulfhad approached with some curiosity to discover the inhabitant of so singular an abode; but his surprise was not lessened by the spectacle that met his eye when he stood in the open doorway, and was enabled to look into the cavern. Its furniture consisted of a table and seat, hewn, like the dwelling itself, out of the rock; but on one side the appearance of a rough altar, above which was carved the figure of the crucifix, betrayed the character of its inmate; and Wulfhad knew that he had fallen on the retreat of one of the persecuted solitaries of his mother's faith. Kneeling in prayer before that altar was a man of venerable aspect, whose meditation had not been disturbed by the prince's quiet step upon the grass; nor was it till his shadow filled the doorway, and intercepted the narrow ray of light, that the hermit was aware of the presence of a stranger, and rose to his feet to receive him.

"You are an early visitor, my son," he said, "nor know I that we have ever met before; was it chance that brought you to my solitude, or are you indeed of the true and suffering faith, and so have come to seek for ghostly counsel at my hands?"

"In truth, good father," replied the young man, "it was the track of a wandering deer that guided me hither; and I am not what you deem, nor know I aught of the faith you speak of, save that it suffers, and therein," he added with a sad smile, "has a claim upon my love."

"That is no pagan thought, my son," said the hermit, bending on him a look of tender interest. "To whom am I speaking, if the question troubles you not to answer?"

"To Wulfhad, the son of Wulfhere," replied the prince; "and you say rightly, for I am no pagan. I have an empty faith, and an empty heart; but to those bloody idols at least will I never bow my knee."

"Now may the dear Lord who died on yonder rood be blessed and glorified," exclaimed the hermit; "surely has it been His love and thine own good angel that has brought thee hither, that thou shouldst receive the words of life, yea, though from the unworthy lips of the sinner Chad;" and with these words, St. Chad, for it was even he, made the young man sit down beside him, and drew from his not unwilling lips the secrets of his heart. He found the ground ready prepared, and wanting only the hand of the sower to cast in the seed of faith. The sublime truths of revelation found ready entrance into a soul already thirsting to receive them; and when, late in the evening, Wulfhad prepared to return to the palace, it was with the promise to find his way again to the hermit's cell, that he might by further instruction be fitted to receive the holy rite of baptism.

His long absence was easily explained when he reached the palace by the fact of his having outridden his companions and lost his way; but when day after day the same adventure was recurring, the attention of the courtiers began to be excited. The young prince's taste for hunting seemed strangely to increase; yet there was always some disaster, which served as the excuse for his separating from his attendants and coming home alone and at a later hour. One time it was the cast shoe of his horse, or the lameness of his favourite hound, or it might be the starting of some beast of prey whom he had resolved to follow; though, as it seemed, always with bad success, for Wulfhad brought no game to show as the spoils of his day's sport.

We have already mentioned a certain pagan knight who enjoyed the confidence of King Wulfhere, and who indeed in some sort held the place of governor to his sons. Werebode bore no good-will to the young prince; for he attributed to his dislike and influence his own

rejection as a suitor by the princess Wereburga; although, indeed, the true cause of his disappointment was the secret consecration of the Christian virgin to the service of God. Naturally of a suspicious temper and roused to vigilance by circumstances that seemed to enfold some mystery, he resolved on setting a watch on the prince's footsteps, that he might if possible discover the cause of his frequent wandering in the forest Meanwhile Wulfhad, all unconscious of the snare tha was being laid for him, had already received baptism at the hands of Chad. Nor was this all: the young catechumen had in his turn become an apostle; and communicating to his younger brother Rufin the instructions of the hermit, had brought him likewise to the same regenerating waters, and had stood godfather to him on a morning which, in the joy of his heart, he felt to be the happiest of his life; for both of them had knelt before the altar, as St. Chad celebrated the Holy Sacrifice before their eyes, and Wulfhad had served at those mysteries wherein he had learned to know the presence of his incarnate God; and when the Mass was over, and St. Chad had dismissed them with his blessing, it was with the promise that on the following Sunday they should return together, and receive from his hands for the first time the bread of life. They rode home side by side, both filled with a happiness that was some time ere it vented itself in words. Rufin was several years younger than his brother, a mere boy; differing too in bodily temperament and disposition; for his eye danced with a merry vivacity, and in the glorious light-heartedness of his years he frolicked on his pony beside his graver brother, and whistled to the dogs, and seemed to fill the glades of the dark and solemn forest with something of sunshine as he passed. They had ridden in silence for some time, and Wulfhad was the first to speak.

"Rufin," he said, "it seems to me that all things have a different look to-day from what they ever bore before, or rather, I should say the old look has come

back upon them that they used to wear when you and I were children."

"Dear brother," answered Rufin, "I know not what you mean, save, indeed, that your own face hath a different look; as for the forest, it was ever a glorious place to ride in."

"Aye," answered his brother, "but not for many a year has it been a glorious place to me. Not since I was a child, Rufin, has the sun looked bright, or the woods gay and gladsome till to-day. I know not how it was, but I have been an old man all my life; our mother's sadness, and those bloody pagan rites which I ever shrank from, weighed upon my heart; and my soul so craved for worship and for love, and that they never found till now. Now does it seem to me as if the sickly shadows had all flown away, and the darkness had gone out of the sunshine; and never surely did the birds sing with such a merry and abundant joy as they do this morning."

"Dear Wulfhad," returned his brother, "I am a Christian, and I thank God for it: it is the faith of our blessed mother; and with His grace, before you and I are dead it shall be the faith of Mercia too. Nevertheless, you know well that I was never such a dreamer as you are; and to my ear the birds you speak of have ever been sweeter songsters than any of my father's minstrels."

"Sweeter," said Wulfhad; "but to my heart they have been so pitiful and sad—the very branches of the trees have wailed above my head with a melancholy tone, and the more of beauty I found, even so much the more had I a longing that was never satisfied: and now it is satisfied, and my heart is at rest." And as he spoke, you might see that the pensive beauty of his eye was lit by the radiance of an unutterable peace.

"Brother," resumed Rufin, as they had ridden on for some time in silence, "do you know what I have been thinking? Even that the black cowl of our good hermit would suit your head far better than a steel head-

piece. How think you those fine fancies of yours will suit the Mercian folk, who have been used to be governed at the sword's point by our father?"

"You shall rule them, my Rufin," returned his brother; "that madcap spirit of yours will some day play with the sword and headpiece better than I should do. You shall be king, and I your subject; and some where in your broad lands of Mercia you shall find a nook for the hermit Wulfhad."

"Nay, not so," answered the boy; "for you are now my godfather, and we will go together. I would not be a hermit though," he added; "better be God's soldier, if you care not for knightly sword, and preach the faith, and plant the cross, and die a saint or a martyr." And he looked up in his brother's face, as if to see the effect his half-spoken words had produced.

Wulfhad had checked his horse, and was gazing before him at the sun, now fast sinking over the hills. He scarcely seemed to hear what was said; for his eye was fixed on the masses of golden clouds slowly rolling to the west, as though he sought to find among their depths a gate or a path to heaven. His bridle hung on his horse's neck, and his hands were clasped, as Rufin thought in prayer; and it seemed to him that the light, as it streamed on his upturned face, played with a strange and flickering ray over its features, and formed itself into a coronet of glory about his brow. There was another eye beside his own resting on them at that moment, nor had it stirred from watching them throughout the entire day. Werebode had followed on their track; and concealing himself behind the overhanging bushes, had been witness to the baptism of Rufin, and had carefully noted the day appointed for their return to the hermitage. The opportunity for his long-coveted revenge seemed now at hand; nor did he fail to improve it. As soon, therefore, as the two princes had returned to the palace, Werebode hastened to the pre-

sence of the king, and communicated the result of his day's inquiry. He knew, however, that the fact of their embracing the Christian faith, though it would scarcely fail of being highly displeasing to Wulfhere, would not of itself bring him to the point he desired; therefore he made an artful use of the presence of St. Chad to persuade the king that the whole was a treacherous plot against his crown, concerted in league with the Northumbrian monarch, who was the hereditary foe of the house of Mercia, and of whom St. Chad was indeed a subject.

The skilful insinuation and eloquence of Werebode were but too successfully planned: Wulfhere agreed to accompany him on the appointed day, that he might receive the proof of his son's treachery with his own eyes. The day arrived, a glorious July morning; the earth bathed in its summer flood of beauty, which made the green lawn before the hermitage, and the waving woods, and the clear crystal stream seem fit scenery for the solemn act which was to set the seal to the happiness of the two brothers, and unite them with the link of loving communion to their God.

Wulfhere and Werebode were in the hiding-place already known to the latter; and the king, as he stood there, could see all that passed. Scarcely, indeed, did he understand it; for he had never assisted at the Christian mysteries, far less had he been a partaker in them himself; yet, though as he stood by, the unconscious witness of his children's first communion, he comprehended but little of the ceremony, he saw enough to satisfy him of the truth of one part at least of Werebode's tale. They were Christians; and that in itself was an offence against his authority and positive command. Wherefore, breaking from his covert, he entered the hermitage with a hasty step, and laid a rough and angry hand upon Wulfhad's shoulder. "What means this foolery?" he said; "I thought thou hadst better known thy subject's duty. Up; and by the gods of

Hengist, if thou dost not speedily undo this morning's work, thy head shall pay the forfeit, wert thou twenty times my son!"

Wulfhad was still kneeling when his father spoke. Nor did there pass the shadow of a change over his countenance as he heard the king's passionate words: his Lord was with him, and within him, and even for a moment after his father had ceased to speak he remained in silence; for he felt as though it were something like profanation to move those happy consecrated lips in aught save thanksgiving to God. "Speak, boy," said the king again, whose fierce nature was irritated by his son's continued silence; "speak, I say, and tell me that thou or I am dreaming; there must be but one faith in Mercia."

Then Wulfhad rose; and slowly and reverently signing himself with the cross, he answered in a firm and resolute tone, "I am a Christian."

"A rebel rather," exclaimed the king, as he struck him furiously in the face; but his arm was held back by a boyish grasp, and Rufin threw himself between them.

"He is no rebel, father," said the child; "he has the most loyal heart in Mercia. I will die ere any of the pagan churls at court shall touch his head, or dare to call him traitor."

"Then die," answered the enraged monarch. "It is the false blood of Kent that speaks, and not the race of Penda;" and ere the words were finished, his sword was buried deep in the heart of Rufin. Wulfhad caught him as he fell, and leant to hear a faltering accent that fell from his lips.

"*I believe,*" he whispered; and the words were the last he uttered. With his dying thoughts the young catechumen was reciting the symbol of his faith; and then his head fell heavily on his brother's shoulder, and the short death-struggle was over.

"Is not one life enough?" exclaimed the hermit, as Wulfhere seemed about to turn his fury upon his

eldest son. But Werebode hastened to interrupt his words.

"The king needs not the counsel of Northumbria," he said; "if Wulfhad be indeed no traitor, let him offer proof of his allegiance. See here," he continued, seizing the crucifix from the altar, "let him but set his foot thus on the impious symbol, and we will believe his words;" and as he spoke he cast the sacred image to the ground, and trampled it in the dust. Wulfhad threw himself on his knees, and rescuing the crucifix from the profanation to which it was exposed, he pressed it to his heart. That action was the signal for his death; for the sword that was still wet with Rufin's blood descended heavily on his bowed head, half-severing it from his body; and clasping the sign of his redemption close to his breast, Wulfhad fell at the foot of the altar and expired.

The passion of Wulfhere seemed to grow calm when he saw his two sons lying dead before him; even Werebode himself stood pale and motionless, and there was a pause of terrible silence. Chad stooped over the martyrs' bodies, and raising them from the ground, he wiped the blood from their pale faces and laid them side by side on the altar-step; then he turned to the unhappy father, over whom, now that the moment of madness had passed away, there was fast stealing the anguish of remorse. "Thou hast given unto God two martyrs," he said; "and their blood is crying unto heaven, not for vengeance, but for grace. The hour is not far hence when thou wouldst barter the crown of Mercia but to find a place of penance; and when that hour is come, thou shalt return hither to seek it on thy children's grave. Go hence now, with the blood upon thy soul; but know that the memory of this deed shall never depart from off the land."

How Wulfhere and Werebode made their way back to the palace may be better imagined than described. A black despair seemed to have seized on the king's heart; and bitterly did he reproach his companion for

the crime to which his words had urged him. And when Erminilda came out to meet him, and, terrified by his gloomy aspect, strove to speak sweetly and cheerfully, and asked him in her gentle voice what troubled him that morning, and why he had been so long away, she heard from his own lips the tale of horror, which told her at once of her husband's crime and the death of both her sons.

But Erminilda was something more even than a Christian mother, she was a Christian saint; she put away from her the selfish grief for those whose fate, while the world called it cruel, was so glorious in the sight of God, and kept all her strength and tenderness for the comforting of her husband's soul. During the weeks of delirium and fever that followed on that fatal day, she never left his side; she brought back to him the better thoughts and associations which had been shrouded by long years of apostasy and violence. And when Wulfhere rose from his sick-bed penitent, yet scarcely venturing to hope, she brought St. Chad to his presence, and implored him to seal his conversion by the confession of his sins.

The future history of Wulfhere shows the success that crowned her efforts; for the remainder of his life was spent in penance for his crime. The idols were banished from the kingdom, and the blood of the two martyrs became as it were the seed of the Church; for from that hour the faith took root in Mercia: and a few years after, at the entreaty of the king, Chad himself became its bishop, and completed the conversion of the country. A cairn of stones, erected over the burial-place of the two princes, gave its name to a town which afterwards gathered round the spot; and the priory raised to their honour in that place, as well as the stately abbey of Peterborough, both the work of Wulfhere, remained to future ages the monuments of his crime and his repentance.

In the western cloister of the latter church might be seen painted on the windows the legend of the Mar-

tyrs of Stone, with the following metrical version of their history, and that of the abbey, part of which we subjoin, as it stands in the pages of Dugdale:—

By Queen Ermenild had King Wulfhere
These twae sons that ye see here.

Wulfhade went forth, as he was wont,
In the forest, the hart to hunt.

Fro all his men Wulfhade is gon,
And suyeth himself the hart alone.

The hart brought Wulfhade unto a well
That was beside S. Chad his cell.

Wulfhade asked of S. Chad,
Where is the hart that me hath lad.

Wulfhade prayeth Chad that ghostly leach
The faith of Christ him for to teach.

S. Chad teacheth Wulfhade the fayth,
And words of baptisme over him sayth.

S. Chad devoutly to messe him dight,
And shrived Wulfhade Christ his knight.

Wulfhade stayed with S. Chad that day,
And bad him for his brother Rufine pray.

Wulfhade told his brother Rufine,
How he was christned by Chad's doctrine.

Rufine said to Wulfhade again
Christned also would I bee fayne.

Wulfhade Rufine to S. Chad brought,
And Chad with love of Christ him taught

Rufine is christened of S. Chad, I wis,
And Wulfhade, his brother, his fader is.

Werebode, steward to king Wulfhere,
Told his sonnes both christened were.

To Chad his cell Wulfhere gan go,
And Werebode brought him hitherto.

Into the chappell entered the king,
And found the sonnes Christ worshippynge.

Wulfhere, in woodnesse, his sword outdrew,
And both his sonnes anon he slew.

King Wulfhere with Werebode tho',
Buried in grave his sonnes two.

Werebode for vengeance his owne flesh tare,
The Divell him strangled, and to hell bare.

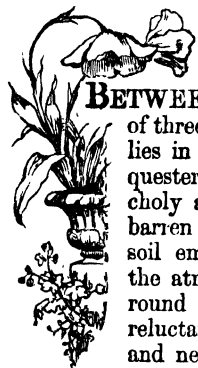
Wulfhere for sorrow was sick,
In bed he lay a dead man like.

S. Ermenild, that blessed queen,
Councelled Wulfhere to shryve him cleane.

Wulfhere contrite shrift him to Chad,
As Ermenild his wife him councelled had.

Chad bad Wulfhere for his sinne
Abbies to found this rewme within.

Wulfhere in haste performed then
To build what Peada his brother began.



THE ABBEY OF PRÉMONTRÉ.

BETWEEN Soissons and Laon, at a distance of three leagues from the latter town, there lies in the centre of a thick forest a sequestered spot, remarkable for its melancholy aspect. Sombre rocks display their barren heights, and a marshy unwholesome soil emits humid vapours, which obscure the atmosphere; the trees even which surround this wild spot seem to grow with reluctance; they assume fantastic forms, and never attain the vigour or height of the other forest-trees; their leaves wither and mingle with the moss at their feet, long before the autumnal decline of the year; every thing, in fact, wears a dull and repulsive aspect. If such sterility is known to exist at a time when civilisation changes deserts into populous towns, what must have been the degree of savage wildness, at a period when countries instead of yielding rich harvests, were covered with inaccessible forests? It must, indeed, have been powerful motive that could induce a man in those days to penetrate into the interior of such forest-shades and trackless solitudes, when superstitious terror would arrest on their thresholds even the steps of the venturesome huntsman, whose prey had sought refuge within the precincts of the wood. It was nevertheless amongst these rocks and marshes that, towards the year 1130, a holy man, filled with the love of God, laid the foundations of a religious order, whose fame has since become co-extensive with the Christian world.

The origin of the Abbey of Prémontré presents circumstances sufficiently curious to interest the reader of

its chronicles and local traditions. The most accredited opinion is, that it was a remarkable exploit of Enguerrand, second Sire de Coucy, which gave rise to the erection of the monastery. Enguerrand did not inherit the violence and cruelty of his father, and he undertook the task of effacing the remembrance of the evils which the latter had inflicted on the country. Ecclesiastics, and more particularly the convents which had been the victims of former extortions, received from the young lord magnificent indemnities, in consequence of which, even up to the revolution of 1789, Enguerrand was prayed for in the abbeys of Saint André at Cateau Cambrésis, of Saint Vincent, Laon, Foigny, Thenailles, Clerfontaines, &c. &c., which practice having been faithfully observed from his own times, sanctions the belief that he was one of the benefactors of these several establishments.

With regard to Prémontré, the sequel of the story will show that he was venerated as at least one of its founders. The pious ideas entertained by the Lord de Coucy did not hinder him from being an accomplished knight,—valorous in the field of battle, as well as expert in all the chivalrous games of that period. Devotion and warlike chivalry were strangely blended in those days,—the Crusades furnish a remarkable illustration of this; so that the characters of the good barons of the middle ages often appear an extraordinary medley to modern ideas. Enguerrand, beyond most others of his time, burned to distinguish himself in all martial exploits; and amongst the nobles of France he occupied a high place as a brave and generous-hearted warrior.

It happened one day, as he was mounting his horse for the chase, that he was surrounded by a number of peasants, who, in tears, loudly implored his assistance.

"My lord," said they, "take pity on your vassals; their houses are desolate, their flocks are destroyed, their children are exposed to death. A lion of monstrous size roams over the land, devouring all that fall

in his way. You alone, sire, can rid the country of this fearful enemy."

"You did right to apply to me," said the Sire de Coucy to these poor people; "with the help of God, I will do what you require. But tell me where I shall find this monster."

"I will show you the way," said a countryman, advancing.

"Well then, let it be now," exclaimed Enguerrand, spurring on his horse. "And you," said he, addressing the other peasants, "go to the church of St. Sauveur, and pray there for the success of my enterprise."

The brave knight, with his guide, proceeded for nearly two hours; till at last they found themselves on the borders of the forest of Waast, which extended formerly to that of Ardennes. There, knowing that his horse could not proceed along these untrodden passes, he dismounted, and with no other arms save a sword and buckler, followed his guide into the depths of the forest. In proportion as they advanced, the way became more difficult: deep ravines, thick briers, and hollow rocks, seemed to conceal and to be ready to let loose upon them the dreadful animal.

In this way an hour passed without any thing offering itself to their notice. They had arrived at the spot described in the commencement of our story, when the peasant suddenly leaping on one side, cried out in an accent of terror, "There he is!"

"May God help me!" exclaimed Enguerrand, drawing his sword. "It is indeed a lion: *mais tu m l'as de presmontré.*"

Saying these words, the knight boldly attacked the animal, fought with him for a considerable time, and at last despatched him by a tremendous thrust of his sword, with which he ran him through the body. This victory, which freed the land from a terrible scourge, was a source of great joy to all the country round. The Lord de Coucy returned to his castle preceded by the lion, which was borne triumphantly before him.

The peasants came in a body to return thanks to their lord, and his vassals took the opportunity of renewing their pledge of fealty and homage.

The life of our ancestors was more poetical than ours, their customs more dramatic and picturesque. Each class of society had its own peculiar manners, customs, and traditions, each town its own institutions and usages,—all which derived their character from some memorable event, and caused a singular variety in the customs and institutions of different nations. In these early days of society all was in relief and eloquent to the eye, all was fitted to captivate the imagination. Now-a-days, all things appear clothed in their barest truth; the modern mind disdains the poetical, and accepts only the most simple forms; legal unity pervades all the different grades of society: whereas in the middle ages, before the emancipation of the burghers, and long after, there was a confused system of usages and customs, changed and modified according to the caprice of the feudal lords, or the preferences and tastes of the popular classes.

The dramatic spirit of the twelfth century could not fail to seize on the courageous deed of the Sire de Coucy. On the day of the combat with the lion, Enguerrand received, as we have said, the congratulations of all the people. Touched by these marks of gratitude, he no doubt received them with hospitality; for they almost insensibly adopted the habit of coming three times a year, at Christmas, at Easter, and at Pentecost, to renew their thanks. Enguerrand himself took pleasure in this custom, made regulations for its periodical observance, and enjoined it upon his vassals. But in order to give the celebration more of solemnity, and to confirm to the abbey of Nogent, which was close to his castle, a supremacy which perhaps had never before been well defined, he wished that his vassals should be represented on those occasions by the abbot of this monastery. Enguerrand used at first to offer refreshments himself to the crowds of people who resorted to his

castle; but afterwards he appointed, that henceforth the abbot should give them the collation in the open air. The ceremony is thus described by an ancient author:

"These feasts of rejoicing were then instituted in honour of Enguerrand, and a ceremony prescribed which is still observed by the Abbot of Nogent, who from the foundation of that house has been obliged to present three times a year a number of cakes to the Sire de Coucy, or his officers, in a particular spot, where was sculptured the form and figure of the lion put to death by Enguerrand. The Abbot of Nogent, or his farmer, clothed in the dress of a labourer, with a whip in his hand, appears in the square of the castle, mounted on a light bay horse, that has been used for the plough. His tail and mane are cut close, and his equipments are in complete order. Then he makes several rounds, cracking his whip, and is stopped at every turn, and accosted respectfully; if there is nothing wanting in his equipments, he is then allowed, after having renewed the act of fealty, to distribute the presents of which we have spoken; but if there is any thing amiss in his fittings, even the want of a shoe-nail, the horse is seized and confiscated. . . . . "

This scene, odd as it was, was continued until the revolution of 1789; only that the Duke of Orleans, regent under Louis XV., as the local possessor of the title attached to the house of De Coucy, had changed the custom of giving cakes into a supply of grain.

Shortly after this event a memorial of a different kind was raised to the honour of the Sire De Coucy. It happened in the year 1130, that several of the most illustrious persons who then adorned the Church in France were assembled in the province. Some were detained by their sacred duties; others were drawn thither by the renown of their brethren, and by the sympathy so easily established among souls labouring in the same cause. Among these were Guibert then Abbé of Nogent, Bartholomew Bishop of Laon, Anselm and his brother Raoul, who were heads of the school of

theology established in that town, and St. Norbert, who had known the Bishop of Laon at Rheims, and whom the latter had not much difficulty in persuading to fix himself in his diocese. A short time after the combat with the lion, the Bishop of Laon recounted this event to St. Norbert, who went soon after in person to congratulate Enguerrand. It would appear that the saint laid open to the Sire De Coucy the views he entertained of founding a monastery in the neighbourhood, and that some negotiations were afterwards carried on between Enguerrand and the Bishop of Laon on the subject; for soon after they offered to assist St. Norbert in raising a monastery in the wild and savage spot where the combat had taken place. The saint agreed. In conformity with the manners of the period, and as a mark of gratitude and respect to the Sire de Coucy, Norbert gave the name of "Prémontré" to his abbey, in memory of the words of Enguerrand when he slew the lion; and then, having repaired to the school of Raoul at Laon, the saint delivered there such a touching discourse, that at the end of the year 1130 the abbey already reckoned forty members. The Sire de Coucy endowed the abbey with a revenue in specie, as well as divers contributions in kind and extensive landed property, as yet uncultivated. These grants once secured to the order, its humble members might be seen devoting themselves, by the daily labour of their hands, to the prompt and cheerful work of building up their homely walls; subduing the stubborn soil, clearing it and draining its marshes, felling trees which had resisted the storms of heaven for centuries, hollowing rocks, and rooting up the brushwood and thick-spread brambles. They had also to encounter the native savage dwellers of the forest,—wolves and wild-boars,—which they succeeded at last in driving from the neighbourhood. At the end of six months a commodious house was erected, and the forty brethren were installed in their new abbey, where they long continued to edify the country by their example. They cultivated a small

piece of land as a kitchen-garden, the produce of which was their principal maintenance. The place soon became celebrated; novices presented themselves in crowds, and many persons of distinguished rank begged as a favour to be received among the number of the brethren. Others made large presents to the monastery, which enabled them to enlarge it; in short, the name of "Prémontré" became in France pre-eminently the symbol of the monastic life; so that requests soon poured in upon Norbert from all quarters to establish branches of this order in other parts of Europe.

Our space will not allow us to trace step by step the increase and extension of the Order of Prémontré, nor to dwell upon its prosperous career; but we may add a few words on its internal organisation. The abbey of Prémontré was, after St. Norbert, governed by an abbot chosen by the religious themselves; and this title gave him jurisdiction over the whole order. At Prémontré all the general and national chapters were held. The primitive rule of the order was nearly as strict as that of St. Bruno; but the successors of St. Norbert made some alterations in the original rules; and in consequence of these changes, each of the houses of the order contained a novice-master, to teach theology and other sciences. The religious also were to undertake the duties of curés; and these regulations added greatly to the lustre and utility of the institution.

It is not without a feeling of regret for his memory that we call to mind the last Superior of the Order of the Prémontrés, the learned Abbé of Lecuy. This venerable man had done much for the order, little foreseeing the deluge of infidelity which would one day swallow up, together with his own, all the venerable orders of France. To the course of study already pursued, he added, a few years before the revolution, the study of grammar, of *belles lettres*, and of mathematics. An enlightened friend of literature, he endowed the monastery moreover with a splendid library;—alas! the hopes and prospects of this venerable man were destined

to be vain: the revolutionary storm broke over the forest of Prémontré, and all its treasures of literature and science were scattered or destroyed. At the time of its suppression the abbey contained fifty religious, to whom the revolution left neither asylum nor support.

We have mentioned that St. Norbert had been solicited to establish branches of his order in several countries. The provinces of Picardy and Vermandois, which form at this day the department of Aisne, contained many of these abbeys, all founded in the twelfth century. Amongst the number we mention the following, which are from the statistics of Aisne. The abbey of St. Martin, at Laon, was regarded as the second house of the order, and gave a Pope to the Church in the person of Cardinal Albert Moira, known under the name of Gregory VIII. The last prior but one, De Montcey, possessed extensive bibliographical knowledge, and had placed in the library of the abbey an ample collection of choice books. The abbey of St. Martin is now the hospital of invalids. The abbey of Mont St. Martin, near Le Catelet, founded by Garembert, Canon of St. Quentin, was built in the modern style towards the middle of the last century. This house was occupied in 1816 by Lord Wellington. The abbey of Valsery, two leagues from Villers-Cotterets, was founded in the twelfth century by Hugues, Lord of La Ferté-Milon. The church attached to it contained several monuments, amongst others, that of Catherine of Valois, wife of Charles of France, Count of Valois, and that of Margaret of Sicily. The last, though not the least, amongst the abbeys of the reformed rule, were those of Yves at Braisne, of Beaurieux, and of Genlis. The abbey of Prémontré was rebuilt, with considerable alterations, towards the middle of the eighteenth century. It was a magnificent edifice, in which architecture was displayed in all its grandeur. There was, in particular, a beautiful carved staircase, distinguished for its boldness and elegance, which formed

the admiration of connoisseurs; and it was said to have been the production of a simple workman, named "Bonhomme." But the most remarkable memorial was the tomb placed near the high altar in the church of the monastery,—an effigy of a knight, in white marble, having at his feet a lion couchant, and bearing on his shield the name of Enguerrand de Coucy, the hero of the combat already described, and one of the founders of the abbey. This monument has now disappeared, the memory of Enguerrand is forgotten; and the next generation will perhaps be ignorant that a celebrated abbey ever existed in that spot, where now is to be seen only a manufactory of glass! The age of industry and progress retains no memorials of the palmy days of religion and chivalry!

LEGEND OF ST. WINIFRIDE.

LONG years ago—the old chronicle declares about the year 660—there lived a very noble and powerful lord whose name was Thevith. It chanced one day as he sat in his ancient manor, looking over the slopes of golden corn which shone like gems in the midst of the wild mountain land, and watching how the little fishing-boats skimmed over the smooth waters of the Dee, that the porter entered quietly, and said that a pilgrim stood without desiring to speak to him; adding, "My lord, from his aspect, and the great holiness of his bearing, I shrewdly guess this to be the venerable Beuno, whose high fame of sanctity has already reached us." The lord of the manor went quickly to the gate to bid his guest welcome with his own lips; for in those days of faith the presence of a holy man was deemed a boon beyond the price of gold. But even Thevith did not guess that, as St. Beuno crossed his threshold, the windows of heaven were opened to rain down blessings on his house. As soon as the saintly man had received the salutations of his host, he fixed his eyes on him, and spake as follows:

"My son, God hath, by a very fervent and peculiar inspiration, drawn me hither from His other servants, with whom I lived elsewhere in great content, to perform some great good to you and yours; therefore, in the name of God, I humbly entreat a small part of your inheritance to raise thereon a church, where others, with myself, may daily pray for your safety."

And Thevith opened his heart wide to the inspira-

tion of God and the power of the saint's words. He instantly gave him the manor in which he then lived for ever as an offering to God; he helped with all his heart in rearing the sacred edifice; and then, as a far more precious gift than gold or lands, he committed his only child, a tender virgin, to the instructions of the saint. Then he chose for himself a dwelling on a hill opposite, that, when he could not be with the holy man, he might at least look towards him, and be spiritually united with him in the perpetual service of God.

Very beautiful was it to see the saint and the child together. Her place was ever at his feet upon the altar-steps; and her childish countenance, so royal in its look of innocence, would glow and kindle as the heavenly teachings of St. Beuno entered her heart. Very fair she was even in this world's beauty; but it was not that which attracted every one so strangely to her: the meek light which shone in those deep blue eyes, and the lustre which seemed reflected from the golden hair which swept her brow, were caught from communings with another world; and men were wont to sign themselves as she passed, and check the loud jest or angry tone as though aware of an angel's presence. So quickly did this fair lily grow and flourish beside the streams of living water with which her saintly father fed her soul, that while she was still of most tender age, she steadfastly resolved to consecrate her life, in all its virgin purity, to Jesus Christ, to whom the young love of her courageous heart was entirely given. Fearing lest her parents might grieve at her resolution, since the only hope of the continuance of their race lay in her accepting some of the princely alliances proposed for her, she went one day to the cell of St. Beuno, and laying her whole soul before him, she begged him to intercede with her parents, and entreat them not to disturb by their opposition a resolution which was unalterably fixed. Great was the joy of St. Beuno at finding the precious fruits which had sprung from the seed he had sown in this fruitful soil, and willingly did he undertake to gain her parents' appro-

bation. Thevith showed the same royal magnificence of heart on this occasion as he did when earthly lands and riches were asked of him: he relinquished at once every hope that he should see his race perpetuated in Winifride, and be able to leave his princely domains to her children. "Since," said he, "our fair and holy child has chosen the Son of the mighty God for her bridegroom, we choose Him likewise for our heir;" and he dispensed immediately in alms and charitable foundations the ample dowry he destined for her. And now the happiness of Winifride's life was complete: she was looked on as an angel of consolation in the home of her devoted parents; she was cherished with especial care by the great saints of her time, as the child of predilection; and Jesus, her celestial Bridegroom, delighted to flood her heart with heavenly sweetnesses, so that the very sound of that wondrous Name would cause such a jubilee within her, that her blushing and tears would discover the secrets of her soul to those around.

One morning, Thevith and all his people were assisting at the holy offices in the chapel in the valley, and Winifride was alone at home preparing some incense to be used in the celebration of Mass. As she was joyously raising up her heart to God, and seasoning her labour with the sweet tones of her young clear voice, Prince Caradoc, the son of King Alan, stood before her, and saluting her courteously, said he had come to speak with the Lord Thevith, her father. Winifride, wholly unconscious in her childlike innocence of the real purport of his visit, answered that her father would soon be returned from the church, and then bidding him farewell, modestly retired. He followed her, however, and pouring out the tale of his love with most impassioned words, he swore with a fearful oath that he would not leave her till he had won her consent to be his bride. Terrified at his look and manner, the Saint preserved her courage through this deadly peril, and meekly requested leave to withdraw into her chamber, there to put on a more fitting attire, and await the return of her father

before concluding such noble espousals. Thrown off his guard for a moment, Prince Caradoc let her depart; but a few minutes had scarcely passed when the truth flashed upon his mind, and rushing to the door, he violently burst it open, and found that that fair and innocent dove had indeed escaped the snare of the fowler. Foaming with rage, he leapt on his horse's back, and spurred down the hill towards the little chapel of the valley. Winifride had all but gained the place of refuge, when her fierce pursuer came upon her. When she saw escape was impossible, that young tender virgin showed by her majestic bearing and noble words the courage that lay hidden in her soul. Caradoc, with his sword drawn in his hand, overmastered by rage and passion, vowed he would sever her head from her body, and deform the face he formerly had loved, if she would not yield to his honourable proposals.

"Prince," replied the maiden, "know that I am already espoused to the Son of the King of Heaven—in power, beauty, and goodness, incomparably greater than the kings of the earth. For His love, which I have tasted, will I ever remain faithful to Him in the constant affection of my unaltered heart. Gladly will I lose my head and my life for refusing to admit any other lover than Himself. Neither your terrors nor your threats shall draw me from the sweetness of His love, or make me go other than I have promised, in virgin truth and purity, to Him."

She spoke, and folding her hands over her bosom, waited for the end. No glance shot from her eye to tell the natural tremor of a maiden of such tender years. There she stood upon the lonely mountain-side, calm as the marble statue beneath its fretted niche. For a moment Caradoc was overawed by the unshaken bearing of his victim. He saw her turn from him, and again descend towards the chapel; her very foot was on the sacred threshold, when, stung with wounded pride and mad with rage to behold her escaping him for ever, he gave one sudden bound upon his charger,

and whirling his sword in the air, the body of the virgin martyr fell lifeless upon the pavement.

St. Beuno was preparing to say Mass, and the people were all kneeling around the altar, when the solemn stillness was broken by a loud fierce cry, succeeded by the sudden plunging of horse's feet. Startled from their prayers, they looked up; and who can describe the cries of horror which filled the holy place as they beheld the gory head which lay on the pavement before them! Who can paint the agony of the parents as they recognised by those golden waves of hair, and the smile which played upon those parted lips, their sweet holy child, lying there so cruelly murdered before them! St. Beuno descended the altar-steps, and taking up the sacred head of his beloved pupil and daughter, he bathed it with his tears, grieving bitterly that this fragrant lily should have been cut down before her solemn consecration to her Spouse, which was shortly to have taken place. Then moving to the door, he beheld the author of this cruel deed standing proudly by, wiping his bloody sword upon the grass, and wholly unrepentant for his sin. When he saw that he cared neither for God nor man, the Spirit of the Lord came upon St. Beuno, and raising his arms to heaven, he pronounced the Divine judgment upon him; because he had foully slain the virgin spouse of the Lord, because he had defiled the holy place by shedding blood therein, and because for all these things he would not repent, but rather gloried in them in the wickedness of his heart. Struck by the hand of God, the prince fell dead before them; and tradition says, that even while those around were gazing in horror on the corpse, it disappeared. Whether the earth had opened, or devils carried it away to its own place, they knew not; but in no consecrated ground, on no mountain or valley trodden by the foot of man, was the unhallowed dust of the murderer committed to the earth. St. Beuno returned into the church; but his eye was bright with supernatural light, and his voice sounded like a trumpet, as he bade the people cease

their tears and lamentations, for the arm that had raised Lazarus from the dead was not shortened now.

"Truly," said he, "this princely spouse hath no need of the company of us miserable mortals, being, as she is, highly exalted into the bridal-chamber of the Eternal King; but for our sakes, and for the great glory of God, pray ye that this blessed one may yet return among us to be enriched with a yet more plentiful harvest of good works, and a yet brighter crown. Truly hath host and sacrifice been offered here this day, and the victim lieth even on the altar-steps; but now shall that Host be offered up for the living and the dead, the Lamb slain from the beginning; and now shall it be seen, O virgin spouse of the Lamb! how precious hath been the shedding of thy blood in His sight."

Then St. Beuno reverently took the virgin's head and laid it to the body, and, breathing on the cold marble brow, he covered it with his cloak; then ascending the altar-steps, he began to celebrate the tremendous mysteries; and men held their breath in awe, for they sensibly felt the presence of the Lord, and saw the heavens open. Scarcely had he concluded, when St. Winifride, waking as though from a deep sleep, raised her hand to her face and wiped away the dust and blood which had gathered on her brow. She brought with her a token from Paradise; for a circle of purest white was presently remarked upon her throat, where the sword had severed her head from her body. O joy beyond all joys, as the happy parents pressed her to their hearts, and then, with sacred awe, retired back to gaze on her who had seen the face of God, and whose ears had drunk in the songs of the angelic choirs!

And earth sent forth its voice of gratitude for the fruitful benediction of the martyr's blood; for a crystal stream sprang up where the head had rested, which for its wondrous powers of cure has been revered from that day even unto this, as the Holy Well of St. Wini-

fride. Summer has never been able to dry it up, winter has never bound it in its icy chain; it flows on with even and untiring force, watering and fertilising the land it traverses, until its waters lose themselves in the sea. An exquisite Gothic building of Henry VII.'s time now covers the well; and the heart must be cold indeed who can stand beneath those solemn arches, and look down on that wonderful water rising so silently yet so powerfully every moment, and then upon the numerous crutches and litters fastened to the groinings of the old roof (tokens of sufferings left behind them by the pilgrims), and not thank God that in one spot at least of English ground the ancient spirit of pilgrimage still lingers. The unbroken tradition of sanctity comes upon the soul as a refreshing breeze from better and happier times; and it would be worth while to make the pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Winifride only to gain the keen consciousness of the reality of those deeds of faith and holiness with which this now barren and desolate soil was once so fruitful,—worth while only to see the pilgrims of to-day kneel as they did a thousand years ago, and cross themselves to pray, and then bathe in the Holy Well, to find the cure which no human aid had been able to give.

Little remains to be told of the history of St. Winifride. The event of her life had passed, and it was no wonder that that little hour had transformed the child into the perfect saint, the illuminated mistress and guide of souls. It was natural that she whose ears had heard the first notes of that wondrous canticle which not all the elect shall sing, but only the virgin train, should have great power to kindle in others the ardent desire for that more exalted way, and that she should quickly gather round her a company of noble and chaste virgins, emulous of that reward which had been once within her grasp. Very shortly after her martyrdom, St. Beuno took her to the fountain which had miraculously risen at the time, and, as they sat together on a large stone near the well (called to this day

St. Beuno's stone), he told her that the time was come when he must depart to other scenes, and leave her to carry on his labours, and guide others fruitfully in those truths which he had taught her. Then pointing to the fountain, he said,

"Listen, dear child and daughter, to three things which I shall foretell concerning this monument of your martyrdom, to the greater glory of your heavenly Spouse. The first, that these stones shall never be washed from their bloody stains, but shall ever retain the same as triumphant signs of your blood, most gratefully here poured out in defence of your virgin purity. The second is, that never shall any person devoutly bathe three times in this fountain, asking any temporal blessing, or freedom from any spiritual or corporal distress, to be obtained by your merits and prayers for him, without being made partaker of his desire; or else, passing by death out of this life, he shall in another world, after a more ample manner, reap the fruits of his prayers. The third is, that after my departure God will give me a cell near the sea-shore, in a remote place of this island; and when you would send me any letters or tokens (as His Divine Majesty would have you do, and I also do entreat the same of you once at least every year), cast them only into the stream of this fountain, and they will, passing into the ocean by many creeks, be divinely conveyed unto me. And these graces, of which I have forewarned you, shall be divulged gloriously unto the world's end, to the greater honour of your Divine Spouse." Then taking leave of her with many sweet and holy words, he told her the will of God was, that he should depart, and she should see his face no more. "As for my poor self, I shall go whither God's Spirit will guide me, and ever retain in my heart and soul a fatherly and loving memory of you."

Long and deeply did St. Winifride mourn for the loss of her saintly master; and it may be well believed she did not forget the yearly token of her dutiful love

which he had asked of her. Nearly a year after his departure, she embroidered, with the help of her sisters, a fair vestment; and when it was completed, she went with it to the well side, and bending over it she softly murmured her wishes to her heavenly Spouse, tracing in the clear waters with her fair virginal hands the holy sign of faith; then wrapping her precious offering in a woollen cloth, she committed it to the stream, saying, "O holy father! I send you here, according to your command and my promise, this small token of my love to you." The obedient waters bore it safely through many a creek and winding way into the sea, and it was cast upon the shore fifty long miles away at the feet of the holy man, who took it up with great joy of heart, and giving God and St. Winifride thanks, caused it to be carefully preserved in his church for the use of himself and his brethren. And never did she fail in this yearly token of her loving remembrance, till she knew by revelation that the spirit of her saintly preceptor was with God. How "beautiful and calm and free she moved in her young wisdom after this event, which left her, as she said, a poor orphan child without a nurse," it comes not within the limits of this short sketch to tell. Kneeling on the spot of her martyrdom, she received an inspiration to go forth into the lonely mountain country, and there await what God should say unto her. At last she was directed to a certain monastery of holy virgins, who received her with very great rejoicings among them, and soon after chose her as their mother and abbess. There she brought to its perfection the rich coronet of holy deeds and merits for which she had been permitted to return to earth; and there, after many full years, amidst the tears of her devoted children, she departed in the calm of innocence to her rest.

THE FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

LEGEND exists, with regard, if not to the institution, yet, at least, to the introduction into our country of one of the festivals in honour of the holy Mother of God, which has a special interest to us at this time. Other festivals have been ordained by the Church as testimonies of her gratitude for great deliverances; but there is this peculiarity attaching to the Festival of the Immaculate Conception, that, if we may trust the legends concerning it,—and that we are about to give rests on no less authority than the great St. Anselm, who relates it as an event which took place in his own time,—Heaven itself took part in the propagation of this devotion, and the appointment of its holyday and office.

England was but newly subject to the Norman Conqueror; and the rapidity with which he had seized possession of the island, no less than the firmness with which he retained it in his grasp, excited the rage and jealousy of some of its former masters. The Danes had not forgotten that they too had a prior claim of conquest; and considering themselves stripped of their lawful heritage by the new intruders, they took secret measures for re-possessing themselves of their former power in the land, and commenced the equipment of a formidable fleet, with which they purposed descending on the eastern coasts. Their preparations, however, were not conducted with such secrecy, but that they reached the ears of William; and he determined to despatch an embassy to the Danish court, for the purpose both of treating with them on favourable terms, and

of ascertaining the truth of the rumours which had reached him. The person chosen for this mission was the Abbot Helsinus, a man of great sagacity, formerly of the monastery of Rheims, but who had followed William into England, and enjoyed no small share of his confidence. He acquitted himself of his charge with the skill and discretion that might have been expected from his reputation; and after a short stay at the Danish court, he prepared to return to England, and set out for that purpose in one of the small and ill-constructed vessels of the period. And if we look at any prints representing those vessels, whatever we may think of the naval skill of our forefathers, it certainly raises our ideas of the courage they exhibited in crossing vast seas in such extraordinary constructions. We are puzzled, as we gaze at such representations, to think how they could have got along at all, where all the men could have been stowed away, and how it was that the masts, top-heavy with their towers and garrisons of soldiers, did not tumble about the ears of the luckless crew. And if such machines seem dangerous to our notions even in fair weather, we need not be surprised, if at the approach of a tempest there was seldom much hope of escape from winds and waves; so that when the crew was Christian they oftener had recourse to their prayers than to their oars.

Such a chance befell the vessel which was bearing Helsinus back to the shores of England. He had already accomplished the greater part of the voyage, when there arose a mighty contrary wind and the waters were agitated by a violent storm. The sailors were exhausted with fatigue, the oars were broken, the ropes torn in pieces, the sails flying in strips, and all on board gave themselves up to despair, looking for nothing else than to be speedily swallowed up in the foaming waves that tossed their clumsy vessel to and fro like a helpless log; and so, to use the language of the golden legend, in which the story has been inserted by Blessed James of Voragine, "no longer being able to look for the sal-

vation of their bodies, they took thought but for that of their souls, recommending themselves, with great clamouring, to God and the Blessed Virgin, the refuge of the unfortunate and the distressed." Suddenly there was a great cry from one of the sailors; something was coming over the waters towards the foundering vessel. It was neither ship nor boat; but as they caught glimpses of it through the blinding rain and the thick darkness, occasionally illuminated only by the glaring lightning, it seemed to have the likeness of a man walking on the billows, as quietly and calmly as though they were a soft and verdant lawn. As he drew nearer they observed that he was clad in pontifical habits, and had a grave and venerable aspect. He came close up to the ship, still treading on the sea, as it raged about him, with a firm and unshaken step; and when he was so near that they could discern the very sparkling of his eye and the waving of his snowy beard, his voice was heard clear and sonorous above the tumult of the waters, as he bade Helsinus fear nothing, but come to him where he stood. The abbot was a man of faith, as well as sagacity; he threw himself from the side of the vessel without a moment's hesitation, and, borne up on the surface of the water, boldly approached the spot where the heavenly messenger awaited him.

"Helsinus," he said again, and his voice sounded soft and sweet amidst the jar of the angry elements, "do you desire to escape the horrors of shipwreck, and to return safe and unhurt to your country?"

"That indeed do I desire right heartily," replied the abbot; "but, methinks, there are small hopes that I may do so."

"There are no hopes if you trust to your sails and oars," said the stranger; "but know that I am sent to you by my sovereign lady, the ever-blessed Mary, Mother of God, whose help you have implored with so much fervour and devotion; and if you will do even as I shall bid you, both you and your companions shall escape the danger which now threatens you."

"I know not, good father, what you may prescribe," answered Helsinus; "but if you be a messenger of her whose name we have so instantly invoked, and if you promise us deliverance from this peril, and a safe return to port, there is little that either I myself, or those yonder in the ship, would think too great to do at your command."

"Then," said the stranger, "what Mary asks of you is this: promise, in my presence, and in that of Jesus Christ, and all His saints, that should He bring you safe to the English shore, you will henceforth solemnly keep every year the Feast of the Conception of His Blessed Mother; and that, moreover, you will preach and procure the celebration of the same by others, wheresoever you may be able so to do."

"Good father," replied the astonished abbot, "I would willingly do what you require; but I know not the day on which the feast may fall: it certainly has never yet been kept in Rheims."

"It is the sixth day of the Ides of December," answered the stranger, "and that is the day whereon it is to be celebrated."

"And what office must I say?" continued Helsinus; "the Breviary hath none such that I wot of."

"Thou shalt recite the office of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, substituting only the word 'Conception' for that of 'Nativity' wheresoever it occurs;" and with these words he disappeared.

Even as he did so the tempest subsided, the sea became calm and smooth, and the moon, breaking through the clouds, cast a clear and joyous light upon the waters, so that the mariners could see both to guide their vessel and to repair the damage it had sustained. And so, a favourable wind springing up, they reached the coasts of England without further danger or difficulty, and all landed, with great joy and gratitude, on the shores they had so lately despaired of ever seeing again.

As to Helsinus, he did not forget his promise; he

went about through all parts publishing what had happened, so that the story of his deliverance, and the Divine command he received, were soon familiar things in the mouths of the English people; and in many of the churches of the island the Feast of the Conception was celebrated on the day and in the manner prescribed by the messenger of Mary. In the monastery of Rheims, where Helsinus bore the chief rule, it was from that time kept with extraordinary solemnity; and "to the day of his death," says Blessed James, "he carefully watched that it should be so kept with the uttermost devotion."

This is the story which St. Anselm gives in one of his letters, and which Blessed James has copied from that authority; he adds another, as being also told by some as the origin of the celebration of the feast in France. We can scarce do better than give it in his own words:

"At the time of the illustrious Charles, King of France, there lived a certain noble, a relative of the King of Hungary, who had the most lively devotion towards the Mother of God, and who regularly every day recited her office. Now, by the advice of his parents, he was about to espouse a certain lady of admirable beauty; and when they had received the nuptial benediction, he suddenly remembered that he had forgotten that day to recite the office of the Virgin; wherefore, sending his bride home to his house, and causing all the company to leave the church, he himself remained behind in prayer at the foot of the altar; and whilst he was praying, and singing the praises of the Mother of God, when he came to the Anthem, 'Thou art all fair, O daughter of Jerusalem,' suddenly Mary herself stood before him, having at her side two angels, one of whom held her right hand, and the other her left; and she said to him, 'If I am fair, why then do you renounce me, and seek another spouse? am I not lovelier far than she? and is there any one who surpasses me in beauty?' Then he, being filled with wonder, answered, saying:

'Thy beauty doth indeed surpass all else that is in the world, and thou art raised above all the choirs of the angels, and above the heaven of heavens; what wilt thou therefore that I should do?' And she replied: 'If thou shalt consent to renounce the spouse thou hast just taken, thou shalt have me for thy spouse in the kingdom of heaven; and if each year thou shalt celebrate the Feast of my Conception with great solemnity on the sixth of the Ides of December, thou shalt be crowned with me in the kingdom of my Son.' And having said these words, she disappeared. Then he determined not to return to his house; but without sending any word thereof to his friends and family, he retired into a certain abbey in a distant country, and there took the monastic habit; and a little while after he was elected Bishop and Patriarch of Aguila; and so long as he lived, he caused the Feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin to be celebrated with its octave, and every where constantly recommended the keeping of the same."

It is perhaps unnecessary to remind our readers that the sixth of the Ides of December corresponds to the day on which the feast has constantly been celebrated throughout the whole Church, and that the office indicated to the Abbot Helsinus is that which is still in use in the Dominican order.

THE CONSECRATION OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

THE evening of a gloomy autumn day was closing in amid the mists of a northern climate, and the feeble rays of a setting sun, which made their way through the masses of dark and heavy clouds that were piled on the western horizon, shone over a scene as wild and desolate as any which the imagination could depict. A broad river rolled through the low flat land that lay on either side, and which as far as the eye could reach presented nothing but the dreary aspect of an uncultivated waste. Towards the east, however, the long lines of marsh were broken by a considerable number of houses clustered together on the river-bank. The misty atmosphere hung over this spot in a heavier cloud; whilst some dark objects on the water, which seemed to be vessels of a larger kind than those used in the inland navigation of the stream, indicated the neighbourhood of a town of some importance. Even further to the west there might be noticed some rude huts scattered about on the water's edge; but their presence scarcely had the power to dissipate the dreariness of the landscape, which impressed the beholder with feelings of no ordinary kind; the wide stream in many places overflowed its marshy boundaries, and breaking into other channels, formed islands in its course; and on one of these, of larger dimensions than the others, appeared several buildings, some newly erected, and others of a heavy and antique character, which were

falling into ruins, and overgrown by the thorny thickets that covered the ground and gave the spot its popular name of Thorney Island. For, indeed, it is no new settlement of the far-west which we are here describing; the wide sluggish river, tangled with weeds and rolling on through that bleak and desolate waste, is neither the Mississippi nor the Missouri,—it is our own busy Thames; and those clustered houses to the east are all that the seventh century can show us of the boundaries of London.

Into one of the miserable huts already mentioned as scattered about beyond the limits of the town, we must now invite our readers to enter. It is the dwelling of Seward the fisherman, and he is even now in the act of preparing to set out for an expedition up the stream; though the hour is late, and the grey and louring sky gives promise of a stormy night. He is standing on the clay-floor of his rude kitchen, gathering some large nets over his shoulders, and, as it seems, deaf to the remonstrances, urged, however, in no gentle tone, of a woman, whom, by the freedom of her tongue, we may take to be his wife.

"Heard you ever such folly?" she exclaimed, as though appealing for support in a defeated argument to some third party; though in truth her husband was the only other occupant of the apartment,—"to go up stream at such an hour as this, with the wind-clouds heaping up like feathers, and not a fish moving in the channel, as he knows, or might know; for he has been after them the live-long day, with nothing to show for his labour but two starveling eels. And then to talk of a woman's stubbornness; I trow, if they be stubborn, they learnt it from their lords;" and the good dame threw her hands into the air as though she had finished with the subject.

If she counted, however, on gaining any thing by her apparent abandonment of the offensive, and trusted that the self-love inherent in human nature would move Seward to have a last word in the debate, she was mistaken; for the fisherman was an East Saxon, and had the

proverbial phlegm of his race. He went on at his work with the nets without suffering himself to be disturbed by the tempting opportunity of a retort; and shouldering his burden, at length moved towards the door.

"A wild evening truly," he said as he opened it, and looked out on the fast-gathering darkness; "three hours hence, good dame, you may bid Eadbald show a light on the shore below, for I fancy the moon will do little to-night to help us homeward; and if by that time the fish will not rise in the Thorney Creek, I shall not try the higher stream."

"The Thorney Creek!" almost screamed his wife, while something of terror mingled with the shrewish sharpness of her tone. "Now, is it not enough that thou shouldst set wind and darkness at defiance, without tempting the fiends and goblins of yonder haunted spot? The Thorney Creek! where none but fools would go by day; and thou speakest of a three-hours' fishing in it at such a time as this, when thou knowest well Mellitus himself were a bold man if he dared put his foot there after sunset!"

"Wife," said Seward, who evidently winced a little at the mention of the goblins, "thou speakest without thought, as is the manner of thy sex. The fiends had Thorney Island for their own a while since, and well they might, so long as the accursed temples of the heathens were the only buildings on its soil; but thou knowest very well that the holy Mellitus hath redeemed it from the enemy, and that even to-morrow the goodly minster he hath raised will be hallowed to the blessed Peter, under whose favour," and he crossed himself devoutly, "I shall fear neither fiend nor wizard; the rather that this night's fishing is for the table of his own guests; for King Sebert is to dine with all his train within the abbey, and the two starveling eels thou speakest of are all the fish as yet provided for the banquet."

"Well, go thy way, and see what comes of it," replied his wife; "and if thou gettest not something more than eels for thy labour, my name is not Ebba.

Eadbald shall show the light; and I trow thou wilt be over-glad to see it, if the fiends have not carried thee to Friesland first, as they did to Swegn the fowler and a score of others."

"Swegn was a heathen, and it were no great wonder that the fiends had power over their worshipper," returned Seward; "but thou and I, good Ebba, have received the baptism of faith, and to such the spirits are subject, as Mellitus hath often taught; and their wiles can injure none who defend themselves with the cross of Christ. Therefore lay aside thy fears, and remember that Eadbald brings the light, as I have bid thee;" and so saying, the fisherman left the hut and closed the door behind him.

Notwithstanding the boldness of his speech, it must be owned that Ebba's words had not been without their effect; for Thorney Island had indeed a bad reputation in those days, and Seward, however prepared to do battle with the fiends, was certainly not one to deny their existence. The night, too, did not promise to be such as would dispel any supernatural fears which had been excited: the river mist wrapt every thing in a gloomy haze; and the wind, as it came sweeping over the dreary and desolate marsh, sighed among the reeds that grew by the water's edge with the sound of a spirit in pain. Seward unfastened his little boat from the shore, and pushed into the channel; but his heart failed him when he was about to turn its head towards the Thorney Creek.

"I will try the southern bank first," he muttered; "it will be time enough to give a last cast in the creek if the fish will not rise yonder;" and so saying, he pulled over to the further bank of the river, and commenced his work.

But the fish did not rise; the hours went by slowly and heavily, and still each cast of his net gave the same discouraging result, and Seward began to doubt whether it had not been wiser for once to have stayed at home by his blazing fire than to have wasted his time to so little

purpose. He felt ashamed at the thought of returning home and acknowledging to Ebba that after all he had never gone near the Thorney Island; and so, gathering up his resolution, he prepared to get in his nets, and try his luck at the dreaded spot before making his way back for the night. Even where he then was, he could see through the murky folds of mist the dark masses of the old ruins, and the outline of the newer buildings, which rose exactly opposite to the place where his little boat was moored.

Those ruins, the object of so much fear to the Saxon Christians, were all that remained of the great temple of Apollo, which formerly occupied the site. Long since abandoned and falling into decay, as they were, the terrible rumours that were associated with the place, and the tales of spectres and fiends that were said to haunt the scenes of the old pagan worship, were so numerous and so generally believed, that the island had been given up by common consent to the possession of its demon-masters. And the thorns that overgrew it with such luxuriance had given it the popular name which describes something of its savage desolation; for it was, in the language of the monkish historians, "a terrible and woful place." King Sebert, however, who, conjointly with Mellitus, the companion of St. Augustine, and the first Bishop of London, had introduced the Christian faith among the East Saxons, and who had already raised a church in honour of St. Paul on the site of the temple of Diana, had resolved in like manner to beat the enemy of paganism on his own ground, by the consecration of a Christian altar in the "terrible place;" and the minster and monastery of St. Peter's abbey were already completed, and awaited their solemn dedication on the very day following that on which our story opens. But the hallowing had not yet taken place; and the Christian associations were yet too fresh to chase away the superstitious dread which the place inspired among all the fishermen of the Thames.

Nevertheless Seward, as we have said, was preparing manfully to encounter all the terrors of the haunted spot, rather than go home empty-handed and own himself in the wrong; when, as he was in the act of unmooring his boat, that he might cross to the northern shore, a sound came from the bank near which he had been lying, as of a voice calling his name. He listened, and it came again, "Seward! Seward!" There was no mistake. Instead, therefore, of leaving this side of the river, he pulled closer in, endeavouring to make out whence the voice could have proceeded. Nor was his eye long before it discovered something like a human form standing on the bank, beckoning to him with its hand, as though bidding him approach.

"Who calls there?" said Seward; "and what do you seek at this hour of night?"

"Fear nothing," answered the voice; and it was one of wonderful power, for it came over the water as clearly as though the speaker were by his side; "I do but seek a passage to the further shore; and if you are ready to give it, your trouble shall be well rewarded."

"That will I," answered Seward without hesitation; saying to himself, as he endeavoured to get within reach of the stranger, "it will be no ill luck to pass the Thorney Creek in company; and if he pays well, the silver will silence my good Ebba's tongue as well as though I brought her river-salmon;" and with these words he pulled his boat beneath the bank where his intended passenger was standing. "Have a care of the weeds, good friend," he cried; "they are overslippery, and thou mightest well miss thy footing;" but before the words had left his lips, the stranger was in the boat, and seated on one of its benches, passing over the obstacles that lay in his way with a marvellous lightness and firmness of step.

"He is used to the river, that is certain," said Seward to himself, whose admiration of his guest's agility had set him quite at ease. "Where will your nobleness land?" he asked; "doubtless you have missed the

ferry, and will be for the path to the city, which is lower down the stream."

"I have not missed the ferry," answered the stranger; "and you will land me in Thorney Island, where you will wait awhile for my return; it will repay your trouble, though the hour is a little late."

"It is one of the king's followers, I make no doubt," muttered Seward. "He is preparing for to-morrow's ceremony; though it is strange he came from the southern bank;" and he began to scan his passenger with a curious eye.

The faint light from a clouded moon enabled him to discern no more than that he was of a noble and majestic bearing; that his venerable beard floated far upon his breast, and that his person was wrapped in a thick mantle, which prevented any part of his dress from being seen. Seward would gladly have questioned him, and engaged him in conversation; but an involuntary feeling of respect held him in silence, and a few strokes of the oar brought him within a boat's length of the shores of Thorney Island.

"The tide must have changed within the hour," he said, as he ran the little skiff along the bank; "for we have come over faster than the water-fowl. Is your nobleness bent on landing?" he added, perceiving the stranger rising from his seat. "Thorney Island is but a weird place after nightfall."

"I have business here," replied the stranger. "Thou, good Seward, wilt await me on this spot; and fear nothing, for the spirits of darkness have had their day, and there are better times in store for Thorney Island;" and so, with the same firm and rapid step, he passed over the benches, and was standing on the shore before Seward could raise a hand to help him.

He watched his figure till it was lost among the thickets; and then, pushing out from the shore, he endeavoured to wile away the time and keep off unpleasant thoughts by fresh casts of his nets,—all as fruitless, however, as those he had made before. He looked

round him, and strained his eye, if happily he could catch sight of his late companion; but no one was to be seen. The moon, as it broke with fitful gleams from behind the thick masses of drifting clouds, fell on the pillars of the ruined temple, which rose close by the water's edge. Within them the darkness seemed blacker than elsewhere, and the very shadow cast upon the river had a gloom and mystery of its own.

"Now, by Woden!" growled Seward between terror and impatience, "I will give him but five minutes more for his business, and will find my way back without him; the fish are sleeping or bewitched, so in with the nets!" Thus saying, he stooped over the edge to commence the work of hauling them in.

As he did so, the reflection of a brilliant light struck his eye: it must be Eadbald's signal; no, that could hardly be, unless he were strangely out in his reckoning. The light came from the island, and from the minster window,—he could discern the very outline of the heavy mullions, and the great round arch above them; what could it mean? But his speculations on the matter were soon lost in a wonder which swallowed up even the emotion of supernatural fear which mingled with his surprise. Even as he gazed in the direction of the minster, the small ray of light he had at first perceived burst into a vast and sudden illumination of the entire building: from every window and opening there streamed forth a light more brilliant far than day; and yet with a yellow golden hue, as though cast from a multitude of torches. The very mist which hung about the marshy ground caught the reflection of that wonderful light, and was transformed by it into a cloudy glory that floated about the walls, so that they scarcely seemed to touch or to belong to the earth, and gave the whole scene the effect of some enchanted or celestial vision.

Nor was it long before another of the astonished fisherman's senses was equally engaged with that of sight; for as he sat gazing in mute bewilderment on

the incomprehensible scene, the sound of distant singing broke upon his ear, at first faint and indistinct, but swelling into louder harmony, and that of so exquisite and extraordinary a character that he scarce knew what to think.

"Holy Peter!" he exclaimed, "what if my wife's words be true, and the fiends have carried me to Friesland? for well I wot this is little like Thorney Island, which was ever a dark and dreary place, and where one heard no sound but that of the screech-owl. But then," he added, "neither would the goblins of the accursed pagans sing like that; for it is the self-same measure wherewith the Roman monks so wonderfully wrought on the ears of Ethelbert; I have heard it from Mellitus' own lips."

He listened again, and it even seemed as though he could catch the very words they sang;—there was a pause and break in the melody, and the sound as of a single voice, loud, clear, and sonorous, like that of his passenger from the opposite shore, as it intoned the words, "*In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.*" "*Amen,*" added Seward; "those were Christian words; and as I am a Christian man, I will see what this singing and torch-bearing may mean. The boat will stay where she is, safe enough; and my strange passenger is doubtless busy with the rest of them, and will not be back before me;" and with these words he jumped ashore, and making his way through the thicket to the walls of the brightly-illuminated minster, contrived to climb to one of the windows, from whence he could look down on the whole scene within.

A great ecclesiastical ceremony is doubtless a splendid spectacle; and when it is performed by night, and the golden vestments and jewelled mitres flash in the brightness of a thousand tapers, and the clouds of incense float away into the dim heights of the darkened roof, and all the light is centered about the altar, there is something yet grander and more mystic in its beauty. And yet all this was little to the magnificence that

fell on the eye of the astonished Seward. Were they indeed priests, those venerable figures, whose heads were encircled with aurioles of glory, that dazzled him as he gazed? And the choir—robed indeed, yet not with linen garments, like the singing-boys of Sebert's church, but, as it seemed, in ethereal vestments made and fashioned out of light—it was as if airy wings moved about their shoulders; and the music, which poured from their lips in such full rich tones, told him that he listened to no earthly strain; heaven seemed moving below him, and its harmonies were floating in the air; and Seward felt that the wonderful choristers could be none other than a company of angels. They were winding in procession round the church, the censers casting forth their sweet and balmy clouds of perfume, and the lights they carried gleaming through the vast nave like stars. He watched them as they came, and the line of vested priests that followed, each with the glory round his brow, and, last of all, a figure more venerable and majestic than them all, clothed in the pontifical robes, with a mitre of light upon his head, who seemed performing the solemn ceremony of the Hallowing or Consecration; and Seward's heart stood still, as he recognised in those majestic features, and in the long beard that rested on his breast, the stranger he had ferried over the river but a short half-hour before. They paused before the door, and at different stations, whilst making the circuit of the church, and each time the walls were signed with the sign of the Cross, affixed there in blazing characters of light; and still the wonderful chant rose and fell at intervals, with words which, whilst he knew nothing of their meaning, clave to the memory of the listener with extraordinary distinctness. How long he gazed and listened he never knew; the ceremony was long, and had many changes; but his eye never felt tired of watching those figures, as they went to and fro with such a sweet order in all their movements: there was such a joy and grace in the bowings of their heads, and

the very foldings of their hands; they did not look weary or unwilling, as Seward felt he often was when he had been long standing at a church-function; but their service seemed all of love, and their singing was so full of gladness, that he thought they could have sung for ever; nay, what is more, if they had, he would have been well content to listen.

But an untoward accident put a sudden end to his enjoyment of the wonderful spectacle; for wholly rapt in its entrancing beauty, he ceased to look to his footing, and one of the stones on which he was resting, insecurely enough, giving way, he fell with a heavy crash to the ground; and looking about him, half stunned and wholly bewildered, he perceived that the lights in the minster were extinguished, and the music silenced. The ceremony seemed to be at an end; and now the only thing was to make the best of his way back to the boat, if, indeed, it were still there, and he were not, as he half doubted, bewitched, or spell-bound, or spirited away to some distant sphere. No; it was Thorney Island sure enough; there was the river gleaming in the light, now full and clear, of the September moon; and there were the dark heathen ruins black and drear as ever; and there, safe among the sedges on the shore, was his own flat-bottomed and clumsy boat; and Seward, as he looked about him on one familiar object after another, thought that, dull and sad as Thorney Isle had ever seemed, it had never looked so sad as now, when his eyes were still full of pictures of the heavenly worshipping. It was as though he had fallen down from the very courts of the Seraphim into a world of "beggarly elements;" and though he would have been puzzled to express it, he felt like Endymion, after his midnight soaring on the eagle's pinions:—"the first touch of the earth went nigh to kill."

"It was surely a goodly vision," he thought; "but the bishop—he with the bright mitre and the snowy beard—I would give the best fish in the river to know his name; and if it were not he I ferried over this very

night, may I never trust eyesight again, nor use it either. There was the very same ring in his voice too, as when he called my name, 'Seward! Seward!'—and how should he have known it, were he not something more than a common man, or even a king's noble, as I guessed in my dulness?"

"Seward! Seward!" sounded the same voice at that moment; and the startled fisherman hastily turned, and fell on his knees as he beheld the subject of his meditation standing on the shore before him. It seemed to him that he was not alone; a golden cloud floated about his feet; and, in the midst of its curling folds, he thought he could discern the beautiful faces, and the wings and aerial robes, of the angel choir; but all was misty and indistinct. "Holy Peter!" he exclaimed, and at the words the saintly visitant seemed to smile.

"Even so, good Seward!" he replied; "thou hast named me aright. Even now hath it been given to thine eyes, and thine alone, to see the hallowing of the first temple that shall bear that name in England; Heaven itself hath come down within its walls this night, and other hallowing must it never have from mortal hands. Wherefore do thou go to Mellitus, and tell him all things that thou hast seen, bidding him forbear to bring the words and rites of Holy Church where now they are not needed; and for thyself, fear not henceforth, either thou or thy comrades, to approach this spot; for the power of the Evil One is gone for ever; and Thorney Island from this hour is become the patrimony of Peter."

"Alas!" exclaimed the bewildered fisherman, "I am surely dreaming; or if I be in truth awake, and carry such a tale to Mellitus and the king, they will treat it as an ill-timed jest, and it may be my ears will pay the forfeit. What token shall I give them that should have power to stay them in their doings, or make them credit the word of a wretched fisherman when he tells them he is the messenger of an apostle?"

"O man of little faith!" was the reply; "still, as

in old time, is the cry for signs and tokens. Bid Mel litus look upon the minster walls, and he will see the evidence of thy words; and if thou needest proof thy self that these things are real, and no sleeping phantasy, cast thy net on the right side of thy boat, and it shall be given thee; and know that neither thou nor thy posterity shall ever want for such so long as you fish not on the Lord's Day, and offer the tenth of all your gains to the church thou hast this night seen hal lowed by the ministry of angels."

Then as Seward still gazed upon the vision, he saw how it was lifted from the earth. The light golden cloud still encircled it, and bore it gently towards the heavens. The bright faces of the angels gleamed like stars about the figure of the apostle, and once more the harmonies burst from their lips, and filled the island with echoes of the same glorious music which had rung through the vaulted minster: "Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered; and let them that hate Him flee before Him. Glorious things are spoken of thee, thou city of God. Alleluia! Alleluia! There shall be sung in thee songs of joy. Alleluia!" And as the vision floated higher and higher above his head, the Alleluias sounded fainter, and the golden cloud grew dim before his eyes. He passed his hand over them, as though to test his senses; and when he looked again, the dark island and broad rolling river were lonely and desolate as before.

It was long past midnight when Ebba caught the sound of her husband's foot on the path outside the cabin. Her terror at his prolonged absence had been excessive; and when Eadbald had returned with the news that the beacon-light had burnt itself out on the headland, and had produced no answering sound or signal from the boat, her worst fears of the Thorney goblins were confirmed. She hurriedly threw open the door, therefore, at the first sound of his footsteps, and catching a brand from the fire, eagerly held it out to see whether indeed it could be he, as she scarcely dared

to hope. It was indeed Seward, who entered bending under the weight of the nets that hung from his shoulders, and, as it seemed, were well filled with fish.

Her anxiety for his safety set at rest by the first glance, which assured her of his identity, the instinct of scolding instantly returned. "A fine fishing truly!" she began, "to keep folk watching and burning of lights till daybreak; and, as I warrant me, with nought to pay their trouble save a broken net. What hast thou there, that thou bearest thyself that gait?"

"Salmon," answered Seward, as he cast his nets upon the cabin floor; and displaying before her a sight such as, it may be supposed, had rarely been seen since the miraculous draught of Galilee, he selected from amongst the finny tribe one fish differing in kind, and of wondrous size. "Salmon; and it is the first caught in these waters, though, man and boy, I have fished in them forty years, and my father before me. Eels, and flounders, and sturgeons, and many other large and noble fish, have we sent to the royal table; but never until this night hath the salmon's fin been seen in Thames. It is surely Peter's own fish."

"And did you net it in the Thorney waters?" persisted his wife, whose delight at a capture so rare struggled with reluctance to yield her point, and an evident dread lest there should be witchery lurking in the salmon's scales. "Now, Our Lady grant you came of it as befits Christian man to do! for else it were worse than folly to set it before Mellitus. One sign from the holy man, good Seward, and if your fish be a goblin token, as I trow, there will be little left to dine on."

"O woman!" exclaimed Seward impatiently, "will you never have done with your witch tales and fooleries? You were used to boast that there was none could judge of fish like you; take this salmon in your hand, and see if it be not real, while I tell you who it was that sent it to my nets."

And as Ebba examined with professional accuracy

the fins and gullet of his prize, he told her in a few words the marvellous story of the night.

We must leave our readers to judge whether the power of his narrative or the beauty of the salmon had most effect in bringing conviction to the mind of Ebba. At any rate, her scruples at accepting the token so supernaturally given were overcome, and it was arranged that Seward should present himself before the bishop so soon as his train should arrive at Thorney on the following morning, in order to deliver the message with which he had been charged.

II.

It was truly a splendid sight that displayed itself within the walls and cloisters of the newly-erected abbey when the royal cortège of King Sebert, together with the whole body of ecclesiastics who were to take part in the ceremony of the day, assembled in their appointed ranks and order before entering the minster, whose doors were still fast closed. The fierce and half-savage bearing of the king's followers contrasted strangely with the aspect of the foreign ecclesiastics—missioners, all of them, from the refined and civilised south, sent to the barbarous shores of an island which Pope Gregory had described as being "in the corner of the world," that they might turn it to the faith by a renunciation of all things. They were mostly Romans by birth; and many a one was destined to leave his name in the calendar of the infant English Church among her apostles and her saints. Not a little of the magnificence of ecclesiastical pomp attended these Roman missioners; and such as it was, it at any rate struck the rude crowd assembled to behold it with feelings of awe and veneration; nay, the very look of those tonsured monks—the expression of their countenances telling at once of saintliness and of a higher civilisation—commanded the homage of their wild East Saxon converts; and many a

knee bent low with unaffected reverence to receive the blessing from the hand of Mellitus.

The procession was ready to advance, and the order to throw open the doors had already been given, when a movement was seen to disturb the crowd, and Seward the fisherman, pushing his way through the attendants, in spite of their best efforts to keep him back, cast himself at the bishop's feet in the very line of march. Many were the blows and hard names he had to endure in the execution of this manœuvre; but he met them with that sturdiness of indifference which was wont so often to excite the impatience of the fiery men of Kent against their more phlegmatic neighbours the East Saxons. Spite of cuffs and kicks, and many a rough hand on his collar, Seward gained his point; but he would scarcely have held his position but for the kindly indulgence of Mellitus himself, who interfered in his behalf as some of the attendants in the king's train were endeavouring to drag him out of sight.

"Nay, I pray you, let the poor man speak," he said, "it is Seward the fisherman, an honest fellow, and a faithful son of Holy Church, though he has chosen a strange time for his petition. Speak, Seward," he added, "and say if there is aught in which I can befriend thee; though, in sooth, thou must say it briefly if thou wouldst not hinder the hallowing of St. Peter's Minster."

"Even for that am I come," replied the fisherman. "St. Peter's Minster hath been already hallowed, and needeth not prayers or rite of thine."

"Thou art over bold," said the bishop sternly "and knowest not how to speak aright of holy things, when thou sayest that yonder minster, built on the very soil of paganism, needeth not Christian hallowing. Rite or words of ours indeed it needeth not; yet we trust that, by our poor ministry, the word of an Incarnate God will come down to do the work, and that His Blessed Spirit will not disdain to dwell therein at our unworthy bidding. Therefore, if thou hast no better or

weightier matter whereof to speak see that thou disturb this holy ceremony no further by thy ill-timed foolery."

"Holy bishop," persisted Seward, "I am no jester, and have not wit enough to be a fool, did I desire it. I come but to say that which mine eyes have seen and my ears heard, and which the tongue of Blessed Peter hath itself declared to me and bidden me proclaim to your holiness and to the king's majesty. Yonder minster hath been hallowed, and by the Saint's own hands; and he bids you forbear to add words of Holy Church to that which is already made fast and sure in heaven. Even last night did I behold the sight and hear the psalmody which, if it beseemeth me to say so, passeth the singing of your holiness's choir; and that I was not dreaming, I have a token in the salmon which I caught at the Blessed Peter's bidding."

"Salmon in the Thames! Nay, if the holy fisherman gave thee such a token," exclaimed Sebert, who had joined the group that stood round Mellitus listening to the curious interruption of the day's proceedings, "I for one will not be slack to credit his word; for never have these waters yet given such fish to my table. What think you, reverend father, of the man's tidings? is he dreaming still? or hath there indeed been given some sign of heavenly favour on the minster we are offering to God?"

"I scarce know what to think," said Mellitus; "Seward is not a dreamer, nor a seer of marvels. Hast thou no surer token," he added, turning to the fisherman, "than the salmon in thy nets?"

"Holy father," replied Seward, "some such token surely awaits your holiness in the minster, though I know not of what manner it may be; only that he whom I saw last night bade me carry you these words, and tell you that the sign of their truth was on the minster-walls."

"Let us proceed thither," said Mellitus; "the things of God's glory are ofttimes hid from the wise and prudent and revealed unto little ones, and it may

be we are even now listening to a messenger of heaven in the person of this fisherman;" and so saying, he himself led the way to the minster-door.

It was opened as he drew near; and ere any foot was put upon its threshold, the bishop and his companions were sensible of an extraordinary and heavenly odour that issued from the interior of the edifice and filled them with wonder and curiosity. Whence did it proceed? for as yet there had been no holy rite that they knew of performed within its walls, and no censer had swung its sweet cloud of fragrance around the yet (as they thought) unconsecrated altar. But it was not incense, but rather the strange and balmy odour of the sacred chrism which filled the place; and Mellitus advancing alone, and with a feeling of more than usual reverence, into the church, approached the crosses on the walls which had been prepared for the ceremony of consecration. All doubts were removed at once; he beheld the pavement inscribed with the letters of both alphabets, the walls in thrice six places bedewed with the oil of sanctification, the remains of twelve wax-lights adhering to twelve crosses, and every part still moist with the recent aspersions.

"Thanks be to God for His great mercy!" ejaculated Mellitus; "no hand of ours shall touch these consecrated walls." Then kneeling before the altar, he added: "Confirm, O Lord, that which Thou hast wrought, and let not Thy name depart from Thy holy house, from this time forth, even for ever! This altar," he continued, "hath been hallowed for the Adorable Sacrifice, and we will offer It in thanksgiving to God this day; for other blessing than that of its Apostle is not needed by the holy minster of St. Peter."

The ceremony of consecration was therefore never performed, and the Mass sung by Mellitus was the only rite that celebrated the opening of the minster church. King Sebert, moreover, added to the rights of the new abbey that of the tenth of all the fish caught in the Thames within certain assigned limits,—a right which

is to be found existing in the muniments of the abbey down to the latest date. Nor was it until three centuries later, and after the minster of Thorney Island had suffered many sacrileges from the hands of the Danes, that the new church erected by the Confessor received consecration just before its founder's death: its erection was also undertaken and completed by the direct command of its glorious patron; for we read that St. Peter appeared in vision to the monk Wulsine as he slept, and declared his will to him, bidding him bear the same to the king.

"There is a place of mine," he said, "in the western part of London, which I love, and which I formerly *consecrated with my own hands*, honoured with my presence, and made illustrious by my miracles: its name is Thorney; and having for the people's sins been given over to the barbarians, from rich it became poor, from stately low, and from honourable it hath been made to be despised. This let the king, giving command, restore, and make it a dwelling of monks; let him magnificently build it, and amply endow it; it shall be no less the house of God and the gate of heaven."

The obedience of St. Edward to this command is well known; and the church so built by him was finished and consecrated just in time to receive his relics and to be made his shrine.

THE MONK'S LAST WORDS.

ASH-WEDNESDAY of the year 1649 had cast its holy sadness over Rome. The merriment of the carnival, that most charming and most childish of all Italian customs, which the northern races have darkened with scandals and debaucheries, had given place to prayer and fasting, and the solemn words, "*Memento, homo, quia pulvis es: et in pulverem reverteris.*" But at mid-day, in a large chamber overhanging the Tiber, five German artists might be seen sitting down to a jovial repast, which suited ill with the penitential day. The room in which they sat was one storey above the level of the river, which washed the foot of the house; three large windows opened upon the stream, now swollen and turbulent from the winter rains; and the artist to whom this apartment belonged could, without leaving his house, enjoy the quiet pleasure of angling.

Peter Van Laar, such was the artist's name, had resided in Rome for sixteen years: Poussin, Claude Lorraine, and Sandrart, were of the number of his friends: he was ill-made, even a little deformed; the length of his arms and legs gave him some resemblance to a monkey, and his whole face was covered by enormous moustaches, of which he was extremely proud, and which, curling up on each side of his nose, seemed to threaten the skies. His reputation, however, as an artist, his never-failing spirits, and a certain coarse good-humour which he possessed, made up in his companions' eyes for all his external defects.

These companions, on the day in question, were

Roelant and Claes Van Laar, his brothers, and John and Andrew Both, two celebrated painters of his own age: they were all disciples of Calvin. A little good sense and feeling might have taught them not openly to violate all the observances of the country which had so hospitably received them; and if they refused to own the authority of the Father of the Church, at least to obey the laws of the sovereign of Rome; and by these laws Ash-Wednesday is a day of abstinence. But they were used to follow their own ways unmolested, and the table was loaded with viands left from the feast of the day before, in the midst of which appeared triumphantly a splendid Tyrolean ham.

"Before we begin," said Andrew Both, "Peter shall play us a tune on his violin; a stirring tune, to wake us up a little and give us an appetite."

The rest eagerly backed his proposal, and Peter, who required no pressing, began with twisting his extraordinary figure and features into every kind of grimace to the tune of a burlesque dance, which was much applauded. At mid-day the five boon companions began their dinner with shouts of laughter, and a noise and confusion which predicted shattered glasses, if not a fray, before the end of the repast.

"We are really too bad to make such a noise," said Peter; "we must respect the customs of the country. What a stillness there is all around us!"

"Bah! nonsense!" answered Roelant; "we are not superstitious,—every one knows it; artists are privileged. Just fill my glass again!"

And the noise increased every instant. By four o'clock the five artists were all more or less intoxicated, and the chamber rang with the jingling of glasses and with their hoarse voices mingling in the most horrible curses, in impious jests and ribald songs.

It happened that a good Franciscan monk, passing the house, heard this hubbub; and fearing that a violent quarrel was going on, he hastened in to make peace. Directed by the noise, he approached the door.

opened it, and started back bewildered at the scene before him.

"Come in, father!" roared out John Both, insolently; "you look like a rare model. Come and take a draught;" and as the monk stood still, he pulled him roughly forward to the table.

"Gentlemen," said the monk gravely, "I thought I was coming among Christians; but I see I was mistaken."

"As much of Christians as yourself, old man!" answered Roelant, holding him back as he tried to leave the room; "and none the less, either, for eating a slice of ham."

"What nourishes the body kills not the soul," said John Both, in a tone of drunken solemnity.

"You are not quite in a state to reason, dear brothers," said the monk, gently; "but were you so, all I should say would be, when Mother Church commands, her children have only to obey. What is more worthless than a disobedient family, or a rebellious army? And besides, as you well know, it is not the food which we consider sinful, but the want of submission to lawful authority."

"The monk means to insult us," said Andrew, in a tone which was becoming sullen.

"No, my brethren, but I pity you; and on this holyday I beg you not to give this scandal. Remember that it is against the laws of the country; and that if, instead of me, any one in authority had seen you, you might have been imprisoned for a fortnight."

"He is right, he is quite right; let us leave the table," said Peter, in some alarm.

"No, no, that we will not!" cried Roelant; "though I am rather frightened, too," he added sarcastically, "if, as you say, he be right in what he says. Claes, bolt the door; John, hold the reverend father's feet."

"Who knows," suggested Andrew, "but we might be banished from Rome? We are Calvinists."

At these words a look of pain shot over the monk's

calm face, and he tried to escape; but he was held too firmly. "We will take care," said Claes, "that the monk does not betray us. Ah, I see how to manage that! Fill up the glasses, Roelant; we'll drink the good gentleman's health,—and, John, just cut him a slice of ham."

This suggestion was received with loud laughter and applause.

But over the gentle, simple face of the poor Franciscan came a wonderful dignity. With the hand which was free he declined the ham, which they tried to force upon him; and, when his persecutors had drunk his health, with every kind of mockery and insult, he said, "If you are indeed aliens from the Holy Roman Church, I can only pray for you and weep over you; I cannot blame you. But remember that I, her faithful son, think this which you would make me do a grievous sin."

"No matter! no matter! the greybeard shall do as we bid him," shrieked Roelant, thumping the table with his fist till all the glasses rang.

"He shall!" Claes rejoined; and he tried to force a morsel of ham through the closed teeth of the monk, who drew back in horror.

And then began a fearful scene—a scene which no pen can describe. Night was fast closing in; a stormy wind had arisen, and had burst open the window. The five artists looked in their rage and drunkenness more like demons than men; and the holy monk, the object of their satanic fury. Now held down in a chair, now pushed upon the tables, now knocked down, and then dragged up again almost stunned, yet firm in his resolve, he saw only furious eyes glaring at him, and heard nothing but curses, threats, and insults. Andrew Both held wine to his lips. Roelant tried to press the piece of meat upon him. Peter Van Laar, more sober, and uneasy at the wildness of his comrades, tried to persuade him to yield. Claes continued his endeavours to force open his mouth; the monk silently resisted, and

at every moment's pause, his prayer rose up: "Dear Lord, deliver me, and pardon them!"

When this disgraceful scene had lasted for half-an-hour, Van Laar, the only reasonable one of the party, tried to restrain his companions. "This is too bad," he said; "let the poor wretch go, if he will first swear not to betray us."

"Impossible!" said Claes. "After all this, we are too much compromised: he may now accuse us of assault. No, no! he shall sin with us, or else he shall make acquaintance with our daggers."

He drew his weapon as he spoke; and all followed his example except Van Laar, who cried, "What, murder! know you not 'tis *murder* you are contemplating? Will you become assassins? You are ruining yourselves for ever!"

The daggers were arrested by this vehement address, and the monk was able to say: "Though you have left the Church, gentlemen, you still hold to the Bible. God sees you! and it is He who has said: 'Whosoever smites with the sword shall perish by the sword.'"

"He speaks truth!" exclaimed Van Laar, in an agony of remorse and fear. "Down with the poniards. I will have no murders or murderers in my house."

"The Tiber! yes, the Tiber!" cried Claes, whose drunken fury was unchecked; and, leaping on the window-seat, he dragged the poor Franciscan towards it.

"The monk will betray us!" said Andrew Both. "He will deliver us up to the Inquisition!" added John and Roelant; and thus, lashing themselves into a rage, they pulled and pushed their victim to the window.

"My God!—" began the holy man: but his dying prayer was drowned in the howling of the storm; and in another moment a heavy splash in the river beneath told that malice and impiety had done their worst.

Van Laar had taken no part in the crime, though he had not moved a finger to prevent it. He leaned

for some minutes from the window; but seeing only the black stormy night, he closed it hastily and turned to his companions, who had flung themselves on different seats, exhausted.

A long quarter of an hour elapsed in gloomy silence. Van Laar was the first to break it.

"What have you done!" he said.

Claes alone could find courage enough to answer.

"It is an untoward event, no doubt," said he; "but at least we have nothing now to fear."

"Nothing," rejoined Van Laar, "if the crime be not discovered!"

"The crime!" repeated the rest, looking on each other with a kind of terror; and they relapsed into their gloomy thoughts.

Moody and sad, the five artists went to their homes, thinking no longer of merriment or feasting. Instead of seeking each other out as before, they avoided each other with horror. Even when the Franciscan's body had been found, and they were certain that no suspicion was attached to them, nothing could banish the cloud from their brow; and Van Laar soon announced that business of importance obliged him to return to Germany. The others also declared that they too would leave Rome, which was now become hateful to them; and they all began preparing for departure.

"It is well, at least," said Van Laar, "that you did not dip your hands in his blood; for, remember, 'He who smiteth with the sword shall perish by the sword.' *He* said it, and the words of a dying man are terrible!"

"Bah!" said Claes, angrily; "superstition! tales to frighten children with! According to that, we ought all to be drowned."

He burst into a wild laugh: but it found no echo from his companions; their countenances only grew more gloomy, and they rose abruptly, saying, "Do not talk of it: let us go—the sooner the better."

The next day the five friends dispersed. Claes Van Laar started for the villa of a Roman noble, who owed him a large sum for some pictures he had painted for him. He was riding on a mule, and in passing a bridge which joined two low rocks the mule slipped, and Claes was hurled into a torrent formed by the late violent rains. The body of his drowned brother was carried to Peter, who was packing up for his journey. After the funeral he set out for Holland, with his friend John Both.

Roelant Van Laar and Andrew Both had started in a fit of strange melancholy, the one for Genoa, the other for Venice. Neither of them was destined to see his native land again. Six months later, Peter Van Laar received the news that his brother had drowned himself at Genoa.

In the spring of the following year, John Both, when opening his studio at Utrecht, read in a packet received from Italy the account of his brother Andrew's accidental death by drowning at Venice.

Horror and remorse at the sight of this manifest judgment of God seemed to deprive the miserable man of his senses. Overwhelmed with agony and despair, he rushed out of his studio and through the streets like a maniac, and flung himself into the Rhine.

Of all the guilty associates, Peter Van Laar alone remained. He who had once been the gayest of the gay now dragged on a miserable existence, a burden to himself and to all around him; wasting in gloom and in vain brooding over the past the time which God seemed to allow him, as having been the least guilty, for repentance and amendment. But the long-suffering God does not always wait: He may continue standing at the door, and may knock again and again, and though as often unheeded, may as often repeat His calls; but there comes a moment when He lingeringly withdraws, and, albeit willing to return, returns no more. The sinner is left to his own weak will and the goadings of the evil spirit within him. And so it was

with this remorseful but unrepenting man, for on Ash-Wednesday, in the year 1673, his cook having served up a ham at dinner, Peter Van Laar sprang up with a cry of agony, rushed from the house, and drowned himself.

Truly the monk's last words had received a terrible fulfilment.

God's vengeance against murder has become a proverb among men; and at times He visibly punishes less heinous sins in this life, as though to vindicate even here His everlasting sovereignty, and to disclose to His creatures something of those tremendous judgments which are reserved for the impenitent in the world to come.

THE MARTYR MAIDENS OF OSTEND

A LEGEND OF THE 18TH CENTURY.

CHAPTER I.

THE LISTENER.

CONSIDERABLY more than a hundred years have come and gone since one evening towards the end of May a young man, by his garb and general appearance adjudged to be an Englishman, or at all events a native of the British Isles, was observed to mingle with the motley crowd, which from every part of the city of Ostend was thronging onwards to the parish-church. It was the hour of Benediction; but no thought of prayer seemed to occupy his mind, for he paused occasionally to scan the passing groups with no incurious eye; and when he reached the church, instead of advancing towards the altar at which the service was to be performed, he ensconced himself in a dark corner near the entrance, where, free from every chance of observation, he could direct the same fierce scrutiny to those who entered as he had already bestowed upon the passers-by.

Some attracted more, some less of his notice; but each new face had power to call forth a look of eager questioning, which again as invariably faded away into one of disappointment; until the appearance of a fresh group at the very moment when service was commencing arrested all his attention, and evidently more than satisfied his previous expectations. The party in

question was composed solely of women, all young, and two at least most beautiful; the one with her fair hair, in contrast to the fantastic head-dress of the day, parted Madonna-wise upon her brow, the other veiling the "merry mischief" of her glance beneath the long dark lashes which swept her cheek like a silken fringe, as with eyes reverently cast down and features composed to an expression of intense devotion, she stepped sedately after her companions. The two fair girls who followed were far too young to call forth much speculation from any casual spectator, and the young woman who walked behind them, and who apparently occupied a position between a confidential servant and a humble friend, would have been absolutely plain, had it not been for a countenance which bore the unmistakable impression of a sweet and calm but most earnest mind.

None of them noticed the young Briton; and though it was plain that he had recognised them, it was just as evident that he did not wish the discovery to be mutual; for he drew quickly behind a friendly pillar as they passed, and it was not until they had taken their places near the altar that he ventured to seat himself at a little distance in the rear, from whence, his face being partially concealed by his hand and by a fold of his short mantle, he continued to watch them unobserved during the remainder of the service.

Though the taller of the two maidens who had first entered the church was visibly the chief object of his attention, yet was it in some degree shared by her dark-eyed companion, while the younger girls seemed to excite his interest only from their association with these two. But whatever might be his motive for this close observation, whether curiosity or admiration, or some yet stronger feeling, he was plainly not disposed speedily to abandon it; for even after Benediction was over, and the congregation had begun to retire, he still kept his eyes fixed upon the group with an air of stubborn determination, which sufficiently announced his intention of not leaving the spot until they had set him the

example. So far, however, from showing any immediate purpose of departure, the damsels remained quietly in their places until nearly the whole of the congregation had left the church; and then, after some little whispering and consultation among themselves, the Madonna-browed maiden rose and walked calmly towards the sacristy. The stranger bit his lips impatiently in apparent disappointment at this fresh delay, and made an involuntary movement forward, as if to follow her retreating steps; but again recollecting himself, seemed to submit with a kind of dogged resolution to his fate, while his unconscious tormentor proceeded with gentle and half-timid accents to inquire of one of the acolyths for the Père de Camba.

"What would you with the Père de Camba, my child?" asked an aged priest of a singularly benevolent aspect, who, having overheard her question, had stepped forward to answer it. "Or rather," he added, leading the way into the interior of the room, and closing the door, "rather, what would you have him to do for you; for I guess by your accent that you are a foreigner, and by your looks that you need advice? I am the Père de Camba, for whom you have inquired; tell me therefore if I can do aught to serve you."

"You can, mon père, if you will be so kind. I would learn of you whether an Englishman of the name of Elliot does not reside in this town, or at any rate at some short distance without its walls."

"Who are you that ask it, lady?" replied the priest, with something both of trouble and of curiosity in his manner.

"Sir," replied the maiden, 'if indeed you be the Père de Camba, of whom in better times my good father was often wont to speak, you will know not only the secret place where at present he hides him from his foes, but likewise the writer of this letter, Master Richard Bishop, of Brailes House, Warwickshire, whom you once honoured by ranking him among your friends."

Père de Camba opened and glanced his eye over the

etter she presented; and then, turning to the lady with an expression of double kindness in his good, kind face, he took her hand and said, "The daughter of the noble Elliot, and the great-niece of my good friend Richard Bishop, has indeed a twofold claim upon my love and service, to say nought of the reverence which I needs must feel for one whose family has given the first of a new line of orthodox prelates to that unhappy land of schism from whence she comes. Say, therefore, Mistress Winifride, in what can I assist you?"

"I would fain see my father, sir; for it is now two long years since he left England and me, his daughter; banished, as I doubt not you already know, for his faithful adherence to the fortunes of a most unhappy monarch."

"That will be easy of accomplishment, my child. Your father leads almost the life of a recluse in a cottage without the walls, and in Ostend he is known only as the holy hermit of England. When, therefore, would you wish to seek him?"

"Oh, soon! very soon, mon père! Sunrise to-morrow, or indeed it scarcely seems too late to-night. I do so pine to see him, when I think how long, how very long it is since he has looked upon his child!"

"Nevertheless to-night is much too late," said the priest kindly but decidedly; "and sunrise to-morrow would be much too early. Suppose we choose the happy medium, and name the hour of seven?"

"Seven, then, let it be," the maiden answered with a grateful smile. "Can you provide me with a guide, mon père?"

"I know of one who cannot be far off," he replied; "for he generally remains until I leave the church, and if you will but wait a moment I will seek him for you;" and opening the door of the sacristy as he spoke, the Père de Camba walked down the church, closely followed by the lady.

Her young countryman, who all this time had never quitted his post, was instantly moving in the same

direction. Then as they paused in conversation with one of the acolyths who had served at Benediction, concealing himself behind a pillar close to where they stood, he had the satisfaction of hearing, not only the name of the hotel at which the fair stranger was lodging, but likewise every particular of the directions which the unsuspecting curé gave the boy for her safe guidance the next morning to the residence of the English hermit without the walls. The intelligence, thus surreptitiously obtained, seemed to make an alteration in his plans. The lady was no longer the chief object of his attention, which was now transferred to her guide-elect; and no sooner did the latter quit the church than the stranger closely followed in his track. He took care, however, not to attempt any communication with him so long as they were within sight of the church; but after he had put two or three crowded thoroughfares between himself and all danger of observation from that quarter, he made a long stride forward, and tapping the boy upon the shoulder, inquired in a confidential tone if he could direct him to the cell of the English hermit. Happily for his schemes, this designation had been more than once repeated by the Père de Camba in his consultation with Winifride and her little guide; and the stranger was far too quick not to guess at the real condition of the person thus described, and to take advantage of the information he had gained.

"Yes, to be sure," replied the boy, completely taken off his guard by the friendly and easy tone in which he had been addressed; and then, connecting in his own mind the stranger who now accosted him with the party he had just left in the church, he added, "Monsieur may rest assured that the demoiselles will be as safe under my charge as if he had the happiness of being their conductor himself."

A slight faint smile played for an instant on the stranger's lip, as he thought perchance that he might not be exactly the guide the young ladies would have

chosen; but he repressed it ere it could have attracted his companion's notice, and merely remarked, with a slight inflection of virtuous indignation in his voice, "Demoiselles! I know not what demoiselles you speak of; but is it possible that ladies are permitted to visit the holy man? I should have thought so stern a recluse would have willingly dispensed with the company of such fair distractors."

"Ladies don't often visit him, certainly," replied the boy: "I never heard but of one before; and no one knew if she were really a woman, or only a man in woman's clothes. However, it is the Père de Camba who sends *my* demoiselles, so it must be all right; for he is the hermit's bosom-friend, and visits him once a-week, to confess him, some folks say, or to talk government matters with him, as others think; for the hermit is said to be fonder of the English king on our side of the water than of the great lady who queens it on the other; and the good father is much of the same way of thinking, as every one knows at Ostend."

"Quite right that he should be!" cried the stranger. "All honest men think the same. The hermit is a Jacobite, as we call them in England, and i'faith so am I, since at Ostend I can say it without danger of my head; wherefore lead on, *mon brave*, and look you say nought of this transaction to your demoiselles; for it must be a profound secret between the hermit and myself."

"Nay, but—" said the boy, pausing with some perplexity of manner—"it is surely a pity monsieur did not name his wishes to the Père de Camba; for the holy man is said not to be over fond of intrusion, and at this hour of night it is quite likely that a visitor to his cell may get a bullet instead of an embrace for his pains."

"Oh, is that all?" replied the young man laughing; "you need have no fears on that score, my good fellow, for the night is much too far advanced to think of beating up the old lion in his quarters: and, in fact, I

did not mean to visit him now, but merely to *have a* look at his den, in order to make mine own way thither at some future time. Take this gold piece, and lead on. The sum shall be doubled to-morrow if I find you have been faithful and true, and have kept my secret."

"*Bon Dieu*, how rich these Englishmen are!" exclaimed the boy, quite overcome by such unlooked-for munificence. "Come on then, monsieur, since you will have it so; but we must make haste, for we shall have barely time to go and return before the town-gates are shut for the night."

"Lead on," repeated the stranger; "and when we return you shall show me the way to the *Golden Fleece*."

"The *Golden Fleece!*" cried the boy in a tone of undisguisable amazement; "why that is the very same hotel where my demoiselles are staying."

"Indeed!" the stranger answered, with a well-feigned look of surprise; "I seem destined to cross their path to-night. However, the *Golden Fleece* will probably hold us all; or if not, I can seek accommodation elsewhere. So hasten on."

CHAPTER II.

AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

THE unconscious object of all these various manœuvres was that evening sitting with the rest of her companions in one of the large empty-looking apartments of the *Golden Fleece*, when, unattended and unannounced, the stranger who had so closely dogged their footsteps entered, and took a seat, though all unbidden, at her side. The two youngest girls started up blushing deeply, partly from timidity and partly from surprise; and she of the dark eyes and raven locks might possibly have one the same, if a glance from her more guarded companion had not restored her to at least the sem-

blance of composure. A long and awkward pause ensued, during which the stranger seemed endeavouring to repress some emotion that unmanned him; nor was it broken until the maiden with the fair hair addressed him in tones that could scarcely be said to tremble, though a marble pallor had overspread both cheek and brow.

"My cousin Douglas, you are welcome; if, indeed (which I fain would hope), your visit be as well intended as assuredly it has been unexpected on our parts."

"And undesired, doubtless you would have me to understand; cruel, as you ever are, Winifride," replied he whom she addressed; while yet, in spite of the bitter look of disappointment on his features, he attempted to take her hand,—a movement which she dexterously evaded under the pretence of taking up her "knotting," the fashionable feminine amusement of the day. "And you, fair Elizabeth," he added, endeavouring to cover his repulse with an affectation of indifference, "are you also unkind and ungenerous as of old? and have you still neither heart nor hand to offer to your kinsman?"

"Neither heart nor hand, Master Douglas," the girl answered promptly, "unless, indeed,—though I do sorely doubt it,—that kinsman hath come back from his captivity a better man than when the fortune of war consigned him to a foreign prison."

"Good faith! you need doubt of it no longer, coz," the stranger answered with a voice and smile of bitter irony; "for if to be strong of will, and firm of purpose, and reckless of all consequences, constitute, as I take it, sterling worth, though in another sense to that which you religious hypocrites would set upon the term, then am I now to all intents and purposes a better man than even when I put thy grandfather's head in peril rather than relinquish one iota of my wishes."

"In troth, an it be as you say, Sir Cousin," replied the lady, striving to conceal an involuntary feeling of terror and repulsion beneath a light and laughing man-

ner, "David himself was not a truer son of Adam, when he set Uriah in the battle-front;—no, nor Solomon, when he bowed before a thousand idols to please the vanity of a thousand wives."

"Nay," retorted Douglas, "your wit is short of the mark, good mistress. With all his wisdom, Solomon was a fool; he risked perdition for the sake of many, while I would hazard it but for one, and that one is ——"

"Self," interrupted the spirited girl, her eyes flashing and her face kindling with irrepressible indignation.

"You are right; no other is, or could be worthy of such a sacrifice," replied Douglas coolly. "You have a keen judgment, Mistress Elizabeth."

"It needs no great wit to judge the present by the past," replied his cousin; "and of him who, even as a boy, sacrificed all things to his wayward passions, it surely may safely be predicted that self will still be the idol and the infatuation of his maturer years."

"Peace, Elizabeth!" interposed her graver companion; "such upbraidings are most unmeet a maiden's lips. Our cousin," she added, turning coldly but courteously towards their unbidden guest,—"our cousin is doubtless well aware that we have but even now concluded a long and wearisome journey; and therefore I trust he will hold us excused if, consulting our weakness rather than our politeness, we leave him to seek a much needed repose."

"His known tenderness and consideration for all human creatures leave no doubt but that he will consider this an indisputable and conclusive argument," said Elizabeth.

But again Winifride checked her. "It is not for us to bandy words, Elizabeth. Master Douglas, we pray you to permit us to retire."

"Not until you have heard me, Winifride; and that in private too," replied the young man, his face assuming that very look of relentless obstinacy of which he had been boasting.

Even Elizabeth felt her spirit quail before it, while Winifride, on the contrary, though she grew paler and paler, as was her wont, beneath the assumed calmness of her outward bearing, yet continued the conversation in the same tone of dignified composure with which she had commenced it.

"To what purpose, Master Douglas?" she said. "If it be but to discuss the question first mooted years ago, at the house of our venerable uncle, Master Bishop, such an interview would be as vexatious as impertinent; for I could but say what I have said before—and nothing more, and nothing less."

"Fie! Cousin Winifride," cried Elizabeth, "to be so mild! Now, an I were in your place, I would tell Master Douglas to his face, that if he were *then* an object of pity and indifference, *now* he is one of pity and aversion, nay, of the most profound contempt; and that not half so much for his unmanly persecution of a defenceless maiden as for his shameless backslidings in politics and religion; his forswearing the faith of his fathers for a hundred generations, and his mean adhesion to the upstart government of an undutiful daughter and a faithless sister."

"I thank you for that word, fair coz," Douglas broke in, with a look of malignant pleasure. "You have heard her, damsels all; and you cannot refuse to bear me witness, when I call upon you, that Mistress Elizabeth Bishop has committed herself to words of treason; yes, treason against the queen of the Protestant people of England, and against the Church of which that princess is the defender and supreme head."

"Not treason,—not treason," murmured the two youngest girls; and "not treason," boldly echoed Elizabeth herself. "For treason can be uttered only against the Lord's anointed; and him, thou knowest, I touched not in my discourse."

"Hush! my cousin," again Winifride interposed. "Master Douglas, once more, will it please you to retire?"

She moved towards the door as she spoke; but Douglas sprang forward, and drawing the ponderous wooden bar by which it was intended to be secured, exclaimed, with the addition of a terrible imprecation, "Not a living soul shall leave the room this night, Winifride, if you do not pass me your word for a private interview. Take your choice, brave damsels," he added, in a taunting tone; "yes or no, either will suit me indifferent well; for if I fail in speech with Mistress Winifride, I can at least find consolation in the fair company into which fate has flung me."

"And what if we will not endure it?" cried Elizabeth, the quick blood mounting to her neck and brow. "What, sir, if we choose to call others to our aid?"

"You may call," he answered, with a malicious smile, "but will any answer? Look at these thick walls and massive doors, and say if your very neighbours of the next floor could hear your cries, even if they were not (as they are) sleeping-off their deep potations of most vulgar schnaps?"

"Would you were fast in your prison still!" cried the vexed Elizabeth; "what ill fortune has sent you across our path once more, bad man?"

"Doubtless the gods, fair nymph, who would make us amends for our long captivity," he answered, with a mock air of odious gallantry. "I was even on my way to England when I received advice of your departure for these sandy shores; and on these sandy shores accordingly I have waited your arrival, winning meanwhile a reputation among the fair Ostendians which has made me the idol of every young frau, and the terror of every old one."

Winifride's very soul trembled within her as she listened to this audacious speech; but her resolution was taken on the instant, and she only said: "I will speak with you alone, Master Douglas, since you insist upon it; but only on condition that you give me your word of honour afterwards to retire."

"Word of honour!" echoed Elizabeth scornfully.

But Winifride checked her with a look, as she continued: "You, dear Elizabeth, will withdraw into the next chamber with our young friends: and Hilliard shall remain with me; but out of ear-shot of what may be spoken."

"That is not a bargain," cried Douglas indignantly; "I said alone, and with no other witness than—"

"God and our own conscience," said the maiden calmly. "Master Douglas, I fear you not; but I speak to no man save in the presence of a third person: and for the rest, Hilliard is my second self, and a secret of mine is as sacred in her hands as if it were her own."

Douglas at first seemed about fiercely to refuse this compromise; but something there was upon Winifride's brow which warned him that if he rejected these conditions he might fail of his point altogether, therefore he sullenly signified his assent by withdrawing the wooden bolt from the door, and so leaving the rest of the party free to depart. This the two youngest girls did in a hurried and terrified manner; but not so Elizabeth, who paused on the threshold to give him a look of defiance, which he, to do him no more than justice, retorted to the full.

CHAPTER III.

THE INTERVIEW.

"JESU! Maria!" cried one of the girls, as they all crowded into the next apartment, like a flock of frightened lambs. "May God protect our dear Mistress Winifride! Saw ye the scowl this fierce stranger cast upon her as we left her alone with him?"

"Nay, little Annie," said Elizabeth, laughing, "that scowl was intended for me; only Winifride being half a head taller, it fell instead upon the brow of the only woman who has calmness and dignity enough to quell the spirit of that insolent Scotchman."

"Then he is not English, dear Mistress Elizabeth;

I am truly glad of it, for I should have been ashamed of my countryman."

"No, Annie; his mother, indeed, was the sister of my mother, and of Winifride's as well; but she married a Douglas, and so the blood of one of the oldest and noblest families of Scotland is tingling in his veins."

"Good lack! and yet he did act the evil part you have hinted at just now," cried the girl, in unfeigned astonishment.

"He did all that I have said, and with more villany even than I have yet described," answered Elizabeth, compressing her beautiful lips to an expression of utter scorn. "He wanted to wed Winifride; and when he found that, her heart being set upon a convent, she would by no means consent to be his wife, then was he wicked and mean enough to seek by force to extort her acquiescence."

"Nay, and indeed!" the girl responded under her breath from very fear; "and what did he, dear Mistress Elizabeth? Did he waylay her on the road-side, and bear her to some old deserted castle, as is told of the heroine of an old romaunt which used to lie in a closet near my late mother's chamber?"

"And which little Annie Scandret used to read and believe as devoutly as if it were the Bible from whence her father was wont to find texts for his discourses," said Elizabeth, who in the midst of her anxiety and vexation could not refrain from smiling. "No, indeed, my own Annie; and lucky for Winifride it was that he did not, seeing that I know not in all the country round about Brailes House of any courteous knight who (as is needful in all such fair distresses) would have ridden to the rescue. Master Douglas had a much more prosaic, and, alas that I must say it, a much more fatal method by which he sought to accomplish his end. He renounced his faith, gave in his adhesion to the usurping government of Anne; and having thus secured the patronage and confidence of its members, he threatened to denounce Winifride's father as an intriguing Jacobite,

—ay, and he afterwards put his threat into execution, and forced him to fly the country, while at the same time he nearly brought mine own old grandsire to the block by his treacherous revelations of the plottings of Brailes House; revelations of which he, in sooth, was a fitting witness, who had been nursed and cherished as one of its own sons from the very hour when at his birth he was bereft of his mother."

"And how did Mistress Winifride escape the snare?" the girl asked again, with all the breathless interest which such a story was calculated to excite in one of her age.

"By the strong will and true heart of woman," said Elizabeth with enthusiasm; "she would not have him on any terms. There had been no pitiful trifling with his vanity or his affections. He had never had her love, but now he had forfeited her esteem; and this she told him kindly, I doubt not, yet simply and resolutely;—so resolutely, that in the first agony of his disappointment he joined the army of the Duke of Marlborough, then gathering laurels on the fields of Flanders."

"And Mistress Winifride would not have him after all?" said the elder of the two girls, who had hitherto been listening in silence. "And yet," she added with much *naïveté*, "he must have loved her very much."

"He loved her, Catherine: she had a fair face and a goodly fortune," said Elizabeth, almost bitterly. But never you trust an affection which can trample on the laws of God and man for the attainment of its object. As I have said, Master Douglas joined the army, and was taken prisoner in his very first battle; and a prisoner he remained, until we were beginning to hope we had lost sight of him for ever; when lo! here he is again in this old out-of-the way town of Ostend,—for our sins, it must be supposed, since assuredly it is not for his virtues. But hark! what noise is that?"

They listened anxiously. The voice of Douglas was at first distinctly audible; then the soft accents of Wi-

nifride seemed venturing a reply; and then Douglas louder and louder still, until Hilliard could be heard interposing between them.

"Nay," said Elizabeth anxiously, after a moment's attentive listening, "Winifride must be hard pressed indeed if Hilliard is coming to the rescue. She who speaks so seldom, excepting to God and our Lady, would scarcely venture to break a lance with Master Douglas unless the case were urgent. But hush! he is at it again."

"And, Christ save us, what an oath!" cried Catherine Jeffs, involuntarily crossing herself.

The next moment the door of the other apartment was suddenly flung open, and Winifride's voice was heard in loud and energetic tones. "Leave me, Master Douglas; leave me! Not for my own life, nor for the lives of the nearest and dearest of my kindred, would I hearken for another moment to such words as these. Pass on!" she continued, in a manner so commanding, that involuntarily the young man obeyed; and when the girls rushed upon the landing-place, they found him standing in the open doorway, but with the hand of Winifride so firmly clasped in his own as effectually to prevent her from withdrawing it.

Quick as lightning Elizabeth saw her advantage, and started up the next flight of stairs, exclaiming, "It is intolerable! Look you, Master Douglas, I will rouse up the people of the next floor, and we shall see if you dare to carry yourself as boldly before men as before women and young girls."

Douglas perceived at a glance that she could fulfil her threat long before he should be able to prevent her, so he thought it best to avoid exposure by dropping Winifride's hand and preparing for departure. Yet, ere he did so, he could not refrain from saying, in a suppressed rage, "I go, Winifride; as *you* will it, have it so: but we meet again notwithstanding."

"It will be on the other side of the grave, then," said his cousin, with calm dignity; "for in this world I do swear most solemnly never willingly to give you

opportunity of insulting me again, as you have done this night. Farewell, then—and for ever."

"Farewell; but only till to-morrow," thought Douglas, as he descended the stairs, smiling with malicious pleasure, to think how easily he should be enabled to try her constancy in her coming interview with the recluse, who, well he guessed, would prove to be her father.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RECLUSE.

NOTWITHSTANDING the restless and disturbed night which was the natural consequence of the distressing visit we have just been describing, both Winifride and her faithful Hilliard were quite ready the next morning, when the little attendant assigned them by the Père de Camba made his appearance at the *Golden Fleece;* and under his experienced guidance they had soon left the gates of the city far behind them, and were walking along the fine sea-promenade called the Levée, which chanced to lead directly towards the hermit's dwelling.

This in appearance was nothing better than a hut; but a little garden had been neatly laid out in front, while in the rear it was sheltered by some low stunted bushes; and among them, it is almost needless to observe, Douglas had securely concealed himself long before the moment when Winifride and her companion tapped at the door of the cabin, and the former was received into the arms of her delighted father. The arch traitor had very cleverly taken up his position just under the open window of the only room of which the house could boast; and there, from behind his leafy screen, he could not only see his cousin folded in her father's arms, and shedding tears of joy upon his bosom, but also distinctly hear the exclamations of affection and delight which each in turn was addressing to the

other. The envy and despair that tortured his soul might haply resemble that which filled the serpent as he gazed upon the joys of paradise: but, like the serpent, Douglas also was plotting his revenge; and therefore he repressed the heavings of his angry bosom, and put back the curse upspringing to his lip, and prepared quietly to listen, and carefully to gather up such materials from the conversation as might enable him, since he uld not hope to make her falter in her duty, to work at least her temporal destruction.

Elliot was the first to speak. "My child, my child," he murmured, as he looked fondly on the fair face of his daughter, after having cast aside with his own hands the mantilla, which, being the ordinary dress of the maidens of Ostend, she had substituted, in obedience to a hint from the Père de Camba, for her more English-looking head-gear, "for how many months, for how many years, have I not thirsted for this moment! And yet now I find you only, as it seems to me, to lose you!" he added, laying his hand on her head with a gesture of inexpressible fondness and regret.

"Nay, my father, speak not thus! We cannot be said to lose that which is freely given to our God; and again, has it not been said by Him, that He will repay an hundredfold whatever we sacrifice for Him?"

"He hath said so, in good sooth," replied her father, with a sigh; "and since He Himself has said it, we must, even as becomes us, try to feel as well as to believe it. Nor think, my own beloved child, that I am less than grateful for that religious calling which doubtless rendered you from the first indifferent to the wooings of your cousin Douglas, who has since proved himself unworthy both of the noble house from whence he is descended and of you."

"My father," cried Winifride, shrinking, as if his words had recalled an evil vision to her mind, "he whom you have named is at this moment in Ostend, and he visited me last night."

"Ha! I trust he rendered you that due courtesy which, as a modest maiden, you had a right to look for at his hands, and that surely none the less so as the daughter of his mother's sister."

Winifride paused a moment to reflect. She felt it would be but adding uselessly to her father's sorrows, if he were made acquainted with the insolent conduct of her cousin, and so she only answered, "He renewed somewhat of the old talk of marriage; but I forbade him both that theme and my presence, and so we hope to be molested by him no more."

Could Winifride have seen the face, or looked into the secret soul of George Douglas, as he crouched that moment beneath the open window, drinking in her every word, as food alike for hatred and for love, she would have felt more than ever confirmed in her own strong conviction (which, however, she did not impart to her father,) that his pursuit of her would never cease until it had left her in her grave.

"No more, indeed," said Elliot anxiously, taking up her last words; "we must hope, dear child, that he will not again force himself upon you. And yet his very presence in these parts fills me with apprehension. Perchance you are not aware that he has been released from prison on a secret understanding with the Court of St. Germains, and for the express purpose of promoting our interests among the Jacobites of England; therefore it bodes no good to us, or to the king, that he should be lingering on here in Ostend, when there is so much to do, and which he has promised should be done, elsewhere."

"His language to us was very unlike that of a friend to the king," answered Winifride. "Is it not dangerous, think you, to trust him?"

"Trust him I cannot say I do; and yet, I think, were he a traitor, he would hardly have revealed his baseness to you. Perchance he left you wittingly in ignorance of his change."

Winifride made no reply. She deemed her cousin's

words but an angry threat; and thus, although she entirely distrusted his integrity, she did not wish needlessly, perhaps, to alarm her father. Elliot, finding she continued silent, of his own accord changed the subject to a less anxious theme.

"But you say *us*, my Winifride, and therefore I must conclude that your gay cousin has really cheated the world by persisting in her resolve to share your cloister. Impetuous and ardent as she is by nature, it must indeed have been a sacrifice to make!"

"And for that very reason she will make it bravely," cried Winifride, with a beautiful enthusiasm for her sister-cousin. "Until the very last moment no one would believe it. Friends saw her faults, but not her virtues; they knew that her feelings were ardent and passionate, and her nature somewhat lofty; but they could not see that out of these very dispositions grew that intenser spirit of devotion which counts all as nothing when given to its God!"

"It is the very stuff of which saints are often made," replied Elliot smiling. "And Hilliard is with you all?"

"My faithful Hilliard! yes, the pain of that parting has been spared me; and as we have grown together from the cradle, and from the cradle have ever thought, and felt, and prayed together (though, in sooth, her fervent piety did use to put my negligence to shame), so now the same convent will receive us both, and in our death we shall not be divided. But there are yet two other damsels of our party;—Anne Scandret, the young daughter of that Scandret, a preacher of the Anglican sect, who, you may remember, was some time since received into the Church, and another girl, the child of one Thomas Jeffs, a good man and a Catholic, as well as an earnest upholder of the exiled king. Master Scandret was anxious that his daughter should reside for a short space in a religious house, to be more deeply grounded in the mysteries of our holy faith; and he and the man Jeffs so earnestly besought me to take

charge of these poor children, that without manifest discourtesy and uncharitableness I could not say them nay. Albeit, I will own I was somewhat unwilling at the first, seeing that the travelling with so large a party tended to embarrass my movements and to draw the attention of government upon us."

"Thou hast done well and kindly, as thou hast ever done, my Winifride," replied her father fondly. "And what of thy great-uncle, the good Master Bishop?"

"He is well, my father, though much oppressed by the ill turn which his majesty's affairs do ever seem to take, however well and prosperously they may have shown in the commencement. But, I bethink me, I have a packet for you which will tell you more at large of his proceedings than our brief interview will permit my doing."

"The good old man!" said Elliot, with a sigh, as he laid the packet on the table, "it grieves me that he should be so despondent; and all the more so, for that I myself have still good hopes that the cause for which we struggle will finally prove triumphant. And now, child of my inmost heart, I fear me I must dismiss thee; for the sun is climbing high in the heavens, and it will not do to let it get abroad that the old hermit entertains ladies in his lonely cell. But where is the good Hilliard? I would exchange a word of greeting with her ere you depart."

Elliot rose, and drawing his daughter's arm tenderly within his own, proceeded to the door, where Hilliard was awaiting them. Douglas seized the opportunity to get a better view of the apartment than he had hitherto been able to obtain. The packet brought by Winifride was lying on the table near the window, within his very reach. No scruple restrained him; his hand was eagerly put forth to seize it, and the next moment the letter was hidden in his bosom, and he himself on his way back to Ostend, long before Elliot had given his last embrace and blessing to his daughter.

CHAPTER V.

THE STOLEN PACKET.

WINIFRIDE and her companion were so absorbed in their own reflections as they returned towards the town, that they saw nothing of Douglas; although as soon as he thought himself safe from discovery, he had partially retraced his footsteps in order to follow upon theirs Happily their little guide was not so unobservant; he had employed himself during Winifride's long interview with her father in making sundry observations in the hut and garden of the latter, and the result was the discovery of Master Douglas ensconced among the bushes. The boy, as it happened, had already begun sorely to repent of his imprudence in making the suspicious-looking Englishman acquainted with his countryman's retreat; and now, nothing doubting that some mischief was intended, he felt greatly puzzled how to act in order to prevent it. The fair foreigner, who had won his heart by the gentle kindness of her voice and manner, would, he felt instinctively, be powerless in the matter; Père de Camba, to say the truth, he feared to acquaint with his own act of folly; so at length he came to the resolution (the wisest under the circumstances that he could have adopted) of returning at once to the hermit himself, and revealing his anxiety as to the intentions of the intruder. No sooner, accordingly, had he reconducted his charge to the gates of Ostend, than he once more turned his steps towards Elliot's dwelling; and when, some hours afterwards, the Burgomaster sent his officials to the spot, they found, as the result of this interview, not only that the exile had himself thought fit to disappear, but that he had likewise either taken with him, or destroyed, all that the hut contained which could have thrown light on his identity or occupations.

After the departure of her young guide, Douglas hesitated no longer; but striding at once up to his cousin, he caught her by the arm in such a way as to make it impossible for her to free herself without attracting observation; and "Winifride!" he said, in that deep low voice which Elizabeth had been wont to say was always the token of his worst and most relentless moods, —"Winifride! you were very brave last night; now let us see if you can stand the test: your life, and—what I believe is infinitely more precious in your eyes—the lives of those who are nearest and dearest to you—your uncle, yes, and your father too, are in my power. Now say, will you bid me depart or not?"

"You have played the listener, Master Douglas," replied his cousin, with far less of surprise than of grave contempt in her manner; "the man capable of such an action can be trusted neither as friend nor foe; and therefore to accept of any terms from him, would be but to lose in dignity without gaining aught in real security or repose."

"Winifride, hear me," Douglas continued with frightful earnestness, which made his fiend-like threats sound still more terrible, "those were no vain words I uttered last night, as perchance you may have deemed them. I told you then—and now you must perforce believe it—that no idle consideration of honour or of conscience has power to turn me from my purpose, no matter whither it may lead me, or what misery it may bring down on others: with you at least I will be candid; nor will I insult your understanding by any affectation of the sanctity which your smooth-faced hypocrites assume; rebel or royalist—saint or sinner—either or all am I, just as I think it may make or mar my fortunes. Now you know all; and you will understand that I am in earnest when I say, that if you will love me and will wed me, I will save your kinsmen, and will join their party; but if you will not, why then you may live to sing their *requiem*, or you may perish with them; but in either case I shall have been revenged."

"Love!" repeated Winifride bitterly; "love in the face of such deeds and sentiments as these! And after all, who are you, that you talk so loudly? or what authority do you possess, that the safety of a whole place is to depend upon your fiat?"

"I am but George Douglas, to be sure," replied the traitor with a sneer; "but then, am I not also an accredited agent from the Court of St. Germains? and as such, would not your father and your uncle be in my power, even if I had not possession of such a document as this?" and he held significantly before her eyes the very packet which but an hour before she had confided to her father.

"You could not, you would not be so base!" the poor girl gasped, struck to the heart by the probable consequences of such treachery. "I will say nothing to you of my father; but you could not act so foul a part by Master Bishop,—the good, the kind old man,—he whose house was so often the home of your boyhood, and whose heart was ever open to you as if you had been his own."

"I could, and I would," replied her cousin with his most determined manner. "I could, I would, and what's more, I will, and that too on the instant, unless by a written document you promise to renounce the mummery of a religious state, and to return forthwith to England as my wife."

"That will I never do!" cried Winifride vehemently. "You may, if you please, prove a traitor alike to God and to your kindred; but me you shall never compel to the baseness you propose. So help me God and our Blessed Lady!"

"Amen!" responded the impious mocker; "and yet it seems to me, fair would-be martyr of this enlightened age, that your oath is somewhat rash; for say you keep it on the one side, then it must perforce be broken on the other. For instance; adherence to your God, by which I believe you would poetically express your mad folly in making a monkish woman of your-

self, will inevitably involve you in the much deprecated act of high treason to your kindred, since I swear to you—and my oath, to say the least of it, may be counted as irrevocable as your own—I swear, that if you relent not, the vessel that sails this night shall bear such intelligence to England as will suffice to send your uncle, with every mother's son who calls him cousin, to the block, ere another month has passed over their heads!"

There was a pause, for Winifride was too much agitated to trust her voice; and Douglas, mistaking her silence for hesitation, thus proceeded: "We are close to your abode, and I give you half an hour to deliberate with your friends. Possibly Elizabeth Bishop may not be so heroically inclined as knowingly to condemn her aged grandsire to destruction. At all events, it will be but courteous to offer her the option; so in half an hour I shall be here for your decision. Meanwhile, I think I need not warn you that any attempt at escape will but precipitate the ruin of your friends."

"You need fear nothing on that head," replied Winifride haughtily, "since all too keenly do I feel already that each of those lives so cruelly imperilled by your treachery is worth more than a thousand and a thousand of mine own."

They had reached the archway of the *Golden Fleece* as she finished speaking. Douglas bowed her in with as much formality as if his had been merely an escort of politeness; and then, setting his back doggedly against the wall, he prepared to await her decision with an outward semblance of tranquillity which was terribly contradicted by the wild workings of the heart within.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DECISION.

"Good heavens, Winifride! what is the matter? and what has happened?" cried Elizabeth Bishop and both her young companions, as Winifride, pale as death, and Hilliard, scarce less ghastly, stood before them.

"Oh, Elizabeth! I have undone you!" cried the unhappy girl, sinking into a chair, and covering her face with her hands.

"Nay, not quite so bad as that neither," interposed the kind voice of Hilliard; "it was but an unlucky accident, for which no one can with any show of justice be censured or reproached."

"But what is it? what has happened?" asked the perplexed Elizabeth.

"The packet! the packet!" murmured Winifride. "My God! how or when could he have obtained it?"

"You surely do not mean to say that Douglas has found means to possess himself of that packet which my grandfather intrusted to the care of Winifride?" cried Elizabeth, addressing Hilliard.

"Unhappily it is even so," she answered. "By foul means or by fair ones, Master Douglas is in possession of that very packet."

"Nay, but it is impossible," ejaculated Elizabeth, now white as ashes in her turn; "you must be mistaken, Winifride. How should you know it from any other paper?"

"By the acorn which you yourself did paint in frolic on the cover, Bessy."

"Then God have mercy on his soul!" cried Elizabeth, utterly aghast at this intelligence. "God have mercy on his soul; for the old man is lost!"

"Not for certain," whispered Winifride; "he will restore the papers, so that I consent to be his wife."

Elizabeth rose from her chair, struggling with emotions that all but choked her; and then catching Winifride by both her hands, exclaimed, "Now, Winifride, I swear to you that, if even for the sake of that dear old man, or for the sake of any human being whatsoever, you are capable of faltering in your noble purpose, or of giving one syllable of encouragement to that bold bad man, Elizabeth Bishop will be your friend no longer."

"Noble Elizabeth!" cried Winifride, folding her friend in her fast embrace; "such well I knew would be your answer. And yet, and yet I did also fear me that you could not choose but hate one who was the cause, albeit unwilling, of your grandfather's ruin."

"There, indeed, you did me wrong," said Elizabeth affectionately. "But where is this traitor Scotsman? Shall we not give him his answer on the instant?"

"I will write it," said Winifride; "thus shall we spare ourselves his hateful presence;" and drawing a sheet of paper towards her, she wrote, in a hand if possible bolder and firmer than ever was her wont:

"Work your wicked will upon us; for I never can and never will be yours.

"WINIFRIDE."

Hilliard took the paper and carried it to Douglas. He gave one glance at its contents; and then, tearing it up with a rage so concentrated as almost to resemble calmness, took his way towards the residence of the burgomaster of Ostend.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CATASTROPHE.

MONTHS of uncertainty passed away, during which the young Englishwomen were placed under the *surveillance* of the chief magistrate of the town, who, although reluctant to undertake the ungracious office, had not

ventured to refuse, after George Douglas had represented to him that his cousins were suspected in England of being engaged in aiding and abetting some of the numerous plots for the restoration of the elder line of Stuart which were every where rife at that period. Through the kindness of the Père de Camba, Winifride had in the course of this time the happiness of hearing of the safe arrival of her father at the Court of St. Germains, whither he had repaired after flying from Ostend; but concerning the fate of her English relations both she and her cousin were compelled to remain in a most cruel state of uncertainty, George Douglas and his agents so closely watching their proceedings, that every attempt at communication with their own country was effectually prevented.

In the midst of all this trouble and perplexity, the poor girls found their only support in the consolations of religion. Few hours of the day there were in which one or other of them might not have been seen kneeling in the church; and there, as in all other places, their devout and modest demeanour secured them the respect and sympathy of the inhabitants of Ostend. Their history (which had got abroad), their vocation to religion, and their fidelity to their holy calling, had well-nigh invested these young girls with the character of martyrs; while the treachery of George Douglas was regarded with proportionate detestation and horror.

It was not until the close of a most stormy autumn that their doom was finally decided, by the arrival of a queen's messenger with orders to compel them to return immediately to England. A note from George Douglas first acquainted them with this fact, as well as with the arrest of Master Bishop, and many of his family, on a charge of treasonable correspondence with the Court of St. Germains; and he took care to couple this information with a hint, that any attempt on their part to evade or delay their own portion of the sentence would only increase the danger to which their friends were already exposed. His victims, however, needed not this sugges-

tion; for, in fact, they had no idea either of evasion or of resistance. The night before their intended departure was spent by Hilliard in the church, kneeling, as was oft her wont, for hours before the altar of the Blessed Sacrament. Her young companions joined her at sunrise; and after they had assisted at the Divine Sacrifice, and received Holy Communion from the hands of their faithful friend, the Père de Camba, they proceeded at once to the place of embarkation, accompanied by that good old man, as well as by vast numbers of the townspeople, who, although personally unknown to the maidens, had yet warmly felt, and openly resented, the unmanly persecution they had undergone at the hands of their countryman and kinsman.

The wind was howling portentously, and the aspect of the heavens threatened a speedy repetition of the terrible storms which already (more than once this season) had strewn the shore with the tokens of shipwreck and of death. But the lives of those who were dearest to them were dependent on their prompt return, and it never even occurred to them to delay it for any chance of danger to themselves.

George Douglas was on the spot to witness their departure; but whether from some late feeling of compunction, or from an eager desire to see his plotting crowned with success, perhaps he himself could scarcely have defined. Probably, however, the former and the better motive was that which influenced him; for as Winifride was passing, he put forth his hand, exclaiming, "Winifride, can you forgive me?"

"I can and do," she answered gravely and kindly, but without appearing to see his outstretched hand; and having thus tacitly refused his proferred aid, she stepped into the boat unassisted, and added, "Douglas, farewell!" and "farewell for ever!"

Not so Elizabeth Bishop, who was following close upon her footsteps; for she paused with one foot already on the edge of the boat, and held out her hand to Douglas, saying, as he took it, "Douglas, I have never loved

you, and you know it well. But now we may never meet again; and therefore I pray you pardon me whatever of idle or unkind I have ever spoken against you, as I do pardon from mine inmost soul the evil dealing which has brought us hither."

"And wherefore should we never meet again?" demanded Douglas in a husky voice, more moved than he chose to own by this unlooked-for mood of softness in this high-spirited girl, who had always hitherto opposed him with a tenacity of purpose equal to his own.

"Because we shall neither reach England, nor return hither alive," said a voice behind him. It was Hilliard who had spoken.

With a feeling as if he had listened to a prophecy, Douglas gazed upon her pale inspired brow; the next moment she and her young companions had passed like a vision from before his eyes; and long ere he had recovered from the shock of almost superstitious awe which her words had caused him, the boat was shoved off from shore amidst the prayers and lamentations of the spectators on the beach.

Higher and higher rose the wind that day, and darker and darker rolled the billows. Ships came hastily in for shelter, and anticipations of coming sorrow were beginning to weigh heavily on the hearts of those who had friends at sea, when word all at once went through the town that the brig conveying the English damsels was in imminent danger of shipwreck. For an hour or two she had indeed struggled bravely with the surging billows; but the tide was running high, and. with a heavy sea and wind against her, the overladen vessel at length became unmanageable, was driven back upon the land, and struck upon the western head of the harbour, close to where Douglas was watching her from the shore. Crowds of people rushed on the instant to the spot, the gates were opened, and every effort was made to save her; but no boat could

have gone to the rescue and hoped to live in those tumultuous waters; and as they watched her beating fearfully against the palisades, the most experienced seamen shook their heads and prophesied her doom.

It was a terrible sight to see, and rendered yet more terrible by the fact of the imperilled vessel being so close in shore that the shrieks and lamentations of the passengers could be heard high over the bellowing of the wind and the roaring of the waves; and once even Douglas saw, or thought he saw—and the very thought almost deprived him of his senses—the white robes of Winifride fluttering in the storm. It was but for a moment; the next the vessel foundered and went down—went down at a stone's throw from the land, and while they who perished in her were still within sight and hearing of the friends they had left but a few hours before—within sight and hearing, irrevocably divided, and yet so near that a hand or an arm put forth in pity must almost have seemed to their agonised senses sufficient for their rescue! Douglas heard the cry of agony which went up in that terrible moment from sea to sky; a rushing sound then filled his ears, a mist came over his eyes, and he covered his face with both his hands, for he felt—rather than could be said to know it—that all indeed was over.

CHAPTER VIII.

REMORSE AND REPENTANCE.

Two days afterwards the bodies of the martyr maidens were discovered washed up among those of other victims on the beach. The venerable Père de Camba attended in person the procession that bore their remains to the church where they were to be buried. Thirty young girls, carrying lighted tapers in their hands, walked by the bier on which they were sleeping side by side, while the entire population of Ostend followed reverentially in

the rear. It was arranged that the funeral should tak place after early Mass next morning; and in the mean time the crowd continued to flock in and out, to pray it might be, for the souls of the departed, but yet more to gaze with reverence on the dead—the dead for conscience' sake. Douglas also, pale and as one spell-bound, lingered through the hours of the weary day around and about, and every where but in the church. He longed to enter, but he did not dare; dreading alike the angry glance of the living people, and the yet more terrible reproach which would meet him in the countenances of the unconscious dead. The veil had fallen from his eyes, the passions that had urged him on were extinct or stifled, and remorse—God's most fearful retribution, and yet His highest act of mercy to the sinner—was already gnawing at his heart.

As night closed in, and the crowd began to disperse, he approached nearer to the church; drawn hither, so it seemed to him, by some invisible hand which he had no power to resist. Nearer and nearer still he came, until at length he almost fainted on the threshold, so strongly did the recollection of the night on which he had stood there to watch for Winifride rush into his mind. It passed in a moment, the sharpness of that pang of agony and self-reproach; and then he staggered up the aisle, until he stood before the bier where the early dead were laid together. There he counted his victims one by one, and lingered long upon each ashy face; until at length, unwillingly, and as if because he could not help it, he sought that of Winifride, and his very soul seemed to die away within him as he gazed upon her features.

Neither she nor the young girls who lay cold and still beside her, bore any traces of the death-strife on their persons. Some kind motherly hand had wrapped their forms in snowy drapery, and wiped the sea-foam from their shining tresses; and there she lay, the idol and the victim of the strong passions of his soul,—there he lay, calm, and pale, and holy—calmer, and paler,

and holier still for the shadows of death beneath which she slumbered. The lovely hands were folded in mute submission on her bosom. The sweet grave look still lingered on her lips and brow, and nothing of fear, or terror, or disorder was there to tell of the awful scenes amid which her young life had passed away. Douglas held his breath, and looked, and looked, until he felt as if he were turning into stone. It was she herself—the Winifride of his early youth and passionate affection; the Winifride who had never flippantly allured or capriciously repelled him; the Winifride who, in her lofty calling and high-wrought enthusiasm, had ever most entirely possessed his love, even at the moment when she was most inflexibly rejecting it.

It was she herself, and it was his hand that had brought her there; and but for him she might still have been bright, and beautiful, and glad as ever. He was her murderer; and though the law condemned him not, and the world would never tax him with it, he knew that Heaven had pronounced him guilty.

"Murderer, dost thou dare to look upon thy victim?" Douglas started, so awfully were the words an echo to his thoughts, that for a second he almost felt as if the dead had risen to convict him of his crime; but it was a living man who stood before him, and gazed upon him with a face more terrible in its rebuking calmness than the wildest energy of passion could possibly have made it. Well, indeed, might he shrink from that glance of stern endurance, for it was the father of Winifride who stood before him, a man grey-haired before his time, and older by twenty years than when he had seen him last with his daughter in his arms. The conscience-stricken youth stood for a moment beneath that stony look, unable either to meet or to evade it, and then sinking on his knees, he struck his hand violently against his breast, exclaiming, "Curse me not, Elliot! I knew not what I did."

In a brief but terrible instant the father, bereaved and childless, looked irresolute; but one glance at his

pale child as she lay upon her bier, one wordless prayer to the Great Forgiver of all injustice who dwelt in the silent tabernacle on the altar, and then with a mighty effort he laid his hand upon his nephew's head and said, "I do forgive you. May God forgive you also; and may the day at length arrive when (though I can hardly think it) you shall be able to feel you can forgive yourself."

Then, as if not daring to trust himself to utter another word, Elliot left the church, set his hat firmly on his head, and strode away, far from the presence of his guilty nephew, whom he never was destined to meet again in this world. Douglas, on his part, waited another instant to recover himself before he staggered back, as well as he could, to his own abode: and what happened afterwards he never rightly knew; for a burning fever deprived him of his senses, and for many weeks it seemed impossible that his brain could ever recover the shock it had received. Youth, however, and a good constitution, carried him through all; and at length, almost against his own wishes, and certainly against the prophecies of his medical attendants, he walked forth from his sick chamber a sadder, but unhappily not as yet a wiser man. For not even then had remorse taken for him the form of practical repentance, and therefore it weighed almost unendurably upon him, by turns wearied him or made him sad, consuming him with the desire to get rid of it and of himself, and rendering his life for many long years afterwards one vain effort to forget.

Happily for him he did not succeed. No noisy mirth could hush the still small voice of conscience; no pursuit of riches or of worldly honours could drive the gloomy image from his mind; and when at length he found the effort fruitless, and that, however exciting or however absorbing, neither business nor pleasure had power to efface the memory of that fatal day which had set the mark of Cain upon his brow, then, and not till then, did he cease to struggle with his own soul, and to

suffer it to seek in prayer and in repentance the peace of which sin had robbed it, and which therefore nothing but sorrow for sin could ever restore. And so at last he became a truly heart-humbled and repentant man; and when after many years had passed away, and he returned to Ostend once more, the oldest inhabitants of the city had either forgotten his story altogether, or at all events failed to recognise the hot-headed handsome youth who was its ill-omened hero, in the grey-haired, dim-eyed man, bowed down alike by sorrow and by age, who might be seen from morn till dewy eve lingering in their beautiful old parish-church; and thus they never guessed, that if he had come to lay his bones among them, it was chiefly for the sad privilege of passing the evening of his days near the tombs of the young heroic girls, whose early death had doubtless been intended alike as the reward of their all but angelic virtue, and as the terrible chastisement of his own selfish and unbridled passions.

Tales and Traditions

Ecclesiastical and Miscellaneous

Being a Second Series of

"Historical Tales and Legends"

BURNS & OATES, LIMITED
28 ORCHARD STREET, LONDON, W.

CONTENTS.

Tales and Traditions.

THE LOSS OF THE "CONCEPTION."

In the sixteenth century Portugal was a great naval power. Her flag was to be seen flying in every port in the world, and her colonies and possessions were very numerous and extensive. She had a flourishing settlement in India, upon the Malabar coast, the affairs of which were administered by a governor, who bore the title of Viceroy, and whose seat of government was at Goa. From this point missionaries proceeded into the interior, to spread, amid the swamps and jungles and sands of that vast country, the holy religion of Jesus.

At that period the art of navigation was very imperfectly known; and not the least perilous portion of a missionary's enterprise was the voyage he must undertake before he could reach the scene of his labours. The records of the age are full of heroic actions performed by priests on their way to distant lands: of endurance under famine; of devotion during pestilence; of courage in shipwreck; of patience amid the thousand disasters with which their ocean course was beset. But few narratives of this class are more touching than the accounts we have received of the loss of the Portuguese ship "Conception" in the year 1555, on board of which three

Fathers of the Indian Mission had taken their passage. It is the duration of suffering, far more than its intensity, that tries the heart and courage of a man; and it is far more affecting, if it be less thrilling, to hear of calm and generous fortitude under lingering torture from starvation, thirst, heat, and disease, than of unshrinking boldness in the most terrible shipwreck that ever cost the lives of a crew.

On the 22d of August, 1555, the "Conception," Captain Noluc, bound from Lisbon to Cochin, a port on the coast of Malabar, ran aground, at three o'clock in the morning, on a sand-bank 400 leagues distant from the Indian continent. The shock roused all on board from their deep sleep: there was a rough, grating sound; then a sudden stoppage of the vessel, and a momentary lull, during which every man looked at his neighbour with terror in his eyes. The next instant, raised on the heaving bosom of a rolling billow, she seemed to be again afloat, but only to drop heavily upon the bottom with a shock that made every timber in her sides creek and every heart quake. With a loud cry, captain, sailors, soldiers, and passengers rushed upon deck, and at once perceived the awful truth. The good ship was fast aground; the sea was breaking over her side with fearful violence; the yards and sails had swung round with the wind; and the masts groaned in their sockets, as if every moment would see them snap in sunder. The night was cloudy and dark; the wind roared through the cordage; no one knew where they were. Every thing conspired to increase the general consternation; and in the first moment of panic some of the crew would have leaped overboard, some would have forced open the wine-casks, some would have fallen on the wretched pilot whose carelessness had been the cause of their ruin, when the voices of the three priests were heard above the din, giving encouragement where it was needed, restraining the frenzy of those who had lost their presence of mind, and urging all to trust to their skill and energy for the preservation of their lives.

With what eagerness all eyes were bent upon the sky across which a few streaks of light now announced the dawn of day! with what anxiety they waited to see whether they had struck on any island or coast which might afford them food and shelter, if they should have the happiness to reach it! Meanwhile every wave seemed to take effect on the stranded vessel. Her bottom had given way in several places; for she was fast filling with water, and the pumps were worked in vain. "Will the day never dawn?" said many an impatient heart. "Will she hold together till morning?" was the question anxiously debated by all. At length the sun rose, and then—oh, woful sight!—as far as the eye could reach there was no land to be seen; nothing but foaming waves met the view on every side. There was no refuge from the wreck beyond the little patch of sand, scarcely twice as large as the ship's deck, on which she had struck. For a little while there was silence in the ship, as each eye scanned the horizon, and then arose a wild cry of anguish from four hundred men, whose only hope had been blasted, and who now saw no escape from a horrible death.

Then arose Father André Gonsalves, who was the oldest of the three priests, and said, in a loud, commanding voice, which in a moment stilled the hearts of all, and seemed to still the very waves:

"Be ye men or children, that ye should thus give way? or be ye Christians or heathens, that ye should thus distrust your God? What is the sea, that it should rage but at His command? See, now, and do as I shall counsel you. Divide yourselves into two companies; and while the one half throw out anchors and cables from the stern, and heave with the capstan, let the other half hew down the masts and lighten the ship of her cargo. It may be ye may bring her off the sand, and so save your lives; and if not, if ye cannot float the ship, we are still in the hands of God; then leave the vessel, and take refuge on the sand. There are provisions in the ship for your sustenance, and it

may be God will send us a vessel to deliver us out of our strait."

When the priest had done speaking, there was a murmur of consent throughout the ship, and the captain said:

"What the priest counsels, that will we do. And see that ye lose no time, for I perceive the storm arising; and if it find us stranded here, the ship will be broken, and we shall be lost."

Then the sailors, as men in whose breasts the hope of life had revived, set themselves manfully to their work. Some dragged the heavy anchors from the prow, and threw them over the stern; some, with strong levers, worked the capstan; some, with axes and hammers, hewed down the masts; some pushed up the boards of the deck; some threw the cargo into the sea; all day they toiled; and men who had never worked before, worked then side by side with the common sailors. But in vain. The sun was fast sinking into the western wave when they desisted from their labour; the ship was as firm as ever. She had made a deep bed for herself in the soft sand; her seams had opened, her hold was full of water, and no human power could float her again.

As soon as the captain saw that there was no hope of saving the vessel, he pointed again to the gathering clouds and the rising wind, and said, "Ye must make haste, if ye would not sleep this night in the sea."

The ship also warned them to leave her at once; for as the water rose in her hold and the waves broke over her, she threatened every moment to fall to pieces. Then, with heavy hearts, the weary crew, each with some provision for the night, landed upon the narrow slip of sand; and the three priests comforted them with holy thoughts, and bid them trust in God.

But the captain had already determined what he would do; for he had consulted the missionaries, and their advice was, that he, and as many as could go,

should leave the island in the long-boat, and endeavour to make the coast of India, where they might obtain succour, and then return for the rest. "I will go," said the captain, "if you will go with me."

"Nay," said Father André, "I will stay with those that are left behind."

"We will stay also," said the other religious.

The captain embraced the three fathers, and said, "I too would stay; but who then could navigate the vessel?"

"No," said they, "you must go, and the two mates, and ten of the best sailors, and as many more as the boat will hold; and if God bless the voyage, you will return for us." And so it was agreed.

Before leaving the ship that night, the captain conveyed into the long-boat a sufficient quantity of provisions for the voyage, and anchored it safely apart from the wreck, leaving ten sailors, whom he had selected to guard it. The night was a night of dread; for one of those storms which are only known in tropical latitudes broke upon the shipwrecked mariners; and when the morning dawned they dreaded to see the cutter torn from her moorings, and the wreck, with all their provisions, swept away. But God had mercy upon them; the return of light showed them the wreck still in its place, though broken in two; and the cutter had drifted indeed to sea-ward, but was still rocking safely on the billows. The storm had subsided, and they were able to reach the ruins of the "Conception," which it was plain could not hold together much longer. They found many of the barrels and casks stove in; but they were able to save thirty sacks of biscuit, ten barrels of water, a few jars of sweetmeats, eight large cheeses, and seven pipes of wine. These were all safely brought on shore, and then, at the captain's request, Father André addressed the people as follows:

"Ye are here 400 men; and ye see the provisions that ye have for weeks, it may be for months, that ye may be left unfound by any ship. Will ye be content

to perish of starvation, when there is a way open for you to be saved?"

"Show us, father, how we may be saved, and we will obey thee."

"My counsel is this: let the captain take with him the ten best sailors and forty of our number,—for more the vessel would not hold,—and let them man the cutter and sail for the Indian coast. If, by God's mercy, they reach the land, they will return hither in search of those who are left behind; and those who go shall all be chosen by lot."

When they heard this, all the people cried, "It is well!"

And the captain said, "What need is there for any further delay? let the lots be drawn, and we will sail."

Then the names were all written down by Father André, and a cask was brought, and a hat put into it, and in the hat were placed the papers with the names. Then the pilot was blindfolded, and he proceeded to draw one name at a time, and the people crowded round, breathless and pale, to watch the moment on which, to all appearance, depended life and death.

As each paper was drawn the captain read out the name, and the fortunate man ran down to the shore, and took his place in the cutter; and the others, looking after him with envy, hung with the most intense eagerness on the captain's lips as he read out the event. In that hour of trial the true character of each man's heart was seen. Some were nobly generous—the most part thought only of themselves. One, Lopez de Castro, heard his name called, and gave his privilege to his brother Alvaro, because he had a wife and children. But he was rewarded for his fraternal love; for Alvaro's own name was drawn afterwards, and thus Lopez was saved also.

Father André, in writing down the names, left out his own, but inserted those of his two brethren; hoping that one at least might be drawn, to give spiritual support and consolation to the crew of the cutter. When,

therefore, Father Pascal heard his name called, he was astonished, and said to Father André, "Did I not say I would not go?"

"Nevertheless be advised," said he; "I and Father Lopez are sufficient for those that are left; do thou accompany them that sail."

"Nay, but I know what I will do."

Now there was a poor lame boy, who had been saved with difficulty from the surf in landing. Father Lopez knew him well. He had a sick sister in Goa, and the poor lad was going over to see her before she died. As every name had issued from the cask he had listened with despairing looks, and still his own never came. Father Pascal had seen it, and his heart bled for the poor boy; and he said within himself, "What would I not give to deliver thee!"

There were now only two names more to be called. The first came out, it was not his. In breathless suspense the last was drawn—"Alfonso Pero."

"It is I! It is I!" screamed the lame boy.

"Thou!" cried a gigantic soldier, with a scowl; "*my* name is Alfonso Pero."

"What! are there two Alfonso Peros?" said the captain. "What is to be done now, father?"

"Done! why of course I am to go," shouted the soldier. "That crippled life is not worth saving."

"No, no, I am not worth saving," said the boy disconsolately; "but oh, my poor sister! my dear Isabel!"

There was a murmur among the crowd. All hated the rough soldier, and loved the helpless lad.

"We must cast lots between them which is to go," said Father André.

The lad's face brightened up, and the soldier stopped as he was going down to the cutter, with a savage oath. They drew. It was the soldier's name.

"We shall only meet the sooner in heaven," was all the lame boy said; and he sat down on the sand, and wept as if his heart was breaking.

Then Father Pascal went down and whispered

something in his ear. A gleam of joy shot over his countenance, and he fell senseless into the father's arms, who carried him down to the sea. In half an hour the cutter weighed anchor amid the cheers of those who went and those who stayed; and the sick Isabel's lame brother was on board.

With beating hearts the devoted party watched the sails of the little vessel, as with a fair wind it rapidly lessened in the distance, and at length was lost in the horizon. Then woe-begone and heart-sick they turned away, and sought comfort in each other's faces, where comfort there was none. The barren island seemed scarcely less inhospitable than the boiling ocean. Not a tree, not a blade of grass, not a herb to afford a scanty subsistence, not a spring of water to quench their thirst. As they wandered sullenly up and down, Father André again addressed them with words of comfort and advice. "Be of good courage," he said, "and take heart, and help yourselves. See, the ship is gone; save what ye can, and that which the waves wash up from time to time, put in safety, and do what ye can while ye can, for there are tokens of a gathering storm."

The calm resignation and practical wisdom of the holy man did much to assure the fainting spirits of the unhappy mariners. With ropes round their middles they waded into the sea, and catching hold of floating planks, drew them ashore. Others swam to the wreck, and clambering about from port to port of the now shattered hull, tied spars, and oars, and ropes together, to be hauled in by their companions on the sand. But they saved scarcely any of what they most required, that is, food. And as night came on, and the gale increased, they were compelled to desist. And here they passed another night of terror. The waves threatened to swallow up their little island; and each flash of lightning showed them the "Conception" gradually breaking up. When light returned, and with it calm, nothing was left where she had been, but a few

naked plankless ribs standing up against the morning sky. Their hearts failed them at the sight of this disaster; for on a farther search they had confidently reckoned on finding more food.

On the advice of the priest, they chose a captain or chieftain to preserve order and superintend their councils. They chose Don Alvaro de Alaide, a young nobleman only eighteen years of age; but an older man, of long experience, was appointed his coadjutor.

Father André then said, "See on all sides floating wood; the tide will wash it up. As it comes ashore, gather it, and ye shall make a boat. But first take yonder beam, and tie that smaller piece across the top, and set it up upon this rock. We will work beneath the shadow of the Holy Rood, and mariners who pass by in distant ships shall know that there are Christians upon this place. So shall the Cross save us."

And they did as the wise man had said, and Don Alvaro, with energy beyond his years, set each man to his work. Day by day broken pieces of the wreck were washed on shore, and carefully hauled up high upon the sand. And soon a large quantity was obtained, quite enough for the boat, which they now set about to construct. But they had very great difficulties to encounter. The ship's carpenter had sailed with the cutter, and they had no teacher but necessity. They were also very short of tools, of which only a small chisel, two cooper's adzes, and an axe, had been obtained from the wreck. However, they had no lack of nails, for every plank was studded with them; there was also a sufficiency of old iron; and their ingenuity devised means for the erection of a forge, in which fresh tools were constructed and the iron beaten into shape. The bellows were composed out of the top and bottom of a cask. The skin of a large fish, which was thrown ashore, as it seemed to them for the express purpose by the goodness of God, served for the leather sides. And when they were in want of a tube to form the nozzle, they found on the sand an Indian cane, which

answered the purpose admirably. By means of their bellow they forged the irons for the rudder out of old hoops. A saw they made out of a two-edged sword, which one of the passengers, Senhor Odivellas, a rich Portuguese merchant, wore when he was cast ashore. Tongue cannot describe the joy they felt, as day by day they saw the boat, upon which all their hopes were cast, rise slowly from the sand. Every one assisted; they toiled day and night; and in fourteen days it was completed.

This is the bright side of the picture. The other side is very black indeed. Pestilence broke out among the unhappy men, and every day witnessed the death of more than one heart-broken miserable man. The priests were all in all to the dying. No holy viaticum had they wherewith to strengthen the parting soul; but on the desolate sea-shore, beneath the rude cross reared high above their heads, these servants of God set up the tribunal of penance. And there the sinner made his peace with God, it may be more perfectly than if he had lived to be absolved upon his bed. The space around was set apart for burials, and deep in the sand the survivors dug the narrow graves of their departed brethren, each not knowing how soon his own turn might come. There the priests buried them with as much as might be of the solemn rites of holy Church, and set up a holy cross to mark the spot where every one was laid. The crosses have been long washed away, and the waves perhaps have disturbed the remains that rested underneath; but the souls of the dead are with the Saints, we trust. Let us say a *De profundis* for the faithful who lie on that solitary sand in the Indian Ocean.

They might have suffered from famine as well as from sickness, if Almighty God had not sent them food. It rained every day; and they found a tank, in which a large supply of water was always kept. The islet was also frequented by a vast number of sea-fowl, who seemed to know no fear, and allowed themselves to be

taken by the hand. These birds laid their eggs on the bare ground. A quantity of fish were found to resort to the shallows, and were easily caught. Thus, however dreary the place, the mercy of God was manifested in many ways, as Father André was not slow to point out. Nevertheless, they watched the progress of the boat with great anxiety, and when it was finished they sang the *Te Deum* for joy.

But when it was all ready to be launched, they were doomed to a terrible disappointment. The seams of the rude bark were not water-tight, and they had not wherewith to caulk them. In their distress they applied for advice to Father André, who taught them that this misfortune, which seemed to blast all their hopes, was sent that, after all, they should owe their safety to God alone. He then recommended them to have recourse to Mary, the Star of the Sea; and they went in procession round the island singing the Litany of the Blessed Virgin. The next morning they found cast up by the sea a barrel of pitch from the ship. This boon they joyfully regarded as a miraculous answer to their prayer, and with shreds of rope picked to pieces and steeped in pitch, they made the seams of their vessel water-tight.

Nevertheless, it was dreaded by the most experienced of their number that the frail bark would never live in a stormy sea, on account of the thinness of the planks, unless something were done to strengthen them; and in this fresh difficulty they were again providentially assisted. A portion of the wreck was washed ashore containing six rolls of lead, and some balls of the same metal. These were placed on a flat stone and hammered thin, and then laid as a coating over all the lower and the most exposed portions of the boat. She was then pronounced to be perfectly seaworthy, if only favoured by fair winds and the assistance of the Almighty. Father André blessed the new boat in the usual form, and sprinkled it with holy water, after which it was launched into the sea. When the poor ship-

wrecked men saw her swimming safely upon the waves, they felt that if God had wrought a special miracle in their behalf, He could not have assisted them more signally; and in gratitude to Him they named her the "Mercy of God." She was moored off the sand by two cables, and preparations were immediately made for her departure. That very evening there came a storm, and the little boat seemed doomed to be lost on the very day of her birth. But the next morning being calm, Don Alvaro went on board with fifty-seven persons. They were found too many for the capacities of the frail bark; and with great sorrow the captain was compelled to land thirteen. There was a large number still left on the sand out of the four hundred who had been wrecked in the "Conception." Among them were the three fathers, who steadily refused to quit the spot while there was one man left who could go instead, although Don Alvaro and the forty-four who sailed with him were most anxious that one of the priests should accompany them, to be their consolation in death and their counsel in life. But the heroic priests preferred to stay with the greater number.

After the "Mercy of God" had set sail, those who were left behind gave themselves up to despair, and walked up and down the strip of sand with haggard faces, dreading death and loathing life. Disease was almost gone; but in its place came the direst famine. The provisions which had been saved from the "Conception" were consumed; and the poor men were now dependent on the sea-fowl, and such fish as they could catch. Day after day some died of famine; and the priests, who were the only stay of the survivors, were themselves almost dead with exhaustion. Nevertheless they still maintained their confidence in God, and often assembled their unhappy companions for prayers and litanies.

As the sea continued at intervals to wash up broken pieces of the wreck, the fathers proposed that they should construct a raft, and make an attempt to escape

from the island. The available materials for a boat had all been used in the construction of the "Mercy of God;" but there remained enough of heavy spars and large timbers to make a raft which should be capable of holding a large number. All eagerly acceded to the proposal, and gave themselves heartily to the work. It was soon made; for it consisted only of a framework of rafters boarded with planks. They had great difficulty in floating it; but when it was in the water, having no sides or other protection from the waves, all refused to trust their lives to the very mode of escape they had themselves contrived. The three fathers, perceiving that the danger of drowning in the sea was not greater than that of starving on the sand, boldly leaped upon the raft, and their example was speedily followed by a few of the bravest of their companions. The rest preferred to remain, and trust to the chance of succour from the cutter. Alas, they waited in vain! The cutter reached India in safety, and started again for the island, but the sand was never found. It was too small an object to be descried in the great Indian Ocean, and the unhappy mariners upon it must have died of starvation.

The cutter, after encountering more than one storm, performed its voyage safely, as has been said, and brought up in the port of Goa. Captain Noluc immediately reported to the deputy-governor, Francesco Barreto, acting in place of the viceroy, lately dead, the loss of his ship, and the forlorn condition of the abandoned crew,—requesting immediate assistance. The affecting narrative awakened in Goa the most lively commiseration. With what tears of joy the dying girl received her lame brother, and what blessings with her latest breath she invoked upon the head of Father Pascal, to whose generous devotion she owed their meeting, we may well conceive. She died shortly after the arrival of the cutter; and her lame Alfonso, after closing her eyes, returned in search of his benefactor with the good captain, under whose command the

governor had fitted out two ships for the voyage of discovery.

They set sail from Goa with a fair wind for the island, which they believed to be the same with the shoal called the Pero dos Banhos; and Masses were offered in every church for the success of the expedition. The captain and the mate, Pedro Fonseca, held long consultations as to the course to be pursued; for in those days the art of navigation was so ill-understood, and the charts were so imperfect, that the best seamen could not make certain of hitting a particular spot in the wide ocean.

These consultations the lame Alfonso watched with the most intense eagerness; always saying, "Captain, thinkest thou that we shall find them all alive?" or "Captain, shall we soon be there?" and then the captain would answer, "As God wills, Alfonso." And this was repeated every day; and the captain soon learned to love the lame boy for his fidelity and gratitude to Father Pascal.

One day, not long after they had left Goa, as Alfonso was standing on the prow of the vessel, with his eyes fixed, as they ever were, on the far horizon, he suddenly seized the captain's arm, and said, "I see it; I see it."

"What dost thou see, Alfonso? There is nothing in sight but the blue waves, and yonder large-winged albatross."

"Oh, yes, I see it; I see it—the island! the island!" and the lame boy forgot his lameness, and leaped about the deck for joy.

Then the captain, looking steadfastly in the direction to which Alfonso had pointed, did indeed see a dark speck far off; but he said, "It cannot be the island—it is some vessel. But haply her crew have seen our shipmates. We will sail towards her and inquire."

As they neared the spot, the captain said to the mate, "What thinkest thou, Pedro; what is that dark object?"

"It is no ship," said the mate; "it is some rock above the sea."

"It is no rock," said the captain. "I know not what it is."

They were now not far from it, and they perceived it was a boat; but such an one as they had never seen before; and men were looking over the side. Presently a hoarse sound, as of a cry of distress, was borne across the waters. Still the captain never conjectured the truth, till the lame boy exclaimed: "I see Alvaro, who was left upon the island."

Every voice was hushed in mute expectation: not a sound was heard but the dashing of the waves against the keel and the wind whistling through the rigging. All eyes were fixed upon the boat; but when they came alongside of the "Mercy of God," and the well-known faces were seen, marked, indeed, with hunger, but the same in feature, one universal shout rent the air.

"A miracle! a miracle!" exclaimed every voice; and not an eye was dry throughout the ship, not a knee unbent upon the deck. The lame boy alone shared not in the general joy; he looked every where, and saw no Father Pascal.

The crew of the "Mercy of God"—and well did the frail bark merit the name—were at once taken into the ship. Their tale was soon told. On leaving the island they had been almost swamped by a huge fish, which had rushed up against their boat and broken her sides. Happily the leaden covering had preserved them from the water; and just as they were becoming short of provisions, they fell in with a shoal of fish, which continued to follow the boat. They caught the fish with a hook made of a carpenter's gimlet. Their whole voyage had been one unbroken series of mercies. Without a compass, and ignorant in which direction to steer, they had sailed straight for Goa. God was their pilot, and the mercy of God their bark: little marvel that their voyage was prosperous.

Captain Noluc sent his rescued crew home in the other ship, while himself prosecuted the search for the island,—unsuccessfully, as has been said. After a long and fruitless cruise, he was compelled to return to Goa, the poor lame boy heart-broken that Father Pascal should be thus abandoned to his fate upon the barren island. He did not long survive the affliction.

But Father Pascal had, as we have seen, embarked with the other priests, and a few others, upon the raft. They started on their perilous voyage eight months after the loss of the "Conception," and for two months the wretched crew were tossed about at the mercy of the waves. They had only a few pieces of dried shark's flesh to subsist upon. However, rain fell, and they caught a little fish. In their misfortunes they were throughout supported by the fathers, who continually showed them the example of holy resignation. At length, after losing four of their number, they were cast upon another island; but it proved to be almost as desolate and barren as that they had left. From it, however, could be seen, about three miles off, a coast fringed with palm-trees, and promising a more hospitable resting-place. Twice they essayed to reach it, and twice they were driven back by the violence of the sea, so exhausted, that only the very bravest of them dared to make a third attempt. The three fathers again stayed with those who were left behind, and their devotion cost them their lives. The raft succeeded in reaching the other island, where they found groves of palm-trees, fresh and dry cocoa-nuts, with plenty of wholesome vegetables and an abundant supply of fresh water. Famished with hunger, they unhappily ate too much, and were seized with sickness, which prevented their immediate return to their companions. They did not return for a month, and at the end of that time only two were found living; the three priests and all the rest of their companions had died. These two told heart-rending tales of the agony endured by their deceased brethren, and especially by the priests, who had

sunk from sheer exhaustion and famine, after superhuman efforts to comfort and soothe the dying.

The two survivors were taken off to the more fruitful island, and there they continued till their strength was restored, when they all again put to sea, after loading the bark with a good supply of cocoa-nuts and other fruits. They foresaw that death must eventually seize them if they remained there. Confiding themselves therefore to their angel-guardians, they pushed off from the only hospitable shore they had touched since they left Portugal. Surely it was only by the direct and manifest assistance of God that at length they reached the harbour for which they had been originally bound. On the 27th November, 1556, fifteen months after the stranding of the "Conception," they crossed the bay of Cochin.

On nearing the land, they were astonished to see the shore lined with people, apparently waiting to welcome them. "How is this?" said they one to another; "are we expected? is our story known?" Even so. As Father Goncalo de Silveyra was preaching in Cochin, he suddenly stopped, and leaned his head on the pulpit; and then looking up again, he said that there had almost reached the shores some who had escaped from the ship which Francesco Noluc had commanded. The congregation, in astonishment, ran down to the sea. So long a time had elapsed since the loss of the "Conception" that few believed that any of the unfortunate crew could now be living; and after the return of the expedition of discovery, their fate had naturally been considered hopeless. But when the crowd arrived at the beach, and beheld some men, as it seemed walking, on the sea,—for they saw no boat,—they were filled with astonishment and fear. Are they men or spirits? While they were wondering, the raft was washed ashore by the tide, and a few emaciated figures stepped on the land and fell down upon their knees. They were received as men raised from the dead, and the inhabitants of Cochin vied with each other in showing them good-will.

That a shapeless raft, without compass or helm, should cross five hundred leagues of stormy ocean, and at length be tossed upon the very port to which the adventurous men belonged, who, confiding in God, had trusted themselves to its fortunes—a fact that is as much matter of evidence as any historical statement whatever—is certainly of the nature of a miracle, and will accordingly be disbelieved. But it is only more extraordinary than the meeting of the "Mercy of God" with the very ships which were sent in search of the island. The whole history of the adventures of the crew, whether on the sand or in the "Mercy of God," or in the raft, is full of proof of the watchful care of Almighty God. If the unhappy men suffered greatly, they were also greatly favoured; and in nothing more perhaps than in the presence of the three priests, to whom it was not indeed given, as to other martyrs, to die for the faith, but of whom it may certainly be said that they gave their lives for their brethren. We cannot doubt that they are now enjoying the reward of their great charity.

FOUNDATION OF THE ABBEY OF ANCHIN.

A.D. 1079.

IT was the evening of a sultry day in summer. The sun had sunk to rest behind a curtain of flaming clouds; but the air was filled with heated vapour, which caught its fiery rays, and shed a glowing light upon the plain beneath. The country people of Montigny, a village near the town of Douay, were busy in the corn-field. The last cart-load was filled, and, according to ancient custom, they had twined the golden sheaves with garlands of the brightest wild-flowers they could gather. The strong-limbed oxen seemed almost to stagger as they drew the heavy wain along; the labourers walked on either side joyfully singing their "harvest-home,"—a song, indeed, of praise to Him who openeth His hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness.

They had now passed out of the field, and were proceeding along a narrow lane, when they had to stop and make way for three horsemen, who were advancing at a leisurely pace. The first two were serving-men, as was plain from their apparel—a parti-coloured surcoat of yellow and black; one carried a falcon on his wrist; the other, a youth of seventeen, was discours-

ing gaily to his companion; they had soon passed by, and their voices died away in the distance. Behind them, mounted on a gallant steed, rode their master: the peasants uncovered as he approached, and saluted him reverently. The stranger returned their salutation with a kind courtesy, and moved slowly forward, oppressed, as it seemed, as much by his own heavy thoughts as by the heat of the stagnant air.

The Lord of Courcelles had, indeed, enough to trouble him; for beside the public cares which devolved upon him as a nobleman, and one of the most distinguished cavaliers of the day, he was burdened with a long-standing feud between his house and that of his indefatigable enemy, Walter, Lord of Montigny in Ostrevant. The quarrel had its origin in some trifling dispute: but pride had kept it up; blood had lately flowed; and now both parties were possessed with a conviction that nothing less than the death of one or other of them could terminate the strife, or allay the devouring hatred with which he was consumed. It was the thought of this that haunted Sohier as he rode along; and so absorbed was he in his moody contemplation, that he did not perceive that he had long since wandered away from his attendants, and, leaving the cultivated plain, had plunged deeper and deeper into a wild and desert region. Night had suddenly fallen; the dull grey clouds were rent from time to time with flashes of vivid lightning; the atmosphere grew heavier every moment, and wearied with his long day's journey the cavalier nodded drowsily over the neck of his horse, who proceeded steadily on his way. The first large drops of a coming storm, rustling among the leaves above his head, recalled him to consciousness. He gazed about him in bewilderment, and discovered that he had left the beaten track, and was in the midst of a thick forest. Urging on his steed, he made his way at length to an open space where four ways met. Here he once more looked anxiously around for something to direct him in his course; but having tried

in vain to pierce the uncertain gloom, he was about to leave himself to the guidance of his horse, when what seemed like the twinkling of a taper in the distance caught his eye. "Thanks to our Lady, and St. Julian the blessed hospitaller," he cried, "I shall find shelter for the night."

He struggled on, as best he could, towards the welcome light, and was delighted to find himself, drenched as he was, under the walls of a strong and stately castle situated on the edge of the forest. The drawbridge was raised; the knight could hear the rain-drops plashing in the deep moat below; and now, for the first time, he became aware that the light he had followed was the flame of the watchfire in the bell-tower. All this gave token that the evening was far advanced; but the cavalier put to his lips the horn he carried suspended from his belt, and blew a loud and shrill blast.

"Who art thou, and what cravest thou at this hour?" said a voice from the rampart.

"I am a cavalier who has lost his way in the forest, and I crave but shelter for the night."

There was silence for a few moments; then the knight heard the grating of the chains as the bridge was slowly lowered. Several men-at-arms, with torches in their hands, appeared under the archway.

"This way, sir knight," said one; "my lord is but now sitting down to his repast, and inviteth thee to sup with him."

"May God reward him for his courtesy!" replied Sohier gladly, as he crossed the drawbridge.

Escorted by the servants, he traverses the court; and as he reaches the flight of steps beyond, he is greeted by a voice which says to him, "Welcome, sir knight; a hearty welcome!"

"Thanks,—a thousand thanks!" responded Sohier, as he followed his host, who ushered him into the large hall where supper was already served; and there, under the glare of the flaming torches, and the brilliant radiance of numerous waxen lights ranged along the

walls, the two cavaliers for the first time beheld each other.

In the instant both started back astounded.

"What!—is it thou?" exclaimed the lord of the castle.

"It is I," replied Sohier calmly.

"And thou art within my good castle of Montigny," rejoined Walter, for he it was; and for a moment he seemed to be struggling with some violent emotion. Then, recovering himself as with an effort, he continued, "Thou art welcome, my Lord of Courcelles; this evening, this night, fear no evil either from me or from my people; feast at my table; rest within my walls. But to-morrow—when thou hast left this castle, beware of me: then am I no longer thy host, but thine enemy."

Sohier at once understood, and frankly accepted terms so congenial with the wild chivalrous notions of the age. He grasped the hand which his host extended to him, and the two mortal enemies seated themselves side by side at the upper end of the table. The cup went round; mirth and pleasantry enlivened the board, and the curfew-bell had rung long ere the two cavaliers said their grace and retired to rest.

The best apartment in the castle had been assigned to the Lord of Courcelles; the floor was covered with fresh straw, mingled with field-flowers and boughs of trees; a bright fire burned on the spacious hearth under its vast canopy of stone; the couch, raised high from the ground, was surrounded with thick curtains; and on the *prie-Dieu* by the bedside lay a Psalter, in costly binding, for the use of such priests, clerics, and monks, and other devout and literate persons, as from time to time shared the hospitality of the castle. Though but a cavalier, Sohier was learned for that age: he knew how to read; he took up the sacred volume, therefore, and as he opened it, his eyes fell on these words: "I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword deliver me" (Ps. xlii. 7). He opened it again, and read: "Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is for

brethren to dwell together!" (Ps. cxxxii. 1.) A third time he opened it, and read: "I will not enter into the tabernacle of my house, nor ascend unto the couch of my rest; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to my eyelids, nor rest to the temples of my head, until I have found a place for the Lord" (Ps. cxxxi. 3-5). These words struck him forcibly, and long time he meditated upon them before he lay down to rest; he wondered, too, as he thought how at that very moment he was lying under the roof of the inveterate enemy of his house; and more than once he said to himself that, after all, Walter was a courteous knight, and one of a frank and generous spirit. With his mind tossed to and fro by these various thoughts, and rocked, as it were, to rest by the soothing melodies of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, the knight at length fell asleep.

The red beams of the sun were gilding the tall towers of the castle of Montigny when Walter quietly entered the chamber of his guest to pay him his morning civilities. Sohier was kneeling at the *prie-Dieu*, his face buried in his hands; at the sound, however, of a step behind him, he turned his head, and his countenance showed that he was agitated by some strong emotion.

Walter, as though he perceived nothing unusual, expressed a hope that his guest had rested well.

"Thanks, sir knight, for your courtesy," replied Sohier; "I have slept; but my sleep was broken by disturbing dreams. Methought I was upon an islet near this castle, when I met a white stag of a marvellous size and beauty; the beast came towards me, threw me on the ground, tore out my bowels, and trailed them round the island."

"Strange!" replied his host; "I also have had exactly the same dream. I thought I was on the island where the Blessed Saint Gordian led for many years a hermit's life, with no companions save wild-beasts; like you, sir knight, I encountered a large white stag, who

goaded me with his antlers, and tore out my bowels. I try in vain to shake off the impression left upon my mind."

"Is the island far from here?" asked the knight thoughtfully.

"Oh, no! you can see it from the windows of the castle."

"Then with your good pleasure let us go thither together."

Together they went; and passing through a rich meadow, arrived at the banks of a little stream, whose limpid waters sparkled in the morning sun. This stream embraced within its circuit the islet on which the saintly recluse had lived so long, there exchanging the society of men for the companionship of angels. Crossing the rivulet on the trunk of a fallen tree, the two cavaliers stood within the hallowed ground. Every thing around them breathed a holy calm. Amidst a thicket of beech-trees might be seen some fragments of ruined walls, and a few half-broken arches, over which ivy had thrown its mantle of dark-green leaves.

"These are the remains of the church which St. Gordian raised," said the Lord of Montigny; "here he lived, here he died, and here his bones repose."

They advanced in silence a few steps, when suddenly before them, in the long deep grass, they beheld a tall white stag, which receded as they approached, and rapidly disappeared. As if entranced, they both stood still; a heavenly voice seemed to speak to their hearts in that spot blessed by the penances, the prayers, and the good works of God's servant. Sohier at length took Walter's hand within his own, and in a voice of deep emotion said,

"Messire, long time has there been war between us; our friends, our relatives, our vassals, have suffered great woes on our account, and many have perished miserably. God, our sovereign Lord, warns us that it is time to bring forth fruits of penance: for myself, my resolution is taken; if you have the same

desire, and will agree to remain here, in this island, like the Blessed Gordian, I will willingly bear you company."

At these words, Walter of Montigny threw himself upon the neck of his foe, and cried, "You have spoken to my heart, my brother: everlasting peace be henceforth between us, and union in God!"

Without delay the two noblemen put their design into execution. They assembled their friends together, and by a public reconciliation put the seal to the amity by which they had already bound themselves. They obtained from Gerard II., Bishop of Cambray, a grant of the Isle of Anchin, whither the mysterious dream had led them. They threw all they had into a common fund, and with seven others of gentle birth, whom their example had drawn from a secular life, they ranged themselves under the austere rule of St. Benedict. At first, a modest oratory was raised, and dedicated to the Saviour, the Blessed Virgin, and all Saints; but seven years afterwards, A.D. 1086, the foundations were laid of a magnificent church, the four pointed steeples of which were long celebrated throughout Flanders. The holy thought of Sohier and Walter had borne abundant fruit; God had blessed their charity and fidelity to grace:—thus was founded the Abbey of Anchin.

This religious house, which existed till the year 1792, produced many holy and learned men. It embraced the reform of Cluny, at the instance of Alvise, a friend of the great St. Bernard. The monks of this abbey occupied themselves, among other things, with copying manuscripts; and these humble artists of the cloister executed illuminated designs and miniatures which would have done honour to the most celebrated painters of those ages of faith. The abbey itself was a monument of architectural skill, and contained within it both marbles and pictures precious in all Catholic eyes, not only for their intrinsic merit, but for the associations that hung about them. But neither art nor

holy associations had power over the sacrilegious destroyers of 1793; and out of all the various treasures of that venerable pile nothing was saved but a few manuscripts, since deposited in the library of Douay, and a striking picture (still extant) attributed to the artist Memling, representing the Most Holy Trinity adored by the ever-blessed Virgin, the choirs of the Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, Anchorites, by the warrior-knights of the Cross, and all the glorious hosts that people the courts of heaven. The rich marbles were defaced and sawn asunder to serve for table-slabs, window-sills, and chimney-pieces; the tombs turned into troughs for cattle; the paintings which adorned the sanctuary scattered to the four winds; the consecrated vessels and holy reliquaries of solid gold sold as so much precious metal. Of the abbey itself, that gigantic pile, there remains but a few foundation-stones, level with the earth and whitening with age, like so many huge bones laid bare by the rude hand of time, and ere many years have gone by, the people will not be able to point out the spot where so many saints abode, so many heroes lie buried, and where generations of their fathers found food, shelter, and a home.

The abbey was situated two leagues distant from Douay, on the banks of the Scarpe. It bore as its arms, in memory of its founders' dream, a white stag on an azure field, strewn with lilies of gold, with this scroll, "*Inter lilia pascit:* He feeds among the lilies."

OUR LADY OF MERCY.

I.

RETURN OF THE CRUSADER.

DAY was declining; already the mists of evening were gathering in the valleys, when a horseman, who had been for some time skirting the shores of the Mediterranean, plunged at length into a deep and winding ravine, whose lofty sides were thickly clothed with pines. Both horse and rider gave signs of a long and fatiguing journey; but in spite of his well-worn mantle, soiled helmet, and arms rusted with rain, the countenance of the young cavalier appeared radiant with happiness. With eager joy he spurred on his steed, casting, as he went, looks of tender interest around him, as though he recognised at each fresh turn of the road some dear familiar object, and ejaculating to himself with a sort of rapturous emotion, indicated no less by the smile that played on his lips, and the tear that glistened in his eye. When he reached a certain point in the road he stopped,—it was before a little image of our Lady, placed in a half-ruined niche; there, joining his hands devoutly together, he cried aloud, "O Mother of Mercy, thanks to thy tender care, I once more behold my beloved country. Here, as I departed for the holy war, I made my vow before thee; and here, as is meet, I promise to perform it. On this spot will I raise a chapel and hospice for pilgrims; hither will I myself come each year to visit thy holy image; and on the same day will I relieve with great devotion thirty-three poor

men, in honour of the thirty-three years which thy dear Son lived with thee on earth. O Virgin, ever blessed, have pity on thy poor servant!"

With reason might Berenger d'Elvaz thank the Lord, whose almighty hand had delivered him out of so many perils. He had gone to the crusade as a faithful vassal of St. Louis. Wounded at Mansoura, he had endured a hard captivity in the house of an Egyptian emir, nor had recovered his liberty till the King of France had paid a million bezants of gold for his followers' ransom, and surrendered Damietta in payment for his own freedom; and now, at last, he had returned over sea to his own dear land of Provence, and to the home of his fathers, so fondly remembered. He was returning, it is true, a poor knight, possessed of nothing but his own good sword; but abundance awaited him in his father's halls: he was wearied and worn with travel, but what affectionate solicitude would not his mother and his sister lavish upon him! He pictured to himself their joy, and in imagination anticipated his own. He thought of the ancient retainers who had known him from a child; he forgot not even his poor faithful dog, who, perhaps, already had instinctively divined the near approach of his master. "Come, Valiant," said he to his horse, "let us push along; a few steps further, and we shall be at home. Once there, a good stable, plenty of fodder, and careful grooming will be yours. Push on, then, Valiant, my brave steed!"

The docile animal set himself to a canter, and soon the young traveller beheld through the increasing darkness the tall shadowy outline of the castle of Elvaz. His heart leaped within him at the sight; but he observed with surprise that no light glimmered through the narrow windows, not a sound could he hear from the ramparts.

"They are in the northern hall," said he, as if to re-assure himself; "my father is playing chess with the chaplain; my mother and my sister ply the distaff;

the varlets are busy somewhere; I will soon make them hear me."

So saying, he took the horn that hung at his belt, and sounded the once familiar notes by which he was wont to announce his return from the chase. No answer. Seized with impatience, he rode on; the drawbridge was down, in spite of the lateness of the hour. Berenger crossed it. Beneath the dark vault over which rose the belfry tower, he found neither servants nor men-at-arms. He shouted; the echo of the ramparts alone replied. He advanced into the court, and all around him was silence, darkness, absolute solitude. "Good God!" he cried, "what has happened?"

At this moment the moon struggled through the thick mantle of clouds with which she was enveloped, and poured a flood of light upon the castle. Berenger gazed around him, struck with a secret and undefinable terror; and it seemed as if the life-blood froze in his veins when he beheld the scene of desolation that was now disclosed. The castle was a ruin; the roofs were uncovered, the windows displayed their gaping recesses, stripped of glass and hangings; masses of rubbish strewed the pavement of the court in every direction; fragments of richly-carved furniture, costly armour, broken ornaments, parchments with large waxen seals attached, lay scattered on the ground; fire and pillage seemed to have spared nothing but the massive walls, which themselves bore the mark of flames. At this sight Berenger leaped from his horse, and, almost beside himself with terror, opened a window, the fastenings of which some hostile hand no doubt had shattered, and entered the armour-room, where once he used to tilt with his father and his old retainers.

"My father!" he called aloud; "my father! where are you? My mother! Alice, my sister! answer me."

"Holloa! who calls?" replied a voice which proceeded from a corner of the vast and gloomy hall.

Berenger rushed to the spot whence the sound seemed to come stretched out his hands, and enco in-

tered the arm of a man clothed in a coarse garment of goats' hair.

"Who are you?" cried the young knight; and he dragged the unknown to the window, through which the beams of the moon were falling.

The two looked into each others' faces.

"Is it you? is it indeed you, my lord?" said the man, as he fell at the feet of Berenger. "You are still alive! Do you not know me? I am James Lerouge, the goatherd, once the companion of your sports."

"Yes, I know you, my poor James. But—tell me—what has happened? My father, my mother, my sister,—in the name of God, where are they?"

The man drew back; then, with a look of the deepest horror, answered, as he grasped the young man's arm: "Your father, your mother, the Lady Alice, are all dead—slain by John de Melfort, the ancient enemy of your house. They lie buried in the chapel."

Berenger's knees tottered under him; he supported himself against the wall, and fixed his haggard eyes upon the goatherd.

The latter resumed: "It was believed that you had perished at Mansoura. Melfort, no longer fearing your return, fell upon us. Vassals, men-at-arms, all were massacred. My lord was slain defending his daughter; your sister was pierced with an arrow, and your venerable mother died of grief. The wretches pillaged the castle, leaving the bodies of their victims without burial. But the monks of St. Benedict laid them in consecrated earth. For myself, I was left for dead in a corner of the court yonder; but I recovered from my wounds, and continued with my flock to inhabit the place in which I had been bred. I never believed that you were dead; I looked for your return, and, besides, I had somewhat to say to you."

"What?" said the young man eagerly.

"John de Melfort has a castle, a wife, and a daughter. Revenge is sweet!"

II.

PETER NOLASCO.

Day had broken fair and bright; a man clothed in a white habit, and wearing a scapular on which shone a shield of gules and gold, was approaching along the path that led to Elvaz. He walked with a firm step, seeming to contemplate with delight the leafy thickets, the banks covered with wild thyme, the ripples of the sparkling stream which ran babbling along its rocky bed, and repeating from time to time in an under-tone verses from the Psalms, as though using the strains of the royal prophet to sing the praises of the Lord of all. Stopping under the walls of the castle, he cast his eyes over the ruined towers, and said to himself: "I will go into the chapel, and pray a moment over its deserted tombs."

He crossed the drawbridge, no longer guarded by men-at-arms; he entered the court-yard, and appeared struck with astonishment on beholding a young man standing with his back against the ramparts, and gazing with a mournful countenance on the havoc that surrounded him. The monk approached; and moved by a lively feeling of compassion, thus addressed him: "My son, what doest thou alone in this deserted spot? The masters of the castle are no more; but you look pale and wan—are you ill? tell me. If you are hungry, I have bread and figs in my wallet. If you are ill, I am somewhat of a leech."

Whilst the good religious was thus speaking with a tender earnestness, Berenger slowly raised his head, and casting on him a look at once cold and calm, said, in a low voice, more terrible than the wildest cry of despair: "I am Berenger d'Elvaz."

"What, my dear son!" exclaimed the monk, "are you, then, alive? Alas! it has been God's will to lay most heavy trials on you; yet doubtless He has given you the strength and faith to bear them. But why re-

main here? You have relations, you have friends, who will rejoice to welcome you. I pray you, my son, leave this melancholy place, where every thing conspires to awaken your grief."

"Never will I leave this castle," was Berenger's emphatic answer.

The monk, though still young, had long sounded the lowest depths of man's heart. He knew well how a smooth brow and a placid smile will often cover the bitterest and most excited feelings, and the fiercest passion disguise itself under a tranquil mien, as the burning volcano lies concealed beneath its veil of snow. Taking, then, the young man's hand, and fixing on him his dark eyes, mild yet penetrating, he said:

"My son, you will not leave these ruins because you are nursing, not your grief, but your revenge; and here, where you stand, you meditate less upon your father than on John de Melfort!"

"And what if I meditate requiting him the evil he has done me—would it not be just?"

"'*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay!* saith the Lord.' No, my child, it is not just to intrench on the rights that belong to God, and by an untimely and violent death to rob the sinner of the day of repentance which God might perchance have reserved for him. I say to you, from that God who will be your judge—vengeance is not yours; and again I say to you from Him who is your Saviour, 'By patience shall ye find peace to your soul.' When you have made desolate your enemy's hearth, will you find your own restored? When you have plunged the sword into the breasts of his wife and daughter, will your mother and your sister rise again from the dead? When you have burdened your conscience with the load that now oppresses his, will your own be more light?"

"My father," interposed Berenger, "you are a man of peace; you cannot understand me."

"My son, before I was a monk, I was a man of war like yourself, before I put on this frock, I wore the

breastplate and belt of a knight; I felt all the excitement of worldly passions. I speak to you, then, as one who has had experience of human glory; and I tell you that, if to our blinded eyes there be a certain grandeur in an insatiable revenge, there is that which is infinitely grander and more noble in the generous forgiveness which triumphs, not over an enemy prostrate at our feet, but over the haughty passions of our own heart."

"But, father, you do not understand me; leave me."

"My son, my brother, I will not leave you; for the hour of despair is no time for good resolutions. God has sent me hither: blessed be His divine providence, which does nothing in vain!"

"But know you," cried Berenger impatiently, "you who want me to forgive like a coward,—know you the evil this man has done me? Do you know that, after two long years of hard captivity, I return with a heart bounding with hope and joy, longing for love, full to overflowing with the tenderest affection for my aged parents and my young sister; and, thanks to this Melfort, find, instead of my father's hearth, yon three tombstones? Did he not revenge on a few poor vassals, an old man, and two women, the wrongs of his ancestors; and shall I not render him woe for woe, pang for pang? I tell you that, all night long, as I paced these deserted courts, by the side of the graves where all that I love lies buried, I heard dear familiar voices crying, 'Strike and avenge us!' and I will obey."

"No, my son, your grief deceives you; I knew those for whom you mourn. Your father was a just man, your mother a noble and pious lady, your young sister an angel of innocence; they have entered into the rest of the saints, and they pray for pardon on their murderer; they heap upon his head, not the burning coals of vengeance, but the riches of a glowing charity. Oh, no, blessed souls! it is not revenge you ask of the Lord; you ask but to see your enemy pardoned, and

throned in glory with you for all eternity. But your child, your brother, still bound with the cords of the flesh, cannot understand you."

"Your words grieve me," said Berenger; "and yet your voice is that of a friend."

"Ah! doubt it not, my brother; that grief of which you have made me sole confidant binds us together for ever. In the name of the friendship with which you have inspired me, grant me one favour. Our monastery is not far from hence,—deign to accept its hospitality; our house shall be your home; there you will find fathers, brothers, ready to welcome you; and your projects, whatever they be, will ripen in silence and reflection. Leave this dreary place, and come to the abode which the Lord offers to you."

"Who are you? what is your name?" asked the young man.

"I am a knight of Our Lady of Mercy," replied the monk, "and my name is Peter Nolasco."

III.

THE CAPTIVE'S DAUGHTER.

TEN years have passed away. The Order of Mercy possesses a commandery at the gates of Montpelier, from which, as from an advanced post of charity, issues forth from day to day the valiant chivalry of the Cross to defend the countries of Europe against the invasion of the Saracens, or, more heroic still, to rescue their victims from their hands in the very heart of their bagnios and amidst the sands of the desert.

It was towards this holy retreat, whose white walls were conspicuous from afar, that about mid-day a young girl might be seen directing her steps, accompanied by a youth and an aged serving-man. After crossing the drawbridge, they stopped under the donjon-keep, from

the summit of which floated the banner of the order; there they spoke a few words to a sentinel, who pointed out the way to the cloister. The youthful inquirers paused, as if awe-struck, at the entrance of that wide enclosure, where already some of the brave companions of Peter Nolasco and Raymond of Pennafort were taking their peaceful and glorious rest. Their modest tombs rose in the centre of the court; around, under the vaulted cloister, walked in silence a number of knights and priests, the former wearing their white tunic and mantle, the latter having their habit of the same snowy purity embroidered with the arms of the king of Aragon,—token of the affection borne by that truly Christian prince for the noble order of Redemption. Nothing disturbed the quiet seclusion of the place, save the measured fall of their feet upon the pavement, and the rustling of their long robes of serge as they paced continually to and fro.

At length a priest, perceiving the maiden and her companions, approached her. He was a man still in the prime of life; but his sorrow-stricken brow, and his hair prematurely sprinkled with grey, seemed to mark him as one who in the world had encountered wrongs and sufferings such as had left wounds in his soul which time as yet had but imperfectly healed. In a voice full of sweetness he asked: "Maiden, what seekest thou?"

"Alas, sir!" she answered; "we are two unhappy children, well-nigh orphans, I might say, though our father and mother are both still living. One is a captive among the Saracens, and the other is dying of anxiety and grief."

"Your father is in slavery?"

"Yes, sir. He had gone to Barcelona to receive a legacy bequeathed him by a friend of my mother's, and was returning in confidence to Provence, when the galley in which he had embarked was taken by the Barbary corsairs. Resistance was vain, the infidels carried him off into slavery; and we have reason to believe

that he is now at Tangiers. My noble father a slave! —put up to sale!" Tears and sobs interrupted her words, and her brother wept at seeing her weep.

"Compose yourself, my child," said the monk; "your father shall be redeemed."

"Ah, noble sir, we shall count nothing too costly for his ransom. See; my mother has given me her jewels, her bracelets, and her rings: we will pledge our lands,—every thing we possess. If only you will consent to go to my father's rescue, we will put into your hands a sum more than sufficient for his redemption; we have faithful vassals, too, and tried friends, and there is not one amongst them but would contribute to the deliverance of the Lord of Melfort."

"Melfort, did you say? Melfort!" cried the monk. "Your father's name is—"

"John de Melfort, sir. If you are of Provence, you know it is no ignoble name."

"I know it!" said the monk, in a low stern voice; "I know it, alas, too well!"

He turned away; his eyes for an instant gleamed fiercely, the next he raised them to the crucifix which hung in the middle of the cloister: "O great God," he murmured, "and do such fierce passions still reign in a soul which Thy grace has vanquished? The voice of this child rouses in my soul feelings of hatred and revenge which I deemed stifled for ever! My father, my mother, my sister, what will you have me to do? Blessed souls, what is it you ask of me?"

He stood for some time silent, his eyes fixed on the divine crucifix; then, turning towards the children, he said in a voice of inexpressible sweetness, "I will myself go in search of your father, and, if it please God, will restore him to you. Pray for me, a miserable sinner."

A few hours afterwards, a monk, habited for a journey, was receiving on his knees the benediction of Peter Nolasco, the general of the order, who, as he embraced him, said: "Go, dear son, and spare neither your blood

nor your life in the service of your neighbour. Go, servant of Christ, follow in your Master's steps; forget not your vows, which oblige you to remain yourself in chains to deliver a Christian from captivity. Brother Berenger, farewell."

IV.

THE DELIVERANCE.

The watchman on the top of the tower of St. Victor's Abbey, at Marseilles, had just given warning that several vessels were on the point of entering the harbour; crowds were hurrying to the quay, and trying to distinguish the respective barks by their rigging, or their general trim, as they ran before the morning breeze. In the midst of the bustling noisy throng, yet somewhat apart, might be seen a little silent group; it consisted of a lady, wearing the black dress and headgear of a widow, a young girl, who clung timidly to her mother, and a handsome boy, twelve or thirteen years of age, who from time to time played carelessly with a tall greyhound by his side. An old servant stood behind them, and all were following eagerly with their eyes the white sails, which approached nearer and nearer every moment. The outline of the rigging was distinctly visible, sharply defined against the sky. The forms of three vessels in particular were now clearly discernible; and soon the spectators could distinguish the colours of their flags displayed at their bows.

The practised eye of a master-pilot at length recognised the leading vessel. "Praised be our Lady of La Garde! 'tis the *Happy Bark;* she comes from Palermo, and brings news of Monsieur d'Anjou, husband of Beatrice of Provence."

"And the second," broke in another, "is the sloop

St. Mary; she comes from Smyrna with fruits and perfumes."

The two ships thus announced rapidly entered the roads, amidst the acclamations of the crowd. The third still lagged behind in the distance, labouring heavily, as it seemed, against the wind, which had become less favourable.

The widow and her children stood anxiously watching her; though at times the poor lady would say, "It is of no use expecting, my children; it is God's will to try us."

"Mother!" suddenly exclaimed the boy; "look! —I see it clearly;—'tis the holy standard that floats on board that galley."

The widow turned pale, and pressed her hand upon her heart, fluttering between hope and fear. She gazed out again upon the waters; the flag unfurled itself in the breeze, and she saw plainly, on the white ground, the arms of Aragon, with the device, "*Redemptionem misit populo suo:* He gave redemption to His people."

"It is the *St. John Baptist*, the galley of the Redemptors!" cried the people.

"Great God!" said the widow, "is it possible? Holy Virgin! let me not be disappointed of my hope."

Still she gazed; and on the deck she beheld a man in a white habit.

"My mother," cried the young girl, "it is he,—it is the priest!"

"There is a captive on board. Hurrah! hurrah!" shouted the mariners and people, whose attention was now strongly excited; "thanks to our Lady of La Garde! He shall hang up his chains at her altar."

The lady tottered to the water's edge; a mist came over her eyes; she dared not look up, dreading not to behold her husband, so long and fruitlessly expected; but the exclamations of her children and the shouts of the people forced her to raise her head. The vessel was close upon the quay; a man was landing from it,

wretchedly clad, his feet and hands loaded with chains; but his countenance,—'twas he! She uttered a cry, made a few steps forward, and fell swooning with joy into the arms of the captive.

He strained her to his heart, and extended his hand to bless his children, who, kneeling at his feet, were endeavouring to loosen the fetters which he had but just resumed; then turning towards the monk, who was at that moment leaving the galley, he cried: "My wife, my children, if you love me, love and bless this good religious; to him I owe my liberty, my life. Let all who love Melfort honour and bless this man of God!" Then, as the monk strove to move away, he grasped him by the arm, and in a still louder voice cried, "He sought me out on the verge of the Great Desert, whither my masters had carried me; he found me dying of the black plague. All had abandoned me; but, undeterred by the loathsome disease, he installed himself as my nurse; he cured me by his skill, or rather by his loving and tender care. The barbarians declared my ransom-money insufficient; he offered to remain himself in my stead; but this I called God and His blessed Mother to witness that I would not suffer. All this he did: and now,—hear me, my son, —I bid every one who bears the name of Melfort be henceforth the friend and servant of the Holy Order of Mercy."

As he concluded, a man wearing a cloth gown and cap pushed his way through the crowd, and said abruptly, "You are the Lord of Melfort! Do you know the name of your deliverer, messire?"

"He is called Brother Berenger; but what other name he bears I know not."

"I will tell it you, then. His name is Berenger, Lord of Elvaz,—Elvaz; do you hear? Ah, my master, my dear lord!" added the man, bathing the monk's hand with his tears, "I knew you."

Melfort had started back as if thunderstruck; he gazed at the monk with a sort of terror, as though

the dead had suddenly stood before him. "Berenger d'Elvaz!" he said at last; "can this be so?"

"Be so!" cried James Lerouge (for he it was); "I should have known my lord amongst a thousand. I was his serf, his liege-man; he freed me, and amply provided for me. I am now a free man and a burgher of the town: to him I owe all."

"And I too," said Melfort, falling on his knees before Berenger. "Servant of God, is it true—this that I hear? You knew who I was, and you saved my life at the peril of your own!"

"Kneel not to a sinner, my brother," said Berenger, raising the knight from the ground; "let us forget the past, and pray God to forgive us for all we have done against each other."

"It is your forgiveness I implore, that I may hope to be forgiven by God," answered Melfort; "but know, that from the day on which, to avenge my fathers' wrongs, I laid murderous hands upon your kindred, I have never had one peaceful night; the very prosperity which heaven bestowed upon me was bitterness to my heart. I shall believe myself pardoned only when you have forgiven me."

"Let this embrace be the pledge of my friendship," said Berenger, as he threw his arms round the hereditary enemy of his house; "and now come to the altar, where I am about to offer the Adorable Victim, and receive the pledge of the mercies of your God!—come, follow me."

They proceeded to the chapel of our Lady of La Garde, followed by James Lerouge and a crowd of people. The captive laid his chains at the feet of the miraculous image, and little children, according to ancient usage, replaced them with a garland of flowers. The Mass began; Berenger d'Elvaz, son and disciple of St. Peter Nolasco, immolated on the altar, once for aye, every remembrance of the ancient feud; and when, himself livingly united with the Saviour of mankind, he laid the Holy Host on the lips of Melfort, there remained no

longer those scions of two hostile houses, but twin brothers, united together in the bonds of divine charity by the noblest of all self-sacrifices and a gratitude as humble as it was profound.

The "Order of our Lady of Mercy for the Redemption of Captives" was founded in the year 1218 by Raymond of Pennafort, Peter Nolasco, knight, and James, king of Aragon. Knights and priests were alike associated, and bound by the same ordinary vow of obedience, poverty, and chastity, and by a special and extraordinary vow, couched in the following terms: "I, N., knight of our Lady of Mercy for the Redemption of Captives, hereby make solemn promise and profession to live solely for God, following the rule of St. Benedict; and if necessary for the deliverance of the faithful of Jesus Christ, I will remain a captive among the Saracens." This order, which rendered such immense services to Christianity, spread rapidly through France, Spain, and Portugal; it gave to the Church a number of canonised saints, among whom the most distinguished are its blessed founders just mentioned, St. Raymond Nonnatus, and St. Peter Paschal, Bishop of Jair, who was martyred by the Saracens.

The work of redeeming slaves continues in our own days, and after a manner, if possible, still more touching; it is performed by women, and the objects of their charity are the poor children of idolaters. The Nuns of the Good Shepherd have founded a house at Cairo, and another at Tunis, where they devote themselves to the redemption and Christian education of little girls purchased in the slave-market.

JOHN DE LA CAMBE.

A.D. 1441-1461.

I.

THE KING OF THE THORN.

ALL Lille was keeping holiday, and the pale beams of a February sun, which for hours had been waging a doubtful strife with the dull grey clouds by which it was still beset, shone upon a brilliant cavalcade, which was passing through the crowded streets on its way to the market-place in the centre of the town. All the wealth and luxury which a prosperous commerce and an ever-restless industry enabled the Flemings of that day to display, seemed to be paraded in the gorgeous procession, half-religious, half-chivalrous in character, which, as it followed the devious course of the Gothic-built streets, looked like some winding stream chequered with divers bright and lively colours. Nothing was to be seen but one long fluttering array of velvet and silk, coats-of-arms richly emblazoned, precious jewels sparkling on the breasts or in the caps of the numerous horsemen, while the steeds themselves, tall and strong, and caparisoned with no less elegance than splendour, arched their proud necks, and tossed their noble heads, as conscious of the stately plumes with which they were adorned. In the centre of the cavalcade, mounted on a bay horse, advanced a young man of engaging appearance, clad in magnificent armour, and carrying in his hand a thorn-branch, as though it had been a sceptre. Four young girls on horseback, splendidly appareled, held the gilded reins of the courser on which rode the

hero of the fête; and before him went a squire, bearing his escutcheon of gules with a chevron of gold. The martial clang of the trumpets sounded merrily through the market-place, and the people thronged together from all sides, crying, "Hurrah! hurrah! long live Sir Joy! long live the King of the Thorn!"

The procession, after traversing the street of St. Peter, had passed in front of the venerable collegiate church dedicated to the Prince of the Apostles, and the palace of La Salle, the ancient residence of the Counts of Flanders, part of which has been converted into a hospital; thence, leaving on the left the castle of Courtray, with its cluster of sharp-pointed turrets, it swept along the street now called the *Grande Chaussée*, and reached the large square which lies to the north of the majestic church of St. Stephen. There might be seen that fountain so long famous for its beauty, and the graceful chapel to which popular admiration had given the name of "the Gem," both long since left to fall to ruin, or destroyed by revolutionary fury. The enclosure prepared for the tournament was strewn with fine sand, and surrounded by barriers decorated with the colours of the town, gules and gold. The ladies, magistrates, and certain strangers of distinction, were ranged on a platform gaily arrayed with tapestry and awnings. The marshals of the tourney kept the entrance to the lists, which they now threw open as the cavalcade approached. Proclamation was then made, in the name of the King of the Thorn, that he and his company were ready then and there to do battle with all comers from the various towns of Flanders, and especially from Valenciennes, Ghent, Ypres, and Bruges. A golden hawk was the prize of the tournament, to be presented to the victor by the hand of fair lady.

And who would not deem that, in times so remote, nobles, and nobles only, were the actors in a scene of so much grandeur and beauty? But it was not so: the fête was conducted by burghers; burghers, and burghers only, arranged and furnished all; their activity,

independence, and energy of spirit raised these Flemish citizens, merchants and traders as they were, to a level (so to say) with the proudest knights who graced the chivalry of England or of France.

We shall not here recount the gallant deeds of arms performed by the good burghers of Lille in these their courtly lists, wherein, sooth to say, coolness and dexterity were needed more than strength or warlike bravery; for they who originated this noble pageant meant to furnish a generous and a manly pastime, not a sanguinary fray. The Festival of the Thorn, which drew such multitudes to Lille, was instituted in the year 1220, in the reign of Philip Augustus, by John of Constantinople, a monarch whose name is still dear to the citizens of that place. Every year the magistrates chose a "king" to preside at the jousts, banquets, and fêtes by which his reign was signalised. This king was to be a burgher of honest family, and at the same time a man of a fair name and goodly substance. His duties were onerous: he must possess such a liberal spirit as would conciliate all parties, and a purse adequate to provide entertainments for his fellow-citizens with becoming dignity and splendour. With these public festivities religious practices were always united. Immediately after his election, the king proceeded with his subjects to the Dominican convent to venerate a precious relic, a thorn out of our Saviour's crown; which done, they repaired to the church of Templemars to pay their devotions to St. George the Martyr, whom the Flemings have ever held in special honour, and at whose altar, as the patron of Christian chivalry, the victor in the jousts hung up his armour.

The king chosen in the year 1441, in the reign of the great Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good, possessed all the qualifications of character and fortune required for the exercise of the functions of his mimic royalty. His name was John de la Cambe; but he was commonly called John de Ghent, after his native place. He was of a cheerful cordial disposition, frank and

courteous to all, and one who discharged the duties of his office with vivacity and ardour. After the tournament, in which he had generously yielded the prize of victory to an opponent from the town of Valenciennes, he repaired with his brilliant train to the monastery of the Friars-Preachers. The Thorn, which had been presented to the religious by the Countess Jane, was placed high above the altar in a magnificent reliquary amidst a thousand burning tapers: the king threw himself on his knees before it, and immediately an extraordinary change was observed to pass over his countenance; the brightness and animation which had flushed and lighted up his features were succeeded by an expression of the most profound devotion; all remembrance, all consciousness of the stirring scene from which he had just come, and with all the pomp and circumstance of which he was still surrounded, seemed in an instant to have gone from him; so intense, so marvellous was his deadness to all outward things, that it looked less like an abstraction than a rapture. And so indeed it was: he saw not the jewels or the lights; his soul was wholly filled with the contemplation of Him whose brow that thorn had lacerated; it was as if he beheld the Precious Blood oozing from each puncture, and covering that Sacred Countenance with its coagulated stream, while an inward voice seemed to say, "*Inglorius erit inter viros aspectus ejus, et forma ejus inter filios hominum.* His visage shall be inglorious among men, and His form among the sons of men."

His companions were astonished at the length of his devotions, and his esquire Pierron grew impatient, and could scarcely restrain the chafing steed, who stood prancing and pawing the ground at the door of the church. It was long before John de la Cambe re-appeared. The trumpets rang, and the gay cavalcade went glittering through the streets amidst the acclamations of the people; but a far different sight was before his eyes, and far different cries resounded in his ears: he saw One sitting crowned with thorns amidst jibes

and cruel mockings, and He hid not His face from shame and spitting.

II.

THE FAMINE.

Twenty years have rolled away since the splendid pageant we have just described. As then, John de la Cambe is a citizen of Lille; as then, he is rich and highly-esteemed: no change is visible in his worldly condition, but a complete transformation has taken place in his individual life. Detached from the world and its illusions, and emptied of the love of creatures, his heart is filled with a boundless love of God and his brethren; and every day that burning charity is exercised in most admirable acts of faith, mercy, and devotion. Not content with magnificently adorning the churches of the town, and promoting the general good by numerous pious foundations, he is the father of the poor, the nurse of the suffering; the tenderness which saints have lavished on those dearest children of Christ's family had its counterpart in him. Widows, orphans, the sick, the friendless, found their way to that mansion at whose threshold they were sure to meet with a ready welcome, and whose very lacqueys, obedient to their master's will, received them with kind and even respectful sympathy. It was, above all, during a grievous famine, which desolated Flanders in the year 1461, that John de la Cambe exhibited that profuseness of charity which made his house the refuge of the destitute. God, who is love, ofttimes kindles in the breasts of His elect a spark of His own ineffable compassion, as if to comfort the poor and needy with a visible token of His most merciful providence. Blessed is he who opens his heart to this grace; blessed is he who watches over the wants of the afflicted! "The Lord shall deliver him in the evil day; the Lord shall make all his bed in his sickness."

The famine had long prevailed, and the distress of the people increased from day to day; so numerous were the unhappy creatures who continually besieged the doors of this good citizen of Lille, that his resources, large as they were, were at length exhausted. His granaries were empty; all the corn they contained had been cast with unsparing hand into the lap of the poor; and still fresh suppliants came, still gaunt forms, with famished faces, looked to him, and clamoured too, for aid, and lean and wasted hands knocked at that gate which ever opened at the touch or cry of the distressed. John gave the wretched people the last victuals in his larder, the last coin in his purse, and none who asked in the name of Jesus Christ went away empty. The domestics loudly murmured; Pierron, his old esquire, above all: "Our master," said he, "will leave us nothing but an empty bag and a platter." But his grumblings did not disturb the unalterable sweetness and untiring charity of the once King of the Thorn. One day, a poor woman came to the door all in tears, pale and feeble, begging, for the love of God, but one handful of corn. It was Pierron himself who went to the gate, and history says that he did not receive her very kindly. However, he informed his master what she wanted. John was touched with compassion, and he said to Pierron with much emotion, "Go to the granary, my son, sweep the floor, if need be, and let this poor creature have all you can collect."

At these words Pierron could no longer contain himself: "Did his master not know that the granary was empty? that the floor had been swept perfectly clean long, long ago?" John was not the least shaken; he gently insisted, and Pierron was obliged to obey. He went grumbling and growling up the granary-steps. To his surprise, when he pushed at the door, he found some extraordinary resistance, but by an effort he forced it open; the next moment he had fallen on his knees at the threshold. The granary he had left empty was as full of wheat as it could hold; the precious golden grain

lay heaped up as high as the rafters of the roof, and streamed out through the now open door. It was manna from heaven, which the Lord had sent down for His poor at the prayer of His servant; for God doeth the will of them that fear Him, the God of Israel is good unto all that call upon Him!

Pierron rushed down the steps, and with a sample of the miraculous corn in his hand, threw himself, weeping and repentant, at the feet of his master. The prodigy was soon noised through the town; and John had the consolation, on this day of blessing, of filling the multitudes who came to beg a share in the bounty of heaven, and nevertheless retaining wherewith to satisfy the largeness of his charity on future occasions.

But charity so heroic was desirous of extending its mercies to generations still to come. John de la Cambe founded at Lille a hospital for the reception of thirteen old people, men and women, the poorest and most infirm that could be found, and committed them to the care of eight religious of the Augustinian rule. He placed this foundation under the patronage of St. John Baptist, and amply endowed it by the gift of the house he inhabited in the street *des Malades*, as well as of a considerable extent of land situated, for the most part, in Belgium, on the confines of Holland.

This pious and charitable foundation has survived the ravages of war and the storms of revolution. The house of John de la Cambe still exists; the walls which beheld his numerous works of mercy, which witnessed that most touching miracle which God granted to His servant's prayers, are still standing. They have not ceased to serve as an asylum for the destitute and infirm; the nuns of St. Augustine have never ceased for four centuries to nurse and tend the poor of Christ beneath those hospitable roofs. The old town of Lille, once the favourite abode of Counts of Flanders and Dukes of Burgundy, has changed its aspect a thousand times, under the divers rulers who have held it in possession; that one little plot of ground alone, consecrated

to God and to His poor, has retained its original destination and its traditionary renown;—token of the immortality which God has bestowed, even in this world, on works of charity.

The subject of the above legend was thrice married. He was a master-tradesman, and dealt in marble and alabaster. The miraculous supply of corn is attested by the historian Buzelin in his *Annals of French Flanders*, b. ix., and by an unbroken tradition. The granary, which was the scene of so astonishing an interposition of Providence, is still extant, and bears the name of the "Granary of the Miracle" It now forms part of the dormitory of the pensioners; and in a silver reliquary are still preserved some grains of the wheat so miraculously multiplied. The hospital has for some time been used as an asylum for persons of broken fortune, and for this purpose several new foundations have been added. At present only women are received, and of these the number is considerable. There, to this day, may be seen the fair and spacious dormitories, the ancient hall, adorned with carvings of rich and quaint design, serving now for work-chamber and common sitting-room, and the refectory of the nuns, hung with paintings of rare value. The portrait of the founder is preserved with much respect. This picture, which has no artist's name upon it, is painted on a diptych, or folding tablet, and is after the style of the old Flemish school, which was remarkable for its minute elaboration of details and accuracy of execution. The St. John Baptist represented on the left wing appears to be of a more recent date, and may perhaps have taken the place of the founder's wife. The arms of John de la Cambe are emblazoned on the back.

THE CARPENTER OF ROOSENDAEL.

A.D. 1663.

VILVORDE is a dull inanimate town, with nothing about it to attract or to gratify the curiosity of the tourist, unless it be its large and gloomy gaol, formerly used as a place of confinement for state-prisoners, and at a still earlier date a feudal stronghold, in which resided, among other notable persons, the famous Jacqueline of Bavaria. And yet there is that to be seen in this ancient cradle of the municipal freedom of Brabant which is not unworthy of the attention of the artist; although we may safely say that not one traveller in a hundred has taken the trouble to examine it.

If you are one who care for those elaborate carvings, rich in fantastic details, breathing the very spirit of creative genius, and combining in marvellous variety the beautiful and the grotesque—the product of the *renaissance* period, and more particularly of the seventeenth century,—enter the great church of Vilvorde, pass into the choir, and look around you. The walls on either side are covered with a perfect forest of tracery, most delicately and ingeniously wrought, and forming an umbrageous canopy over the stalls. To describe to you all that glides and climbs, floats and falls, curls and twines itself amidst that inextricable yet most harmonious confusion, would be impossible. At the first glance you perceive only the general effect,—a cornice supported by twisted pillars, which separate a number of niches filled with the images of the twelve Apostles, six on each side; designs illustrative of their respective martyrdoms form the finishing above. In front of the

pillars are imaginative figures, bearing the several instruments of our Saviour's Passion, fourteen in all. Such is the result of a general survey. But now come nearer and examine each compartment attentively; you will find a million details more intricate and minute than you could have conceived.

The pillars are especially deserving of admiration; little figures, some inches high, of animals and fruits, the inventions of the wildest and most exuberant fancy, are wreathed and blended together, seeming now to touch, now to recoil from one another, with a wonderful regard both to perspective and to artistic beauty Then, in the spaces between the pillars, strange, hideous faces seem to stare out at you, each with its own peculiar expression: heads of griffins, satyrs, monsters of every kind, ornament the wood-work of the stalls; flowers, foliage, and fruits cluster carelessly between the frieze and the acanthus-leaves of the capital;—all seems alive in this beautiful composition, the minute details of which combine and harmonise together so felicitously as to convince the beholder that the whole is the result of one vivid original conception. Around the ninth pillar is grouped every thing relating to the chase: at its base are wild boars' heads, stags' antlers, bows, and hunting-horns; in the centre, greyhounds, deer, and huntsmen; at the summit, the traditional stag of St. Hubert, with the crucifix on his forehead. Upon another pillar, and immediately opposite, the artist, whether to indulge a freak of fancy, or wishing to embody some mystical allegory, the meaning of which it is not easy to divine, has introduced two angels, struggling, like the unhappy Laocoon, in the folds of an enormous serpent. Two exquisitely carved panels represent incidents in the Passion of Jesus. In fine, a little angel, with his face turned towards the body of the church, bears in his hand a medallion on which is written "*Anno* 1663."

These carvings, less generally admired perhaps than those of St. Gertrude at Louvain, our Lady at Bruges,

or the Augustinian convent at Ghent, are nevertheless, in many respects, quite as remarkable. The finish, the variety, the delicacy of execution, the richness and quaintness of design, the extraordinary intermingling of natural and monstrous shapes, render these oak-panellings of the church of Vilvorde worthy of all attention. It must be allowed, however, that the images and larger figures are generally wanting in gracefulness and ease; the position of the head and limbs is stiff, sometimes forced and impossible, always constrained. The artist excelled in details; although he lived in the seventeenth century, he evidently belonged to that patient painstaking race which illuminated the ancient manuscripts so marvellously with rich arabesques and borders, but was not as successful in delineating the human countenance.

After speaking of the work, it is only natural and just that we should say something of the workman. The artist who executed this elaborate composition out of some half-dozen planks of sound oak is not one whose name has been handed down like those of Michael Angelo, John Goujon, or Van Huysuns. Popular tradition has barely preserved a lingering recollection of him; for artists did not then inscribe their names on their productions, whatever might be their merit, as at the present day. The finest statues, the most valuable paintings, of former ages have scarcely a monogram to indicate their author. The carvings of Vilvorde bear no artist's name. Tradition simply says that they are the work of the "Carpenter of Roosendael;" and it is thus the legend runs:

Roosendael, up to the time of the French revolution, was a spacious convent situated in the village of Waelhem, near Mechlin, and devoted to the especial care of the sick. The religious received all who sought their hospitality, no matter who they were or whence they came, with that tender compassion which still characterises the order of the "Black Sisters;" the aged and infirm, chance travellers, and sick people of

every kind, were there treated with that affectionate solicitude which Christian charity so well knows how to bestow. One evening there came to the convent-gate a poor wayfaring man, suffering from a violent fever; he seemed to have travelled far that day, and to be too weak and exhausted to continue his journey; indeed, he was so ill as hardly to be able to speak. The good nuns received him most kindly, and begged him to stay overnight. The next morning his illness had assumed an alarming character; and for six long weeks he remained hovering between life and death. The strength of his constitution, and the unremitting attentions of the good religious, however, at last triumphed over the disease; and after having been within a hair's breadth of the grave, the stranger began insensibly to recover.

Now the nuns of Roosendael had long been laying by their savings in order to be able to decorate their fine church in a manner worthy of it. The amount was already considerable, and there appeared every prospect of their being speedily in a position to engage some competent artist from Brussels or Antwerp to undertake the work, when, most unfortunately, one night thieves broke into the convent and carried off all the money they had collected with so much trouble. Great was the despair of the superioress and the nuns,—if they can be said to despair who put all their trust in the providence of God; the hope they had cherished for so long, and which seemed so near its accomplishment, was gone, and the realisation of their fondest wishes appeared now to be deferred to an indefinite period.

The stranger, in common with all the other pensioners of their bounty, heard of the disaster, and begged to see the superioress. "Reverend mother," he said, as he approached the old and venerable nun who was at the head of the establishment, "I have learnt that you are in great trouble about your intended decorations for the church, in consequence of the money

you had laid by being stolen last night. You need not despair, however."

"What! do you know any way?"

"Yes, and a very simple one; I can manage to get all you desire done without expense."

"Without expense! surely you are but jesting. What artist is there who would undertake so great a work without payment?"

"Myself, reverend mother."

"You?" answered the religious, smiling; for she began to think that his illness had affected the stranger's brain.

"Yes, I; perhaps there is something of presumption in my proposal, but I have been long meditating how I could prove my gratitude to you for all the kindness and attention you have shown me; to-day an opportunity occurs, and I wish to profit by it."

"But, my friend, who and what are you, that you should think of such a thing?"

"I am but an insignificant individual, reverend mother, a poor journeyman carpenter, who have been living with a master-carver at Cologne to learn my business. I was three years in that city, and was returning on foot to Antwerp, my native place, in the hopes of finding work there, when I was taken ill, and should have died on the way but for the hospitable reception you gave me. I am not altogether without my notions of art; and if you would intrust me with the work, I believe you would have no cause to repent of your confidence."

The stranger spoke with such a tone of profound conviction, and the gratitude he felt was so evident and touching, that the superioress was much moved, as well as favourably impressed.

"But what conditions do you annex to your proposal?" she asked, after a moment's pause.

"Five years to complete my undertaking," he replied without hesitation; "a sum of thirty crowns to purchase the necessary tools, and a shed where I can

labour by myself; with the understanding, moreover, that no one shall inspect my handiwork until it is finished. As for salary, all I ask is, that you should feed and clothe me during the time."

The superioress consulted the community on the subject of this strange proposal. The stranger's conduct during his stay in the convent had been such as to inspire confidence in him, and his offer was accepted without a single opposing voice. A few days afterwards, being now perfectly restored to health, he might be heard cutting and sawing, planing and carving plank after plank of solid oak in the interior of a little detached out-house, the keys of which were intrusted to himself alone.

This was in the spring of the year 1658. Five years afterwards, on the 1st of March 1663, the anniversary of the day on which he had first entered the monastery of Roosendael, the stranger donned his holiday suit, and with the radiant air of an artist who is satisfied with his performance, he sought out the superioress, and invited her, together with the whole community, to come and inspect the carvings, to which he had put the finishing stroke that very morning.

The reverend mother, thus invited, proceeded, accompanied by all her nuns, to the workshop of the artist. At the sight of that magnificent piece of carved work, so elaborately wrought, so profusely ornamented, and executed with so much delicacy and skill, there was one universal outburst of praise and admiration on the part of the good sisters. Never had they beheld any thing so perfect: the success of the artist so far surpassed all their hopes, that they regarded him with a respect only equalled by their astonishment. For himself, he stood apart, in a corner of the shed, enjoying in silence that intense satisfaction which is ever the reward of real merit.

"Most nobly have you responded to the confidence we reposed in you!" exclaimed the superioress, wishing to give the artist a public testimony of her approbation.

"These beautiful carvings, destined for our little church, would be well worthy of a cathedral; you are indeed a great artist. We accept your work with lively gratitude; but you must allow us to make you some acknowledgment in return; we will settle upon you a sum of twenty livres, to be paid you, on this day, every year as long as you live."

"Oh! reverend mother, such recompense far exceeds my deserts."

"No, my friend, it is no more than you merit. You are industrious and you are virtuous; God will protect you in every thing you undertake; and we will never cease our prayers that all the graces and blessings of heaven may be yours."

Eight days after, the erection of the stalls was inaugurated with all solemnity in the church of Roosendael, and the same day the unknown artist disappeared from the convent, and, as the legend says, was never heard of more.

At the French revolution, the convent of Roosendael was suppressed, and every thing belonging to it was sold and dispersed. The parish of Vilvorde had the good fortune to purchase the magnificent carved-work, which forms at this day the most striking ornament of its noble church.

THE WIDOW OF ARTOIS.

A.D. 1173.

IN the latter part of the twelfth century there lived in the small town of St. Pol, in Artois, a poor widow who feared God and reverenced His saints. Her only joy in life was her infant son, and she had nothing to depend upon for their common support but the labour of her hands and the charity of pious souls; but she placed all her confidence in Him who has bid us not be solicitous for the morrow, and look to Him for our daily bread.

One evening a poor friar, who had lost his way, knocked at the door of her humble abode, and begged for a little food and a night's shelter. Like the widow of Sareptha, she never refused to give out of her deep poverty to those who were in need, and she willingly accorded to the stranger the hospitality he craved. He gave only the name of Christian; but the words that fell from his lips had in them a wonderful mixture of sweetness and command. In the morning, as he was about to take the road towards France, he said, in the words of St. Peter to the lame man sitting at the gate of the Temple, "Silver and gold have I none; but that which I have give I thee," and raising his hand, he bestowed his benediction on the good widow and the child she bore in her arms, with an air of so much majesty, that she felt as if his blessing had something of supernatural virtue in it. And, in fact, this poor unknown friar, clad in a habit of coarsest serge, to whom she had given a night's lodging, was no other than the famous Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury and Pri-

mate of England, who, like his Divine Master, was suffering persecution for justice' sake. Compelled to fly his country in disguise to avoid the tyrannic violence of Henry II., he was on his way to seek an asylum at the court of Louis, King of France. The presence of such a man in her humble cabin left behind it a perfume of edification in the heart of the pious widow, the effect of which was increased tenfold when she became aware who it was whom she had entertained unawares. Nor was it long ere the tidings with which all Christendom rang reached her lonely cottage, that the crime of a worthless monarch had obtained for the venerable prelate the crown of martyrdom; and as every day in her prayers she testified her belief in the communion of saints, and that death has no power to break the ties by which Christians are bound together in this life, she never ceased to have a lively faith in the protection of her saintly guest. Devout as she was before, she now redoubled her fervour; and took all diligent pains to bring up her child, from his earliest years, in obedience to the commandments of God and the Church.

The year of our Lord 1173 was a year of dearth and famine; a rigorous winter had now come to add its own peculiar sufferings to the privations of the time, and the general need closed hands and hearts against the poor.

The widow sought for work or alms in vain; she had exhausted her last means for her child's support, having stripped herself of her very clothes, and deprived herself of food to obtain some scanty sustenance for him; but soon her strength gave way in the extremity of her distress, her energies of mind and body alike failed her. She fell sick; and from the wretched pallet where she lay helplessly extended, she had the agony of hearing her child saying continually by her side, "Oh, mother, I am so cold and hungry; I want some bread."

"Bread, my poor child? It is all gone, and I cannot go and seek for any; but the Lord never for-

sakes those who serve Him in sincerity of heart. Pray to Him; then go out into the highway, and beg of the rich as they pass by; hold out your hand and say, 'Give me something for the love of God!' They will be sure to give to you; for your voice is sweet and gentle—not like mine." The anxious mother thought that the penny which would be denied to her poverty and importunity would be granted to her child's plaintive accents and tender years.

The little fellow went out as his mother had bidden him; but, spared as he had hitherto been by her exertions the necessity of imploring the compassion of strangers, he was ashamed to beg. Far from trying to attract the attention of the passers-by, he hardly liked to let them see his misery, and went wandering about, murmuring mechanically a few broken words which nobody could hear; so that several went on their way without so much as observing him. At last he reached the porch of the great church; an old canon was just coming out; and encouraged by his mild and benevolent countenance, the child was on the point of approaching him and imploring his charity. But the old priest was hastening to a dying man; he walked quickly on, and did not perceive the little boy following him. While endeavouring to overtake him, the child met a cavalier, covered with velvet and ermine, mounted on a beautiful palfrey, with a damsel, richly attired, seated behind him. They were on their way to a banquet given by the Sire de Bryas, and doubtless would have gladly thrown a handful of coin to the young petitioner, to begin the pleasures of the day by a work of charity; but the howling of the wind and the noise of their horse's feet drowned the tremulous voice which ventured to accost them, and they left behind them the poor little beggar-boy to his sorrow and his hunger.

Thus abandoned by all, his eyes red and swollen with tears which he strove in vain to repress, he suddenly remembered that his mother had often made him pray God to bless the noble lady, the Countess de

St. Pol; and how he had heard people say she was gracious and gentle to all her vassals, high and low, and kindest to those to whom God had dealt the smallest share of this world's goods. At this cheering thought, his strength and courage revived, and he ascended the steep path that led to the castle; but on arriving, he found to his dismay that the drawbridge was up, and on the other side he could see a man-at-arms standing, whose stern aspect and martial appearance frightened him. He stopped, however, and from time to time cast supplicating glances towards him, in the hopes of moving him to pity; but the man took no notice of him, and the child felt his last hope die in his heart. To shelter himself from the piercing blast, he crept into the thicket which skirted the side of the moat, and went and sat behind a pile of faggots newly raised by the woodmen. There he remained sobbing and crying; but after a little while a benumbing chill seized on his little limbs; he fell into a drowsy stupor; the pitiless cold completed what want and misery and fatigue had begun. Soon he ceased to cry, he ceased to suffer: he was dead.

Meanwhile the mother, left all alone, had counted the long dreary hours as they went by, looking in vain for her darling's return. Every time the wind shook the door, she thought it was her boy coming in, and with difficulty raised herself up in her bed to catch a sight of him; but the wind was quiet again, every thing was still, and she sank back exhausted with pain and anxiety. More than once, in spite of her illness and weakness, she dragged herself to the door of the cabin, to listen in the distance, and call him by his name; but there came no reply to relieve and gladden her heart. At last, no longer able to control her fears, and love lending strength to her enfeebled frame, she left the house, and went out into the highway; and now she, in her turn, wandered about the neighbourhood, asking every one she met, not for bread, but for her child. Her distress touched the hearts of those she accosted; but no

one could tell her what had become of him, he had passed along so quick and unnoticed. In an agony of tears, and, like Rachel, refusing to be comforted, she wandered thus the whole day long, and all night too, without finding any traces of him whom she was seeking. At last, on the third day, she went into the chapel of Tourelles, and throwing herself on her knees before the image of Our Lady of Dolours, she implored her by her three days' sorrowing at the loss of Jesus, and her joy at finding Him in the Temple, to give her back her child, dead or alive. The tender heart of Mary had compassion on her; and the unhappy mother, as though guided by an invisible hand, went straight to the place where her child was lying. Her eye had no sooner lighted upon him, than she rushed forward, cast herself on the ground, and clasped him to her breast, amidst a shower of tears and kisses; but when she found him hang motionless in her arms, and felt his stiff and icy cheeks against her own, she fell fainting by his side.

But God, who has pity on a mother's sorrow, and who once raised to life again the only son of the widow of Naim, willed to show forth His mercy in this poor mother, and to glorify through her one of His blessed saints. Her first thought, as she came to herself, was of that holy pastor who had shed his blood for the Church of Christ She had taught her boy from his earliest years to invoke the great St. Thomas, and to regard him with a loving veneration as his most especial patron; on the very last feast of Whitsuntide she had taken him to the Abbey of Dommartin, on the confines of Picardy, where the relics of the saint were kept; and now, without rising from her knees, she thus piteously besought his aid: "O holy martyr!" she cried, "my child is dead—the child whom once you blessed when he lay an infant on my bosom. Have you forgotten the honour you then did me in visiting my humble dwelling? have you forgotten the pilgrimage we made you in return? and will you not assist us in our need? For myself, I know that my sins have rendered me

unworthy of your notice; but this poor child, as yet so innocent, have pity on him!"

The gates of heaven opened at the widow's prayer, and from his throne in glory the saint completed those words of the apostle, which years before he had begun to utter: "In the name of Jesus rise up and walk." The boy instantly revived; and with life to her child, joy once again returned to the mother's heart.

In the following year, the subject of the miracle, to manifest his gratitude for the mercy he had received, collected together five hundred children, and went with them to the monastery of Dommartin to behold and venerate the relics of the holy martyr.

THE VILLAGE OF BLANKENBERG.

ADOLPHE DE LA MARCK, Prince-bishop of Liège, had reigned nearly twenty years over his factious and unruly subjects, when he determined on selling the town of Mechlin, the lordship of which belonged to the bishopric of Liège, although it was really under the dominion of powerful patrons, the family of Berthold, who on more than one occasion had successfully resisted the dukes and counts their neighbours. Louis de Nevers, Count of Flanders, had already, with the consent of Adolphe de la Marck, purchased all the rights and titles of the patrons of Mechlin from the heir of the last of the Bertholds; and, on the 3d of December 1335, the town became his property and domain, with the single reservation that it should remain a fief of the church of Liège, and continue to pay it feudal homage.

When the treaty was concluded, it created great dissatisfaction in the breasts of the townspeople; they had a violent antipathy against Louis de Nevers, which broke out in expressions of open disaffection. They sent a deputation to the people of Liège, who, in their turn, held tumultuous assemblages, in which resolutions were passed strongly condemnatory of the conduct of the prince. The feelings of the multitude once excited, discontent soon showed itself in angry murmurs, to be speedily followed by actual insurrection. John III., duke of Brabant, who, as a near neighbour of Mechlin, was at hand to seize any opportunity which might

favour his own designs upon the town, encouraged the revolt: there was fighting in the streets of Mechlin, and still more serious conflicts in the streets of Liège, and blood flowed freely on both sides.

Adolphe de la Marck had found that the government and patronage of the town were productive of more trouble than profit; he felt, also, that as the agreement was signed, he could not in honour recede from it, but, on the contrary, was bound to use every means to carry it into effect. He accordingly desired his officers to speak to the people; but their representations had not the slightest effect. In the heat of the tumult the venerable Count de Hermal, a nobleman of high integrity, who supported the cause of the prelate, was grossly insulted by the Count de Looz, who had put himself at the head of the insurgents. Hermal was endeavouring, by conciliatory language, to pacify the malcontents, and had mounted the flight of steps which served the agitators of Liège as a rostrum, when the Count de Looz violently seized him and dragged him down, accompanying the outrage with an opprobrious epithet, which the old man's spirit could not brook. Both, at the same instant, drew their daggers in the midst of the crowd, and closed in mortal combat; and although youth and strength gave Looz the advantage, yet Hermal triumphed, and in a few seconds his antagonist lay stretched dead at his feet. Then one wild yell of fury burst from the multitude, they raised aloft the dead body of their leader, crying loudly for vengeance, while the bishop's guards, hastily surrounding Hermal, profited by the confusion to bear him away to a place of safety. And well it was that they were so rapid in their movements; for the populace, after their first outbreak of passionate indignation, looked round for him whom they styled the assassin, although in fact his adversary, and not himself, was the aggressor; but the object of their resentment had disappeared, as if by magic. Their rage now turned to frenzy, and seizing the body of the Count, they paraded it through the

streets, and rushed tumultuously to the palace of the prince-bishop, where the burgomasters of Liège assured their lord that the people were ready to rise in arms, unless the murder of their champion were speedily avenged.

Weary of strife and contention, Adolphe de la Marck readily promised that inquiry should be made into the crime, and full justice be done; and for the moment peace was restored. But when, after a few days, the murderer was not forthcoming, the agitation, which, moreover, was fomented by the burghers of Mechlin and the agents of the Duke of Brabant, commenced anew and lasted into the following year, when a circumstance occurred which quieted men's minds, at least as far as concerned the death of the Count de Looz. A traveller arrived at Liège who had become acquainted with the retreat of the Sire de Hermal.

The old count, rescued, as we have seen, by the guards of the prince-bishop, had found means to escape from the city in the shades of the evening without being recognised. He hurried on, recommending himself to God, and thankful for every step that placed a greater distance between himself and the city of Liège; for he well knew the perils that menaced him for having provoked the wrath of its headstrong populace. For a whole week he pursued his way, directing his course towards the sea-coast, where he hoped to meet with a vessel that would convey him to England. He thus accomplished nearly fifty leagues: not daring to enter Bruges, a town which had much commercial intercourse with Liège, he retired to a little hamlet three leagues distant from that fair city, and four from the town of Ostend. This hamlet had been, in ancient times, a Roman station, and was now known by the name of Schaerfout. Two classes of people, widely separated from each other, formed its only inhabitants: rich burghers of Bruges, whose gay country-houses stood upon the sea-shore,—and poor fishermen, lodged in humble cabins, who every day braved the stormy

northern sea, to supply the luxury of the opulent city. The wide-spread commerce of the Flemings had poured into the country not plenty only, but superfluity; the silks, the velvets, and the gold, which were so profusely lavished on their attire, made their towns appear like so many royal courts. A queen, who visited Ghent at this time, when she beheld the superb dresses of the ladies, exclaimed: "I thought I was the only princess here, but I find I am but one among a thousand." The vices which followed in the train of this prodigality of wealth kept pace with the luxury from which they sprung. Great license prevailed, and license produced a frightful brood of crime: not a week passed without some deed of blood; not a street, not a village, but had its den of infamy.

The little hamlet of Schaerfout was a very Nineveh for wickedness: the country-houses of the rich citizens were so many temples of riot and debauchery. The fishermen, who felt that their livelihood depended on the good-will of the dissolute young men of the neighbourhood, scrupled not to pander to the vicious pleasures of their employers. One individual alone in the whole place, a poor man named Elias Blankenberg, had the courage to profess himself a Christian, and fulfilled the duties of his state with exemplary regularity. He maintained himself and his wife, as pious as himself, on the profits of his fishing, and every Sunday that came saw them praying fervently, but with aching hearts, in the almost deserted church of Schaerfout: their only child, Gertrude, once their hope and their pride, had abandoned herself to a career of guilt and shame. One friend they had, a man of the world, yet of blameless life, who occasionally condoled with them, as they returned together from church; this was the Sire de Tronchiennes, who came every month to the village to visit an old relative.

It was to the house of the good Blankenberg that the Count de Hermal came and begged for shelter, until he could make his escape to England. It was late

in the evening when he reached the cabin on the coast, and found the fisherman and his wife lamenting together over the loss of their beloved child; but they hastily dried their tears, and welcomed the stranger who sought their hospitality with so much genuine cordiality, that the old man's heart was cheered, and he blessed the Providence which had guided him to such a place of refuge; the more so when he found that he was at Schaerfout, a village of such scandalous notoriety. But it was the middle of winter, and the weather so stormy that no vessel made its appearance; and the count was forced to wait on with patience. However, he was a Christian in deed, as well as in name, and he failed not every Sunday to accompany the fisherman and his wife to the parish-church, where his piety and recollection were noticed by all. He thought himself safe from recognition; but he was unfortunately observed by a tradesman of Aix-la-Chapelle, who, passing through Liège shortly after, mentioned, probably without any ill intention, that he had seen the count.

However this may be, so it was that, one Sunday in the March of 1334, while the aged pastor of Schaerfout was declaiming from the pulpit against the fearful vices of the time, and bewailing above all the disorders of his own guilty village—at the very moment that, with the air of an inspired prophet, he was declaring that the mercy of the Most High was at length exhausted, and that the terrors of His judgments were about to descend upon the earth, eight deputies from Liège entered the church, and Hermal no sooner left the building than he was arrested. The quiet churchyard was soon a scene of the utmost confusion; crowds, who on ordinary occasions never entered the sacred precincts, were attracted by the tumult; the heads of the village assembled, before whom the deputies denounced the stranger as the murderer of the Count de Looz, and Hermal was called upon for his defence. The old man's heart failed him; for he knew that the inhabitants of the place were

friends of the people of Liège; nevertheless, strong in a consciousness of his innocence, he betrayed no sign of alarm, but calmly detailed all the circumstances of the untoward event. The deputies, in their turn, inflamed with fury against him, contradicted his assertions, and gave another and a darker version of the story; and the inhabitants determined on delivering him up. The doors of the church were immediately closed, to prevent his taking sanctuary.

However, Hermal had his friends, and among them was the Sire de Tronchiennes, who happened to be on the spot; he seems to have been a man of about forty years of age, and a person of considerable influence. He warmly embraced the cause of the Count, and while deliberations were going on as to the measures to be taken for giving him up to his enemies, saving the privileges of the town, he led him back to Blankenberg's dwelling, and urged him to put to sea at once, without a moment's delay, were it only in the good man's fishing-boat. Preparations were being made, and the boat about to be launched, when the crowd besieged the hut, and called upon Elias to deliver up his guest; but the fisherman planted himself before his door and boldly refused to comply with their demand.

Meanwhile it was no longer possible to venture out to sea; for, as if the old priest's denunciations were to receive an instant fulfilment, he had scarcely done speaking when a sudden and violent tempest arose. The waves, dashing furiously over the beach, rushed like a torrent upon the crowds, who were now endeavouring to force an entrance into the fisherman's hut. Panic-stricken, they betook themselves to flight; and the good man smiled as he beheld his humble dwelling threatened by the mighty waters and in a moment appearing like an islet in the midst of the deep. The Count de Hermal reconnoitred his enemies through a loophole in the wall, and perceived that the whole population had sided with the men from Liège, and were only waiting for the subsiding of the waters to seize

upon his person. But, so far from retiring, the waves continued to rise higher and higher, with a roar like that of thunder; while the terrible north wind, increasing every moment in fury, shook the frail tenements to their foundations, and uprooted the strongest trees. Blankenberg alone felt no fear: he remained calmly in his cabin, with his wife, his guest, and the Sire de Tronchiennes; his daughter too was at his side: she had fled back to her forsaken home, half-dead with fright, yet, alas! impenitent as ever.

So rapidly did the waves advance, that every fresh breaker which burst upon the shore drove Hermal's enemies further and further inland. Soon even they were seized with terror, as, casting their eyes around them, they perceived that the flood had closed them in on every side; the very land seemed slipping down into the waves, and the whole village on the point of being engulfed in the raging element. The wind blew furiously, sweeping every thing before it, and tearing off the roofs of the cottages and houses; the ground heaved under their feet, and it seemed as if the last terrible day were come. The population rushed towards the church, which stood above the level of the rest of the village; the doors were again thrown open, and, fear teaching men the need of prayer, the house of God was filled with sinners, prostrate on their knees and crying to heaven for mercy. But the angry floods rose to the very church-doors, and poured into the building—it seemed as if the mound on which it stood had suddenly sunk down, to second the vengeful fury of the ocean; the crowds, struggling in vain to escape the pursuing waters, pressed madly to the altar, and, in the agony of their despair, called for their priest; but now that they sought him, they found him not.

Night had set in, while the tempest was still raging with unabated fury. Blankenberg was engaged in fervent prayer within his hut, though at every blast of the wind it tottered to its base. At length the little boat, driven by the waves up to the very threshold,

seemed to offer itself as a frail but temporary refuge; and, without a moment's delay, he embarked upon it, with his wife, his daughter, his guest, and the Sire de Tronchiennes. The last had scarcely set his foot on board, when the cabin disappeared beneath the waves. of the village itself not a vestige was to be seen.

During all that fearful night the boat was tossing amid the waste of waters; but as the day broke, the storm abated; the unhappy parents looked in vain for their daughter, so lately restored to them; Gertrude was missing—the furious blast had swept her from the boat, and the waves in an instant had closed over her head. The whole village had been swallowed up, not a habitation remained; the church itself was no longer visible: a hillock of barren sand covered what but yesterday was a thriving town, given up to sinful pleasures and ungodliness. The boat stopped, as though of its own accord, close to the belfry-tower; it alone had survived the universal devastation, and at the same instant the old priest issued from the ruin. Vainly endeavouring to reach his flock, he had been permitted only to save his life.

The fisherman rebuilt his cabin; a new village slowly rose on the site of that which lay buried beneath: it took the name of the good man who alone, amidst the general depravity, had remained faithful to his God, and is now the little village of Blankenberg.

ST. EDWARD'S DEATH.

CHAPTER I.

THE GIFT AT THE ALTAR.

WE have already presented our readers with the traditionary story of the first consecration of Westminster Abbey, a building whose history is, perhaps, as rich in saintly and supernatural interest as any that could be named. The desolation of the church and monastery in the times of the Danish irruptions, and its subsequent restoration under Edward the Confessor, have been already briefly noticed; and it is of this, its second dedication, that we are now about to speak. The erection of the restored abbey had been originally undertaken by St. Edward, in commutation of the vow by which, when in exile, he had bound himself to make a pilgrimage to Rome, should he ever be put in possession of the crown of his ancestors; it was commenced as early as 1049, and sixteen years elapsed before the building was finally completed.

During that time the progress of the work was often interrupted; but in the autumn of the year 1065 the urgency of the king had caused a rapid advance to be made, and every thing seemed to promise that the new church of St. Peter might be opened and dedicated at no distant day. Edward's eagerness to watch and superintend the completion of the building, and the love

which he had insensibly acquired for the spot, made holy long since by the mystic presence of the great Apostle, and believed to be still dear and favoured in his eyes, had induced him to take up his own residence in the neighbourhood; so that now, under the very shadow of the stately minster, there rose at a short distance the walls of the royal palace; the two buildings being scarcely a bow-shot from one another. The presence of the court had therefore rendered Westminster a busy place; and on the autumn morning on which our narrative opens, the scene before the palace-gates, if differing widely from that which is now to be witnessed on the same spot, was scarcely less gay and bustling. There was the varied costume of the age, the long-haired Saxons, mingling with the Norman nobles, who crowded the court of Edward, and were already viewed with a certain jealousy and suspicion by the English. For it was said the Normans enjoyed more of the king's favour than his countrymen; that he had himself adopted their dress and their national habits; and that even in the erection of the edifice, which many were now examining with a curious eye, Norman architects and Norman rules of art had been preferred; so that the minster was, as we are told, altogether of a new kind of architecture, evincing an evident departure from the rude and barbarous style which had hitherto prevailed.

"It is a fair sight," said one of a little group of idlers, who sauntered about the open space, awaiting, as it would seem, the opening of the palace-gates; "but methinks that Englishmen could build churches as fair, without the aid of Normans as their masters. I marvel when we shall be rid of them; they crowd about the gates yonder, as though they alone were free to draw near to the person of the king; it looks not well to see the Saxons jostled to the outer rank each time he comes abroad."

"Hugolin, the chamberlain, is of Norman blood," replied the companion whom he addressed; "it is he who

gives his countrymen the places on the palace-steps, that they may gain the king's ear when he appears, and win what they will out of his royal heart."

"By my faith, Leofstan," said the first speaker, "were all England of my mind, the palace-steps should soon be cleared of foreigners, and the palace too; and we should hear no more of Norman chamberlains to an English king. England for the English, say I; there are learned heads and stout arms enough in our own island, as I take it, without sending over the sea for our courtiers or our priests."

"Egelnoth," said a low sweet voice behind him, "thou hast uttered a foolish word, and I pray God the day may never come when England shall call it wisdom."

The Saxon turned as he was addressed, and encountered the mild eye of one who wore the habit of a monk, and who, indeed, formed one of the new community of Westminster; his presence at once seemed to impose something of restraint on the language and murmurs of his companions.

"Good father," said Egelnoth, with the air of one a little abashed by the presence of a superior, "I knew not you were within earshot; but I would fain know why you call my prating folly; for of a truth, if the rights of England should be dear to any, they should be so to Aldred the Saxon."

"And they are dear," answered Aldred, "and to none dearer. But I deemed that thy words betokened something of a spirit which England may one day learn to rue. 'England for the English,' saidst thou? Why, hadst thou lived in the days of Ethelbert, I trow thou wouldst have thrust back the very Cross that Augustine bore, because it was brought to thee by a foreign monk. Where, then, would be the glory of our Saxon fathers, who knew of no such limits to Christian love as may be found in the boundaries of lands, or the difference of tongues, but freely gave the blood of their saints and martyrs to evangelise the world? Had there

been the cry of England for the English in the days of Boniface, methinks Germany would have scarce had her apostle from our shores."

"Dost thou, then, condemn the love of country, good father?" said Leofstan, who till now had listened in silence; "and wouldst thou have us tamely endure the taunts of these shaven Normans, who come hither to teach us manners unasked, and to mock at what they term our clownish ways?"

"I fear me," answered the monk, "there is something in Saxon manners which Norman novelties might mend; and some say the Normans are welcome guests with our noble king, the rather that they have not yet unlearnt the temperance which raises man above the brutes. Thou knowest best, my son, at which banquet-boards the angels are likeliest to be guests."

"Why, thy heart is grown Norman, father," interrupted Leofstan reproachfully; "it was not thus thou wast used to speak in the cloisters of Winton when, as a boy, I learnt to love the Saxon saints and heroes from hearing their stories from thy lips."

"Leofstan," replied the monk, "there was, as I think, in the days you speak of, less talk of Norman and of Saxon, and of foreign blood and English rights. England hath been, God knows, an isle of saints, and fitly may her children love their name; but yet a Christian man does well to stretch his heart a little wider than her shores, and to think that all lands where the Cross shines beneath the rule of Peter are knit in a bond of brotherhood. The Church is a mighty mother, and her tongue is one; and, in truth, when the gates of the Eternal Palace open to us, there will be small question of blood or country among those that crowd its steps."

"Well, well, Master Aldred," said Egelnoth, the first speaker, "you talk like a monk, and we as men; it may be, the world is all one land to those who have foresworn all lands alike; but to me, who have not yet forgotten my Saxon blood, it is a burning shame to see a crowd of foreign foes close about the king, thrusting

from him his own brethren; and, for aught I know, shutting his heart against them."

As he spoke, Egelnoth's eyes again turned towards the palace-gates, and Aldred followed the direction of his glance. A smile passed over the features of the monk, as, after a moment's inspection of the distant group, he said, in a livelier tone, "Mine eyes are surely sharper than thine own, good Egelnoth; it seems to me that neither Saxon nor Norman will this time claim the first word with holy Edward, but one thou wilt scarcely find it in thine heart to envy. Let us draw a little nearer; and if the Normans succeed in pressing their suits the first to-day, I give thee leave to grumble as thou wilt, and to teach them a lesson of Saxon manners, if thou hast a mind."

So saying, he approached the palace, followed by his two companions; and the crowd, which had now considerably increased in numbers, giving way as he advanced, the three soon found themselves close within the circle which had gathered about the gates. Aldred's person, indeed, was known to all; and at his appearance, the whisper which rang among the strangers of "the king's confessor," explained the secret of the respect so universally displayed.

It was the hour when the king was usually accustomed to ride abroad; and whilst an idle curiosity had brought many to the spot, others had come, as was the habit in those days, to present some suit, or ask a favour, from the royal lips; or, it may be, only to pay their court, and remind King Edward, by their presence, of their claims to notice. As Aldred and the two Saxons arrived in the midst of the group which stood closest to the steps leading to the palace, it seemed as if those who had formed the subject of their conversation a few minutes before were occupied with some matter of entertainment, on which they were by turns exercising their wit and ridicule.

"It is a barbarous island, my Roland," said one, who was evidently the exquisite of the party; "but of

the many strange sights my eyes have rested on, this passeth all; thinkest thou the thing is human?"

"It is a question more learned heads than mine must answer," replied Roland; "and happily," he added, as he perceived the approach of Aldred, "here is one at hand who will solve the riddle; see here, good father, we would crave of your reverence to tell us if it is the custom of your English monarchs to adorn their palace courts with grotesque images, after the manner of the Greeks?"—and as he spoke he drew back a little, and pointed towards a strange and hideous object which occupied the lowest step.

It was that of a human being, so deformed and misshapen by disease, that the Norman might well have been excused for misdoubting of its reality. The muscles of his legs were contracted, so that the soles of his feet adhered to his thighs; and the only manner in which the unhappy creature could move, was by means of a kind of wooden roller, which he grappled with his hands; thus dragging himself with pain and difficulty along the ground.

"It is the Irish cripple," said the monk, in a tone of compassion: "thou hast not yet made pilgrimage to the shrine of Peter, noble count, or thine eye would have learnt a familiarity with such sufferers as these, who crowd about the holy places for relief, and, I doubt not, do much to move the hearts of the faithful with the touch of charity. But why art thou here, Murodac?" he continued; "knowest thou not that the king's nobleness is shortly expected? and thou art indeed but a strange equerry to hold his stirrup."

"Even therefore am I come," answered the cripple, without attempting to move from the position he had taken; "I have a message for the king, and must deliver it to him face to face, nor know I where the beggar Murodac can better hope to meet him than on his own door-step: wherefore, by your leave, good father, I will abide where I am, and the noble gentlemen can make merry with me as they please."

At that moment the wide door of the entrance-hall was thrown open, and Hugolin, the royal chamberlain, appeared on the steps, to prepare the way for his master's approach. As he did so, the form of the Irish cripple at once arrested his eye. "What foolery is this, Murodac?" he asked, in an angry tone. "It is many a day since thou wert seen at the gate; thou shalt be cared for, man, another time; but now hobble off at thy fastest pace, for the royal retinue is at hand."

"Hugolin, Hugolin," cried the miserable being, in his shrill and unnatural voice, as some of the servants were about to enforce the chamberlain's command with some degree of violence, "hast thou no pity on me? I have crawled many a weary mile to reach this step, and now they are thrusting me away before thine eyes, and the sight moves thee not to compassion."

"Why, what wouldst thou have of me?" asked Hugolin, to whom the cripple was indeed an old friend; "I will listen to thee another day, but now ——"

"But *now* I say," interrupted the other; "*now* is the hour for which I came. I have a message for the king, and have borne it from Rome, being charged to deliver it to him face to face, at his palace-door; and now that I have reached my journey's end, thou wilt surely for once befriend me, and suffer me to do my errand."

There was something so earnest and positive in the beggar's tone, that Hugolin hesitated: beggars were no strange sights in those times at the doors of monarchs, and Edward was known to have a singular tenderness and love towards those poor outcasts, from whom the refinement of modern days is wont to shrink; moreover, it did not seem quite impossible that it was even as he had said, and that some secret of importance might have been committed to this strange ambassador, whose very rags and misery would secure him from suspicion on the way.

As he paused in doubt what course to follow, for tune decided the question in favour of the cripple. A

stir was heard in the hall within, and, in another moment, Edward himself was seen descending the steps which had been the scene of the singular dispute. Of the middle height and of admirable figure and proportion, the form of the royal Confessor was full of a kingly dignity that was worthy of his rank and station. But when you glanced at his face, you were struck at once with the contrast between that manly bearing and the expression of childlike and extreme simplicity that shone upon his countenance. The extraordinary fairness of his complexion communicated an almost infantine character to features whose delicate and gentle beauty had nothing to betoken the warrior or the chief of a great and semi-barbarous nation. Standing in the midst of his courtiers, with his fair mild face and tranquil eyes, brightened rather than shadowed with hair and eyebrows, "as dazzlingly white," says William of Malmesbury, "as the snow-fair feathers of the swan," he floated before the gaze like an angelic vision; and the feeling rose upon the heart that the possessor of that countenance, which already bore the stamp of beatitude on its singular loveliness, must be all unsuited to the harsh contests of the world around him, and ripe for the glory of heaven. And, indeed, it was whispered that some notification of his coming release had been received by the royal saint not long before, and that his increased earnestness in pressing the completion of St. Peter's church and monastery arose from an anxiety to see the solemn fulfilment of his vow before he died. However that might be, it could not be doubted that for many months there had been a visible change in his conduct and in his appearance. His prayers and alms, at all times so profuse, had been redoubled; whilst something of unearthly sweetness had mingled with the traces of bodily suffering which at times might be observed upon his face.

Such was the exterior of the Confessor, as he stood in the midst of his retinue, and paused to ascertain the meaning of the momentary confusion.

"So please you, my liege," began Hugolin, in some vexation at the arrival of his master in the midst of the disorder, "it is the Irish beggar, Murodac, who would fain thrust himself into your sacred presence, under pretext of some message, and will not be kept back until he hath delivered his suit."

"And wherefore should he, or any of my subjects, be kept from me?" said Edward, with a shade of severity in his tone. "Come hither, Murodac, if thou art able, and tell me what thou seekest: when last I saw thee at the gate, they told me thou wert bound for Rome: the touch of the holy chair hath not, as it seems, restored thy limbs."

"Most gracious lord," answered the beggar, who had meanwhile succeeded in dragging himself to the feet of the king, "six times have I, even as thou seest me, visited the seat of the apostles, but have not been worthy to have the soundness of my body restored to me: nevertheless, the prince of the apostles hath not absolutely refused my prayer, he hath but deferred its accomplishment, because he desires that thou, O king, shouldst be his associate in the miracle. Wherefore, with his own lips, he hath commanded me to seek thy presence, in order that thou, bearing me on thy sacred shoulders, mayest carry me from the palace to the church yonder, which thing if thou wilt do, health and strength shall be given to these crippled limbs."

An indignant exclamation burst from the bystanders at the insolent proposal of the beggar, and some advanced to lay hands on him and eject him from the court; but, with a motion of his hand, Edward kept them back. "I give thanks to God," he said, "that He hath not denied me the choicest of His gifts. For thy cure, good Murodac, thou must look to God; nevertheless, the bidding of the apostle shall be surely done."

As he spoke he descended the steps, and, approaching the cripple, he stooped meekly down and raised him on his shoulders. "Then," says his biographer Ailred,

"there might be seen hanging around the person of this illustrious king a wretched sordid beggar, whose squalid arms and loathsome hands embraced his neck, and were clasped together on that truly royal breast! Some of those who were present laughed outright at what they saw; others gibed and mocked, and declared that the king had been cajoled by a beggar-man; whilst others esteemed it but the utter simplicity and extreme folly of virtue." Little regarding their murmurs, however, the king walked on, bending under his burden, in the direction of the abbey-church. He himself was absorbed in prayer; but he had not advanced many steps when Murodac felt a sudden and wonderful change within him. The contracted muscles simultaneously relaxed, the bones knitted together, the diseased and mortified flesh was warmed with health, the feet, that had till then adhered to the thighs, lost their hold, the joints moved freely, and, as he stretched his legs in their recovered freedom, the bystanders perceived that the royal robes were stained with the blood which flowed from his open wounds. At this sight a fresh cry rose from the crowd of spectators; but the king did not heed it, and perhaps it did not even reach his ears.

"Surely enough hath been done," exclaimed Count Roland, whilst a strong expression of disgust passed across his features; "let the king free himself from the miserable creature, now that the will of St. Peter hath been accomplished; his royal robes are scarce the linen to bind a leper's wounds!"

"I doubt not," answered Aldred, to whom the indignant noble had turned whilst he spoke, as if to secure his interference with the king, "I doubt not our noble master will count his dress more richly adorned with yonder leper's blood than if it sparkled with a thousand gems. See, they are even now at the abbey-doors; let us follow, gentlemen, if, indeed, we be not unworthy to behold the glory of God."

Although the church of St. Peter's was not yet entirely completed in every part, yet it had been opened

for some time, and the high altar within the choir of the monks had been in daily use during more than a year previously for the celebration of the Divine mysteries. Thither Edward now bent his steps, nor did he pause or relinquish his precious burden till he reached the altar-steps; but, bearing the beggar as though he was a holy holocaust, he laid him down before the altar, and there resigned him to the care of God and of St. Peter. Then, kneeling reverently by his side, with his hands clasped before his breast, he lifted his streaming eyes to the figure of the crucifix, and said: "Many gifts and offerings hast Thou suffered me, O Lord, to lay before Thy feet, but none so dear and precious as that which I offer Thee to-day. Go, Murodac," he added, turning to the cripple, "and if God hath heard thy prayer, through the merits of His apostle, fail not to use the strength he hath restored to thee in making a pilgrimage of thanksgiving to his shrine."

At the words of the holy Confessor, Murodac arose and stood before the multitude erect and without a vestige of deformity or disease upon him; and, as the astonished spectators broke out into praises of God and St. Peter, and the crowd without mingled with their acclamations the name of their saintly monarch, Edward hastily retired, that he might escape from the observation of the people and from the admiration that was painful to his humility.

The scene of this miracle, performed in the eyes of hundreds and attested by many witnesses, is still among us; but it is marked by no monument or wayside cross; it lies in the busy thoroughfare half-way between the Abbey Church of Westminster and the Houses of Parliament; and amid the countless crowds who daily pass, not one, perhaps, has dreamed that, in the eyes of God and of His angels, that path has once been made holy and beautiful by the humility of a royal saint.

CHAPTER II.

THE PROPHECY.

WEEKS had passed since the incident we have described above, and the festival of Christmas was being kept in the court of Westminster with unusual splendour. The building which had been the object of so much solicitude was at length completed, and its solemn dedication was fixed for the feast of the Holy Innocents. To do honour to the sacred festival, and, at the same time, to celebrate the consecration of the church with extraordinary magnificence, the entire nobility of England had been summoned to the court, and Westminster had never displayed a more brilliant or more august assemblage.

It was the 27th of December, the preparations for the ceremony were rapidly advancing, and all hearts were filled with the expectation of to-morrow's gorgeous spectacle. Apart from the gay and noble throng, Edward sat in a distant chamber of his palace, and the monk Aldred was his only companion. The room exhibited a strange confusion, and the royal inmate bore the signs of weariness and care. On the table and covering the floor beside him were papers and parchments without number: deeds of gifts and endowments rent-rolls of the crown lands about to be made over to the new abbey; whilst standing apart, arranged by his own hands, were the vessels and sacred ornaments which were to be his dedication-offering at the altar.

"It is well nigh over now, Aldred," said the king, as he sank back in his chair, with an unusual languor in his look and tone: "I will give the papers to thy keeping, and thou wilt see that the sacred vessels are carried to the church."

"The festivities have fatigued your grace," observed the monk, as he took the papers from King Edward's

band. "You will surely need a rest after this ceremony is brought to an end."

"And I shall have it, father," answered the king. "I am tired, as you say; for, of a truth, for three successive days to bear the weight of crown and *sceptre* and all this pomp of royalty, with the voice whispering in my heart that it is the closing scene, and the gates of eternity opening on my soul, has been a toilsome labour, and I shall be glad of rest;—and the rest," he added, "will be, I humbly trust, with God."

"My liege," said Aldred, "I had trusted that the fever which threatened you on Christmas night had passed away; I have watched you with anxious eyes during the banquet-scenes of these three days, nor have I been able to trace a return of the attack; and can it be possible that your grace is suffering still?"

"Only in the body, Aldred," replied the king; "think not, because I speak thus wearily, that the languor is in my heart, for, I thank God, never hath my soul been filled with a more abundant joy than during the sacred solemnities with which we have celebrated the sweet mysteries of Bethlehem. But it is hard to keep down nature; and though I would not sadden my people by yielding to the sickness whilst they were keeping holyday, it hath been preying on my heart. Even therefore was it that I hastened the dedication; for know, Aldred, that, if God grant me mercy, the Epiphany which these eyes are to behold will be in heaven, and not on earth."

"My lord," said Aldred, with something of remonstrance in his tone, "bethink you that God's times are in His own hand; it is well for us to be ready when He calls, yet scarcely wise to reckon so surely on the day of our visitation."

"Father," replied Edward, whilst his voice sank almost to a whisper, and a blush passed over his pale cheek, as though he hesitated to speak of some cherished secret, "canst thou recal the day when the two palmers from Palestine craved admittance to my pre-

sence on secret business? It is not yet a year ago, for Paschal tide had scarce begun."

"I mind it well," replied the monk: "men deemed their message was from the Grecian court, whose practice it often is to trust their weightiest embassies to the meanest hands."

"Their business," continued Edward, in the same low voice, "was to deliver me this ring, mine own signet, which I gave in alms, having, at the time, an empty purse, to a pilgrim who asked it of me for the love of St. John. Thou knowest it is a name which is wont to unlock my heart, and, though a piece of silver might have seemed a fitter offering, I dared not refuse the dear disciple of our Lord. I marvelled greatly when I saw the ring in the hands of those two palmers; yet know, father, that it was from him, the Evangelist of Christ, and mine own dear patron, that they received it, with the message that within a year he would visit me again, and call me to the following of the Spotless Lamb."

Aldred did not answer, for the tears were flowing from his eyes, and Edward continued: "Thou seest, therefore, that I reckon not the times of God from human fancies, but from His own divine and blessed warning. To me it will be a glad release; for my hand hath ever been too weak for the task of ruling, and I have long prayed that He would spare mine eyes from beholding the troubles that are to come. But the time is very short, and there is much to do; wherefore, now that thou knowest all. I would have thee help me in setting my house in order, that the last hours of my life may be all for God."

Before the day closed, every thing had been arranged concerning which the king desired to give his parting directions, and an evident weight had been taken from his mind. Aldred, while he could not consent to trust implicitly to the singular statement he had heard, still felt a presentiment of sorrow that he would scarcely acknowledge to himself;

but not a whisper of apprehension was heard among the courtiers, and the day of the Holy Innocents dawned as a high and joyous festival for the whole of England. The nobles and bishops of the entire kingdom were assembled within the abbey walls, and the grand and solemn office of the Church was celebrated with unexampled splendour. Yet it was remarked as unusual, that once or twice during the course of the Mass King Edward remained seated, instead of kneeling, as was his wont during the longest ceremonial, and that the looks of the Queen Edgitha were often directed towards him with something of anxiety. All at length was completed; the religious solemnity was at an end, and the officiating priests had retired from the altar; the clarions and trumpets of the soldiery outside burst out into a triumphant strain, and the courtly retinue waited but the rising of the king to form into the order of procession, in order to return to the palace. But, as if he had striven with and overmastered his disease only to see the fulfilment of that hour, Edward, as he made the effort to rise, sank fainting upon his seat; his head fell back, and, no longer able to struggle with the mortal agony so long repressed, he lay as one dying before the eyes of the assembled multitude. The accents of festivity and triumph were exchanged for a wail of sorrow; for not only did each man feel that the expiring form before them was that rather of a sainted father than of a sovereign, but too many foresaw, in his death, the coming woes which were to lay the English honour prostrate in the dust. He was immediately conveyed to the palace and laid upon his bed: every one thought that he would die in the arms of those who bore him, so utterly prostrated did he seem; nevertheless, though he lay for two days without speech or motion, he still breathed, and, at the end of that time, to the surprise of those who watched around him, awoke as if from sleep.

He raised himself in bed, and spoke; but the words were to God:

"O Almighty Lord," he said, "in whose hand are all things, who visitest the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, and who knowest all events before they come to pass, if the things now revealed to me be sent to me from Thee, give me voice and strength to declare them to my people, that with contrite hearts they may appease Thy wrath, and so the evils which Thou threatenest may be averted."

"He hath surely seen some heavenly vision, whilst we deemed him lifeless," whispered the monk Aldred to Edgitha, who knelt at the foot of the bed; and, as he spoke, a marvellous vigour seemed to re-animate the drooping form of the dying saint. The beautiful colour came back that was wont to be seen upon his cheek; his voice, of late so low and languid, became clear and powerful in its utterance; and, as though they gazed upon an evident miracle, all present sank upon their knees to catch the accents from his lips. He spoke again, and there was an unearthly sweetness in his tones.

"When," he said, "I was a young man, and lived in Normandy as an exile, that which was ever most grateful to me was the society of good men; and whatever persons appeared to me to be the purest, the best, and the most pious, within the sacred precincts of monastic life, were ever those who stood on terms of most familiar intercourse with me. Among these were two men who, by the holiness of their words, the purity of their lives, and the gentleness of their manners, won my special admiration and affection. Them I constantly visited, for their eloquent discourse was sweeter to my mind than honey to the tongue.

"Now these two men, long since removed from earth to heaven, but even now stood by me as I lay buried in slumber; and, in obedience to the command of God, they have declared to me what should befall my people after my death. They said that the measure of English wickedness is full, and that the iniquity of England is consummated; that it has provoked the wrath of God

and calls to heaven for vengeance, because her priests have defiled the holy covenant, and with polluted hearts have laid their hands on holy things; because they have acted as hirelings and not as shepherds, and have forsaken their flocks, and cared for the milk and the wool and not for the sheep themselves; therefore death shall feed alike upon shepherds and upon sheep, when both are thrust down into hell.

"Then they said that the nobles of the land were unbelievers, robbers of their country, men in whom God's majesty inspires no fear, and the law no respect, to whom truth and justice are a burden, and cruelty is become a pastime, so that our rulers have ceased to care for equity, and our subjects make jest of loyalty and obedience. And because these things are so, God even now brandishes His sword and bends His bow against them, and a heavy doom is hanging over their heads. His wrath will be manifested, and evil spirits will be sent against them, to whose power they will be delivered over for a year and a day, to be punished with fire and the sword.

"And when I heard these things, I was filled with grief for the calamities of my people; and I cried and said, 'O ye who are cognisant of the secrets of heaven, tell me, if the English people be converted and do penance, will not God forgive them? For penance suspended the sentence which had gone forth against the Ninevites, and the vengeance which had been provoked by the impious Achab. Therefore I will persuade my people to repent of their past sins, and to live more circumspectly for the future; and it may be God will take pity on them, and so this great evil may not come to pass, and He who is prepared to punish them as His foes may receive them into His grace as repentant sinners.' 'No,' they replied; 'this they may not change, for the heart of thy people is hardened and their eyes are heavy, and they will not regard thy warning, nor be moved either by threats or by kindness.'

"Then," pursued the king, "my sorrow greatly in-

creased when I heard these words, and I said, 'Will God, then, be angry for ever? Is there no time fixed when He shall be appeased? And when shall be the day when joy shall succeed to adversity, and there shall be an end to the sorrow of England? What remedy is to be looked for in the midst of so many afflictions, so that, whilst grief and woe may endure for a while, we may look that the mercy of heaven may be hereafter exhibited?'

"And, as I put these questions, the messengers of God made answer to me in a parable; and they said:

"'When a green tree, cut down from its trunk and separated at a distance of *three acres* from its parent root, shall, *with no man's hand aiding it and no necessity forcing it*, return to its parent stem, and, engrafted upon its ancient stock, shall have again its sap restored to it, and flower again, and produce fruits, then may be hoped for some consolation for tribulation, and a remedy for the adversity that we have predicted.'

"And, having spoken these words, they returned to heaven, and I was restored to consciousness, as you beheld."

The attendant group had listened with breathless attention as Edward had delivered his prophetic words, and as they ceased, he sank back upon his pillow; once more the light waned from his gentle eyes, and the colour which had flushed his cheek a moment before with the bloom of health and vigour once more vanished, and left it of a deathly pallor. They saw that the last hour was indeed at hand, and, as the truth forced its way to their unwilling hearts, they broke into passionate weeping.

But Edward roused his failing strength to comfort them in their sorrow. "If you loved me," he said, in the words of his Master, "you would rejoice, because I go to the Father; not through my merits, but through the compassionate grace of my Lord and Saviour. Nevertheless, follow me, who have been your friend, with your loving prayers, and resist those who would hinder

my ascent to the celestial country, with your psalms and almsdeeds; for though my faith in the Crucified cannot be overcome by my enemies, yet no man can leave this world so perfect that those foul fiends will not attempt to impede or terrify him."

Then he bade farewell to each one separately, and spoke aloud to all of the nobleness and virtue of his queen. He gave orders for the kind treatment of all his servants, and for the burial of his body, which he entreated might be laid in the abbey-church, and that all men would pray charitably for his soul. Then, having made his last dispositions of temporal things, he bade the priests be called for, and prepared for the reception of the usual sacraments of the dying.

The concluding scene has been given in such noble and eloquent words by a writer* whose account is taken from the old biography of Ailred, that we shall make no apology for transferring the passage to our pages as it stands in his:

"Perceiving the queen weeping abundantly and sighing constantly, he said to her, 'Weep not for me, daughter; for I shall not die, but live. I am departing from the land of the dying, to live, as I believe, in our Lord's blessed land of the living.' So, commending himself totally and absolutely to God, in the full faith of Christ, with all the Sacraments of Christ, in the hope of the promises of Christ, this old man, in the fulness of his days, departed from this world, and his pure spirit abandoning its pure flesh, was, as a victor, united and for ever to the Creator of all spirits; and ascending, it was received by the citizens of heaven, and the ethereal key-bearer opened for it the gates of Paradise; whilst, in the fulfilment of his promise, John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, met the sanctified soul; and virgin associated with virgins to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth for ever.

"It would not be possible," he continues, "to describe what mighty fear then fell upon the minds of men,

* M'Cabe's *Catholic History of England.*

nor what amount of grief possessed their hearts, as if a thick dark cloud had rested over the entire island. It was with such feelings that the relatives and friends of the king stood by his sacred remains, when suddenly the lifeless corpse assumed the semblance of that beatitude which had been bestowed upon Edward; for the countenance of the dead became suffused with a roseate hue, so pure and so entrancing, that it seemed to come from heaven, and won at once the admiration of all who gazed upon it. All marvelled at the spectacle; but still more were they astonished when they found his uncovered body was glorious with beauty, and that the snow-white flesh seemed refulgent with a dazzling light, so that the honour of his stainless virginity was made manifest even to unbelievers. The royal remains were prepared for interment; the body was rolled up in precious linen and gorgeous robes; and at the same time the poor of Christ were relieved with abundant alms. The bishops were present; crowds of priests and clerks were there; the earls of the kingdom with nobles and thanes were assembled; and vast multitudes of both sexes gathered around the body of the king. On one side was to be heard the intoning of psalms, and on the other the shrill notes of grief, which came from tearful crowds. In all places joy was commingled with sorrow; joy, because of the king, who all were conscious had passed to heaven; sorrow, because, by his death, they knew themselves to have endured a loss that was irreparable.

"They bore to the church that temple of chastity and abode of virtue, the body of the king; and they offered up for the king himself the Sacrifice of Salvation. And thus, in the place which he had himself determined upon, he was buried with all honour; and there, until the last day, lies his body, awaiting the blessed resurrection bestowed by our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be honour and glory now and for evermore. Amen."

The sepulchre of the saint is with us to this day; his shrine, rifled of its jewels and its costly treasures, yet contains the relics, that are a richer treasure than the regalia of his crown.

The last prophecy uttered by his lips, which we have given as it stands in the histories of his own time, was thought by many to have found its fulfilment in the woes that fell on the Saxon race at the Norman conquest, and in the subsequent union of the rival lines, by the marriage of Henry I. with Matilda, the heiress of the royal Saxon blood, and the birth of their son, Henry II. Nevertheless, we can scarcely avoid the application of these singular words to later times; and now that three centuries after the religion which raised the Confessor to our altars had been rooted out of the land, and the faith of England had been torn from its parent stem, we have seen in our own day, "no man's hand aiding it, and no necessity forcing it," the promise of a large return, and hundreds hastening once more to be "engrafted on the ancient root," the prophecy of our royal Saint has seemed to hold out the hope of better days, when England shall once more produce the flowers and the fruits of sanctity, and the remedy of her long tribulation shall be found in her recovered faith.

THE WINDOWS OF SAN PETRONIO.

A STORY FROM THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED JAMES OF ULM.

IN a small chamber, ill-arranged for the purpose of an artist's work-room, with few of the conveniences and nothing of the professional show common in the studios of the time, there sat a painter busily employed in putting the last touches to a work of elaborate design, which had been the result of many months of painful and incessant labour. It was on glass, and evidently intended for a window of extraordinary size; and the rich colours and skilful arrangement of the figures betokened that they were the production of no common hand. In truth, though the black scapular which he wore over a rough woollen habit of white showed that the artist claimed no higher rank than that of lay brother in a convent of preaching friars, yet it would not be too much to say that Giacomo the German, as he was called in his adopted city of Bologna, was one of the most distinguished painters of his day. As you looked at him, in spite of the poverty of his dress, a feeling would force its way that the man before you was remarkable for something more than artistic genius. Through the chastened demeanour of the religious you might trace the remains of a noble and military bearing, which seemed to show that Giacomo had once followed a different calling from that he now pursued; and yet, when you glanced at his shaven head and the expression of his calm and tranquil eye, the conviction was just as irresistible that, whatever might have been his former life, the cloister alone was the true home for one who

bore in every feature the lineaments of a saint. In fact, Giacomo's reputation for sanctity was as great as the celebrity of his paintings; and among the disciples who flocked about him, there were many who sought the society of the great master rather for the guidance of their souls than from a love of his professional skill.

On the morning of which we speak he had, however, but a single companion, a young man in the secular dress, who sat apart from Giacomo grinding the colours for his use, and watching the movements of his pencil and the progress of his work in unbroken silence. He was considerably younger than the German; and you might see, from the darker hue of his complexion, that he was not a fellow-countryman. A singular beauty was visible in his countenance, where the light of great intelligence was mingled with so pure and childlike an expression, that, as his comrades were wont to say, Fra Giacomo could do no better than take his disciple, Ambrogino of Soncino, for the model of a cherub. On the present occasion it was evident that both he and his master took more than ordinary interest in their work, which was now rapidly approaching its completion.

The young man was the first to break the silence in which they had hitherto pursued their labour, and an expression of delight broke from his lips as he surveyed the finishing strokes of the painter. "San Petronio!" he exclaimed, "the canons will have the rarest windows in all Bologna. This morning's work will be the last, Giacomo; and, if I mistake not, it hath been eighteen months in hand."

"And eighteen minutes by and by may, for aught we know, spoil the whole," answered Giacomo, with his usual tranquil smile; "wherefore, my Ambrogino, I would not have thee too boastful in thy glee, lest the furnace may chance to mar all the colours thou hast been grinding so patiently for these long months past."

"Does such a chance often happen, my father?"

inquired Ambrogino. "I have heard it said that men are as little to be trusted as a glass furnace; but I knew not what was meant."

"Thou wilt know better ere thou hast lighted the furnace of San Domenico a dozen times," replied Giacomo; "it hath spoiled my best works, and taught me lessons of patience which I found it over hard to learn some thirty years ago. Thanks to its teaching, however, the task is easier now; but when thou, Ambrogino, shalt hear the cracking of thy first window, and shalt know thy time and labour thrown away, be on thy guard lest Satan have a triumph, for, in truth, there is vexation in the sound."

"And is there no remedy against such mishaps?" continued the young man; "I have seen you test the furnace, and count the very minutes that the glass hath been subjected to the heat, with a curious care; nor, as I remember, has there been an accident since I have been within your studio."

"Surely," said Giacomo, "care and patience are excellent remedies for all things. It is only when the furnace is overheated, or the glass detained too long, that there is any danger; but a few minutes may do the work, and shiver all to a thousand fragments; and if such a fate should be in store for the windows of San Petronio, both thou and I, Ambrogino, must bear the disappointment as best we may."

"And that will be ill enough," said Ambrogino. "But thou wilt watch the furnace, Giacomo, and I will be here to aid thee; and San Petronio will care for his own windows, and thou wilt see this time all will go well."

The master smiled at the impetuosity of his young companion, and proceeded to prepare the furnace which had been the subject of their conversation. It was clumsy and ill-contrived, and took some time to light and set in order. "It will be a good forty minutes," said Giacomo, turning to his disciple, "ere the glass must be fixed for burning; and before we venture to do

so, we must test the heat, and cool it if it be excessive; for this is the first danger to the painting. Then we must watch the work and count the time; and when the hour is up, be nimble with our hands, for I have known a five minutes' delay do many months of mischief."

"And these forty minutes," said Ambrogino, as he sat at his master's feet, to wait the heating of the furnace, with something of the familiarity of a favourite child, "these forty minutes' watch thou must spend as thou hast promised, and tell me the story of thy life, and how thou, who wert a soldier once, art now a painter and a friar."

"Well, as thou sayest, it hath been a promise," answered Giacomo, "which thou hast earned by thy patient service at the colours. Nevertheless, if I weary thee, thou must not marvel; for, in truth, there are few men's lives much worth the telling. As thou knowest, Ambrogino, I am not of thy country; I was born further north, in the country they call Swabia, and in the great city of Ulm. My father was a merchant, and would fain have had me follow his trade; and, indeed, I did travel in his company more than once to the town of Flanders, where his business carried him every year, and it was there I got my first love for this glass-painting. For thou must know I had, like thee, Ambrogino, a restless mind; my chamber was filled with twenty works begun but never finished. I tried mechanics for a while, and filled the house with water-clocks and spinning-wheels of new invention; but my mother said they seldom answered, and that I should do better to settle to the cloth-trade, like an honest burgher, and leave glass-painting and clock-making to abler hands. But I could not settle, and somehow it was not altogether a boyish restlessness that filled my head with idle dreams; it seemed to me that I had not hold of the will of God in aught that I did; for, indeed, I had been Christianly taught and nurtured, and I knew well that a man can do well only where God calls him, and no

where else. Now it chanced, when I was about thine own age, that the thought came to me that I might find an answer to the doubts that perplexed me as to my future course by making pilgrimage to some holy shrine; and so soon as I conceived the plan, there was no rest till I had put it in execution. I had ever a devotion to the great apostles; and every year, as the Easter pilgrims came back to Ulm and told of all the holy sights of Rome, my heart yearned to kiss the sacred threshold, and to bathe it with my tears. My father saw it was useless to hinder me in my design, though he had been well content could I but have turned my thoughts to business. Nevertheless, he gave me his blessing; and I set forth with a staff and a well-filled purse, for Theodoric of Ulm was a wealthy burgher, and, little as he loved my thoughts of travel, he would not, as he said, that I should bring disgrace upon his house and fall into ill company through poverty. I will not tell thee, neither indeed can I, what kind of thoughts stirred my heart when I found myself in that most wondrous city. Surely there is a strange sweetness in its very air, as though from the soil that had been watered with the martyrs' blood fresh and very odoriferous flowers were daily springing. Methought I could have dwelt there for ever, and that, rich or poor, it were happiness enough to make my daily prayer beside the tomb where throbs the heart and life-blood of Christendom. But even there the old restlessness returned; and I was fain to travel further south, even as far as Naples, where Alfonso of Arragon was then in arms with the states of Genoa, defending his crown like a stout and valiant king. My money by this time was all spent, and I knew not where to look for more; for, indeed, neither my clocks nor my spinning-wheels were likely to find much favour in the idle south, had I a mind to go back to the making of them; but no such thought was in my mind.

"Ambrogino," continued the friar, after a pause, during which a look of unusual pensiveness had passed

over his face, "there are strange mysteries in these hearts of ours, which God only can read aright. Thou art wont to call me the tranquil Giacomo, and to marvel, perhaps, how one so dull and spiritless could ever have borne part in the stir and tumult of battle. And, I thank God, I am tranquil; but it was not always so. Perchance thou hast sometime watched a mountain-stream, as it fell foaming from rock to rock, dashing itself to a silvery spray at every bound, and deafening the very ear with its loud and angry roaring; and perhaps thou hast followed it in its course, and hast seen it reach the plain below, flowing swiftly and hurriedly at first, but soon with a gentler motion, until at length thou mayest have looked down on it, winding like a silver thread among the meadows, and scarcely murmuring against its grassy banks, as it won its way in unruffled calm towards the deep and tranquil sea. Even so is it with some souls whom God calls powerfully to Himself; yet they know not His voice, even while its sound is in their ears, and its echoes haunt and trouble them, and will not suffer them to take their rest in aught save Him alone. In the world they never rest, but wander from one thing to another, and spend their energies and their tears in vain and fruitless efforts to find the thing which is to be their life; but it never comes: they feel after it in the dark, if haply they may touch and grasp it, but all is empty air, which they beat with idle disappointed hands. And all the while the world is calling them turbulent and unquiet; and so they are, for they are ill at ease,—they are not the world's children, and it cannot even satisfy their passions, far less subdue them into quietude; and so they wander to and fro, and sometimes break out into wild excesses, and sometimes try to still the voice within them by the stir and distraction of a busy life. Then the day comes when God makes all light to them, and they are different men; He takes them to their true home within His arms, and they lie upon His bosom, like tired children, and rest, it may be with a truer

sense of rest than they who have never wandered from His side. And thus much I say to thee, Ambrogino, because thou art wont to wonder how Giacomo, the lay brother and the glass-painter, whom thou seest telling his beads at the convent-gate, or happy at his daily work, can have felt so strong an impulsion to deeds of martial valour. But, my child, till we find the truth, we are content with counterfeits, and busy ourselves with pictures and fantasies of the life which is to be our home. And to a brave man there is in the soldier's life, with its labour, its self-denying sufferings, its obedience, and its gallant devotion to struggle with and conquer a cruel enemy in a noble cause,—there is, I say, a likeness and a shadowing of the Christian fight; nor do I doubt but that to pure and chivalrous hearts the knightly course may be the path of sanctity, if it be trodden in the grace of God. So, too, the pilgrim, as he wanders, staff in hand, through distant lands, and scarce can tell what impulse leads him on, may find the secret of his wanderings in the unconscious picture ever before his eyes of the life of the sons of God, who have here no abiding city, but are ever seeking one to come; and with wayworn tired feet are toiling on, strangers and pilgrims in a world that counts them not its own."

"But tell me, dear Giacomo," interrupted his young listener, "how did thy soldier's life speed with thee? Men say that it is a glorious thing when, with banners forward, and lance in rest, they go down into the *mêlée*; though, in truth, it is not so I would care to die."

"Thou art right, my Ambrogino," answered the painter, "that hand of thine was never meant for sword or halberd; though, in truth, I have seen men die a Christian death even on the battle-field; and the broad cross of their good swords has had the last look from their eyes, and the last kiss from their dying lips. Well, I entered into King Alfonso's service, and abode with him to the last; though it was the losing side, and at length the Genoese were masters. I had my share

of the fighting; but I found little to meet my dreams of a soldier's calling among the ranks of his mercenaries and free-companions. They were the offscouring of all lands; and a weary time I had with them, for I could not do as they did; and so, with all my martial ardour, the camp was as little my home as the merchant's shop at Ulm."

"And so thou wast soon tired of the sword," said Ambrogino; "but they say there was a reason for thy departure from the ranks, though I have never heard the tale."

"Why, thou seest, Ambrogino," returned Giacomo, with something of an awkward bashfulness in his tone, "I have said I could not do as they did. I could not forget my gentle mother's nurture, and the lessons I had learnt at her knee. They were a reckless set, and thought more of plunder than of glory; and whereas I deemed it no dishonour to a soldier's name to be pitiful and courteous to prisoners, devout to God, and terrible only to the enemies of Holy Church, they were all for bloodshed and rapine; and the peasantry of our own people hated us for the ruin that followed on our steps. Now I could not in conscience witness these things unmoved, and I spoke what was in my heart, even as I think God moved me; neither could I ever share in the plunder which they brought to camp. For which things they railed on me as superstitious; and at length they devised a scheme for making me the butt of a foolish jest. It fell out thus: on a certain day I had been sent, with others of our company, to a distant post; we had been on foot all day, and came home weary and hungry. As soon as I had returned to our quarters, some of my comrades came to me with seeming kindness and invited me to dine. 'We knew,' they said, 'that you would have a long march of it, and but little time on your return for preparing a dinner, so we have made all ready, and this day you must dine with us.' I bore them no ill-will, and was well content to accept their offer, for, in truth, I was very hungry; so I went

back with them to the place they had appointed, and the dinner was set before me. After I had well eaten, I began to see that there were smiles and whispers passing among them, and some jest in which I was not a sharer. I thought it might be that my appetite was the cause of their merriment; and the more so when one of them, he who had bidden me to the dinner, addressed me in a jeering tone: 'What thinkest thou of our table, comrade?' he said; 'thou hast eaten heartily of what we have set before thee, and as though thou didst relish the viands well enough.' 'I have eaten as a hungry man,' I answered; 'nor knew I till to-day that a good appetite was reckoned to be want of manners among the ranks of the free-companions.' A shout of laughter followed my words; and when the uproar was a little subsided, my host spoke to me again. 'Excellent Giacomo,' he said, 'it is not that thy appetite offends us in any wise; we rather rejoice that thou hast attained so great a liberty of heart. Know, then, that all which thou seest before thee, and of which thou hast so joyously partaken, hath been stolen goods: the fowls a day ago were roosting in the barns of our neighbour in the valley; those luscious grapes thou hast so fondly handled were hanging in his vineyard ripe for the vintage; the wine was pressed into the king's service, as the mules of Don Antonio were contentedly carrying it to the residence of the royal intendant; and the very oil which dressed these vegetables—it is the best of all—the oil, I say, was stolen by our nimblest hand from the synagogue of the Jewish dogs of Capua, as it burnt, after their custom, before the books of their law. So now thou hast shared in our plunder like an honest fellow, and art witness to thyself that stolen meats have a marvellously pleasant flavour;' and then they renewed their laughter and merriment; but the thing cut me to the quick. Perhaps I was over-hasty, but their villanies sickened me; and before another day had passed, I had turned my back on the camp, and was far on the road to Capua. My soldiering was now

over for a time; and yet I must needs do something for my bread; and things so fell out that it was not long before I was engaged in the service of a great lawyer in the city, who used me well, and in whose house I lived for nearly five years, serving him as his scrivener."

"That was a great change, Giacomo," observed Ambrogino; "how did the scrivener's stool and pen suit thy wandering pilgrim fancies and thy martial humour?"

"I was five years older, my child," replied Giacomo, "and had learnt that a man must do as he can, and not always as he will. Nevertheless, it was distasteful enough; and I often cast a wistful look at the staff I had carried from Germany, and the broadsword that hung over my bed. Moreover, I had a strange longing once more to see my home, and to hear the accents of my fatherland; for albeit your tongue is softer and more musical, it hath not the homeliness and heartiness, to my thinking, of our German speech; and, in short, after the five years were ended, I besought my master for leave to return to Swabia and get my father's blessing before he died. But he would not hear of my departure; wherefore I was fain to take another course. I did not resolve on the thing till I had prayed before the crucifix that I might be led aright; and then I laid aside the clothes that I had received from my master's hands, and the money he had paid me, and once more taking my tattered soldier's habit and my pilgrim staff, I set out in secret and by night, and bent my steps towards the north. At length I entered this city of Bologna; and there the first news that greeted my ears, from a countryman whom I met with in the streets and had known in old times at Ulm, was that my father was dead, and that there was no home now in Swabia for Giacomo. I felt saddened and out of heart: there was no cause now for my hurrying to the empty house, where all would be strange, and where there would be none of the familiar greetings for which I had been longing. For the first time in my life I was content to

abide in quiet; and God so willing it, I once more entered as a soldier in the service of the Visconti, who, as thou knowest, Ambrogino, had a hard matter just then to defend the rights of the Holy Pontiff. In truth, I found matters very different from the License of the free companies. But I was not happy; that restless longing for I knew not what was like a hunger in my heart; and I knew no other way of easing the anguish which I often suffered than by praying in the churches, and chiefly in our own church of San Domenico. I ever had a reverence for the holy Spaniard, who was surely God's soldier in a righteous cause, and had a soldier's great heart and gallant spirit; and I loved to spend hours by his sepulchre, and ask for God's guidance and Our Lady's help.

"Tell me, Ambrogino," continued the old man, "doth it not seem to thee that there are some days when the windows of heaven are more open than on others—such a dew of grace falls on our souls, and such a fulness and excess of light? There are days, too, which are regenerations; we rise in the morning, and all seems as at other times, and we are neither gladder nor holier than our common wont; and yet, at the hour when God has willed from all eternity, we go to meet our fate; and before that day's sun has set, we have a new being given to us. A sin has been washed away, or a soul been saved; God's voice has been heard;—yea, more, it has been answered. We are no longer blind and pitiful wanderers, but have safe hold of our Father's hand; and when we lie down to rest at night we thank God and take courage, for we know that it is well with us, and that we are at rest. Now it was so with me on the day whereof I am about to speak. My heart was very full, and such a constraining desire came over me to spend the hours alone where no man might observe me, that I could not settle to my accustomed work. 'I will go to the Friars' Church,' I said to myself, 'and it may be this folly will pass away, as it hath done at other times.' So I turned in hither and took my wonted

post, and prayed the good God to give me peace. But it was all to no purpose, nay, it seemed as though the very deeps of my soul were broken up; and yet I knew not what it was that moved me, or what I would ask from God. I know not how long I remained thus before the altar; but at length I felt a hand upon my shoulder, and a voice sounded in my ears. It was that of Father Alessandro, who was then the prior, though now he hath gone to his rest. 'Brother,' he said, 'thou art surely in some great trouble (for I was weeping like a child); and I would fain minister to thy grief. Thou art not wholly strange to me, for I have marked thee many times praying in our church, rather like a friar than a man-at-arms; tell me, then, is there a sin on thy conscience?—or what is the cause that thou, a soldier and a man of mature years, should be weeping like a very woman?' O Ambrogino, it was not his words, it was the Lord God, who that moment drew the veil from my eyes, and made all clear to me! I did not stay my weeping, but I fell at his feet and kissed the very dust of that dear pavement; and I said, 'Father, I am not worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.' 'What wouldst thou?' said the prior; for he marvelled at my words even more than at my tears; and so, to make a long tale short, I told him all. I told him the story of my life, and the weariness that had been ever in my heart, and how, at the sound of his voice that day God had answered all my doubts, and shown me that the home whereto He had called me from a child was His own house and His own most blessed service. And they heard me, Ambrogino,—they took me, the poor friendless soldier, into their company; and when a year after I was to make my solemn profession before that very altar, I could not contain the joy that was in my soul, but went round on my knees from one to another, and prayed them of their goodness and pity to keep Giacomo among them, and not to drive him from them for his vileness and unworthiness.

"And now thou hast heard all; and if thou wouldst know whether the old longing ever returns, know that the cloister gives me all I ever asked from life. I am on my true pilgrimage, and listed under my rightful banner: I am where God wills me to be, and He hath given me the fulness of perfect peace."

As Giacomo finished his story, there was a pause of some moments: at length Ambrogino said, "I would fain know the secret of that peace, my father."

"Nay," replied his companion, "I am a poor philosopher to tell thee why and how, like the doctors of the schools. I cannot tell thee *why* the touch of silver upon melted glass* should turn it to a golden tint, silver and gold being, as one may say, opposite and unlikely things: neither can I say *how* it falls out that a man, by the renouncing of his own wills, should gain a happiness which others vainly seek in their gratification. I only know it is so, and that obedience is the sweetest yoke of our sweet Master, the very touch of His own hand, which He lays upon the weary, and their heavy burdens fall from off their shoulders, and leave them light-hearted as children."

Ambrogino did not reply: he well knew that Giacomo's reputation for religious obedience was of so singular a kind as to have extended beyond the walls of his own convent; and though it was a virtue less appreciable to the world outside than many of more brilliant character might have been, yet even men of the world had learnt to reverence the saintliness of the artist-friar, though it was often displayed in ways they could not comprehend. But however much disposed he might have felt to question his master, or, as he loved to term him in familiar discourse, his father, a little further, he plainly saw the present was no fit time. Giacomo's head had sunk upon his breast, and his eyes were nearly closed. Scarcely even did he seem

* The Blessed James of Ulm is said to have been the first to discover the tinting of glass to a yellow colour by means of oxide of silver.

conscious of the presence of his companion; and the young man, who knew his master's way, little doubted but that he was rapt in overflowing thanksgiving and prayer. He, too, had his own thoughts; and the painter's words, "the cloister gives me all I asked from life," were echoing in his heart.

At length Giacomo roused himself with an effort, and, assuming a different tone, reminded his pupil that their day's work was yet before them. "In my idle talking," he said, "I had well-nigh forgotten the furnace, which is surely ready heated for the glass; and now, Ambrogino, thou must take thy first lesson in colour-burning, and do thy best to help me, for the honour of God and San Petronio."

A few minutes more and they were busily at work; the rich windows, which had so excited Ambrogino's admiration, and which were the acknowledged masterpieces of the artist, were fixed in their place; and all that remained to be done was to keep the furnace at the same temperature, and mark the time, so that exactly at the juncture when the colours should be fixed, the glass might be carefully removed, before an overlong exposure to the heat put them in danger of being cracked or injured. A kind of hour-glass, made to run for the space calculated for this purpose, was the only timepiece used by the friar-preacher, whose studio had all the poverty of a convent-cell. This was placed before the furnace, and then the two companions sat down to watch for the critical moment of removal. The silence was again unbroken; and again, as Ambrogino fixed his eyes on the countenance of his venerable master, he felt a kind of awe as he marked its expression. It seemed as though, when the business or conversation of the moment was over, Giacomo's soul ever fell back to prayer, as the stone falls to the ground and seeks its centre when loosened from the grasp. There he sat, with his eyes bent in abstraction on the furnace-door; the beads were in his hand, and his lips were moving gently and noiselessly; and as Ambrogino,

weary at times of sitting still, would rise and busy himself about the room, his movements caused no disturbance to his master, whose thoughts were evidently powerfully absorbed. The sand was running to its bottom, and the moment so longed for by Ambrogino was nearly at hand. Every thing had gone well: the furnace had burnt steadily, and there had been none of those warning cracks of which his master had spoken in the morning; ten minutes more and the windows of San Petronio would be safe upon the table, and the greatest work of the greatest master of Bologna completed, as Ambrogino proudly thought, for the admiration of a hundred ages. "And I shall have helped him," he exclaimed aloud. "Oh, that the sand would but run a little faster, and suffer me to open the furnace-door!"

But the furnace-door was not destined to be the first to open: even as he spoke, that of the chamber in which they sat was flung a little hastily on its hinges, and one of the lay brothers of the convent entered. "Fra Giacomo," he said, addressing the painter, who had just risen, and was preparing to commence the removal of his glass, "the father-procurator desires that thou go out on the quest to-day. Fra Anastasio is to be thy companion, and he waits for thee even now at the convent-gate. I pray thee, moreover, delay not; for I have already lost some minutes searching for thee in thy cell."

"I am coming," replied Giacomo, in his usual tranquil tone, as he drew his hood over his face and took his mantle. "Ambrogino, my child," he added, turning to the youth, "there will be nought more for thee to do to-day; thou mayest return to-morrow."

"And the windows?" gasped Ambrogino; "thou wilt surely remove them first: the glass is all run out, and it is the very moment we have been waiting for."

Perhaps there was something of wistfulness in the glance Giacomo cast on the furnace-door; and the young man thought his voice was tremulous for a mo-

ment, as he replied, "God will have our windows for Himself, my Ambrogino; and look not so disconsolate, for obedience is better than the blood of victims; thou must not forget that Giacomo is less the painter than he is the mendicant of his convent."

He was gone before there was time for another word, and Ambrogino remained in a kind of stupefied dismay. Then his natural impetuosity broke out into a kind of passion: he stamped the floor and clasped his hands before his face, then, sinking into the chair from whence his master had just risen, his grief found vent in a flood of boyish tears. "His best work!" he exclaimed, "ay, and such a work as Bologna has never seen; his own favourite, as I know, and the thing whereon he has spent his choicest skill and all the secrets of his art. And to be ruined for the whim of a tyrannic master! He, the first painter of our city, to be sent begging through its streets, whilst his masterpiece is in the fire! Oh, it would chafe the very seraphs, this senseless thing they call obedience! And I know his meaning well in those last words: he deems that I, too, am one day to wear the habit of St. Dominic, and perchance that I am to profit by this first lesson; but may I never grind colours more, if I place my reason and the gifts which God hath given me under the heel of some dull clerk, who knows not the .racery of Angelico's fingers from the daubing of a sign-post!"

He rose from his seat and walked rapidly to and fro, then stopped before the furnace-door and listened if there were any sign of mischief. "If I dared but take them out!" he muttered; "but I know not the fixing, and they would be broken to a thousand fragments. No, there is no help for it; and I can but wait and see the ruin of what I cared for as though mine own fingers had done the work!"

He sat down to await Giacomo's return, for he could not persuade himself to leave the spot: perhaps something might turn up to be done, or Giacomo might

have a fortunate quest, and even yet be back in time; anyhow his young disciple determined to keep his guard by the furnace in which his favourite windows were enclosed. And, as his first passion abated, the painter's words came back to him with a singular sweetness, "God will have our windows for Himself." It was, then, no feeling of slavish submission to a tyrannic law that prompted his obedience; and in that moment of human disappointment the only movement of his heart had been one of sacrifice to God. Certainly there was something deeper in all this than at first appeared; and every moment, as Ambrogino pondered over his master's obedience, it assumed a more admirable character in his eyes. He felt all the greatness of the sacrifice itself: the works thus abandoned to destruction without a word or gesture of regret were not only of great value, but would have placed Giacomo's reputation as an artist beyond the competition of all his rivals. Moreover, the young man had enough of the enthusiasm of his profession to know that the value of a work of art, or even the admiration and renown it may win from the world, forms but a small part of its worth in the eyes of its author. He knew that to creative genius the works to which it has given birth are dear as children; they bear the impress of the soul that has produced them; they are the expressions of his thoughts, and have, as it were, shared in the very confidence of his heart; and he knew that Giacomo's sacrifice must needs have cost him something. He knew, moreover, that it had been generously made: the reputation and character of the painter would surely have obtained some indulgence in such a case, and a word from his lips would have been enough to have relieved him from the necessity of his obedience. His compliance was not compulsory or unavoidable, but a willing offering for the perfection of religious virtue. And as Ambrogino thought of all these things, he felt that this perhaps was destined to be for him one of those days of grace and illumination of which the painter

had spoken in his morning's story. The hours passed swiftly on, as the young man remained buried in thought before the unlucky furnace, and it was already evening, when he was startled from his long reverie by the sound of his master's step at the door of the chamber.

Giacomo entered: his face bore the expression of fatigue, for the quest that day had been long and to little purpose; yet in its look of weariness there was the same sweet tranquillity that always distinguished it. "What still here, Ambrogino!" he exclaimed, as his eye rested on his pupil; "I meant not that thou shouldst tarry for my return."

"But I could not go, dear Giacomo," said the youth, "I thought—I hoped that something might yet be done."

Giacomo went to the furnace-door and laid his hand upon the fastening: then he paused, and Ambrogino thought he saw the glistening of a tear on the old man's cheek. Another moment and the door was opened, and the frames in which the windows were fixed were in the painter's hand.

"Mother of God!" he heard him say, in a tone of wonder, "this is thy doing!" He could not be mistaken now, the tears were indeed falling thick and fast upon the glass, as his master bent, so thought the youth, over his ruined work, and, with a sudden impulse, Ambrogino sprang to the old man's side. As he, too, bent over the frames and eagerly scanned them with his eye, he could detect no flaw or crack upon the polished surface, and his heart beat fast with a strange hope, which yet he hardly dared to trust.

"Look, Ambrogino," at length faltered the artist, as he held the paintings against the open casement and displayed them to the light, "the windows are unbroken, and the colours fixed as never yet I saw them. This is God's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

Ambrogino looked, and scarcely dared believe his eyes: the glass was not only perfect and unmarred in

every part, but the colours of the paintings, as the bright light of the now setting sun streamed through them on the ground, wore a richness of hue such as he had never seen or imagined. The figures, too, had a grandeur in their design which was surely new; there was a majesty and devotion about them which surpassed even Giacomo's skill, and he could not doubt that he was gazing on the effects of a Divine and supernatural interference.

"Said I not, my child, that God had claimed our windows for Himself?" said the painter. "Lo, He hath wrought a great work this day, and we will thank him for it, as it is meet."

"It was the reward of thine obedience," said Ambrogino.

"Nay, rather," interrupted his master, "it was to teach thee the value and worth of obedience in God's eyes. And let not the lesson be lost; for if He hath suffered thee to behold a miracle, it was that thou shouldst learn this truth, that the abjection of a despised lay brother is dearer in His eyes than the genius of a thousand painters."

The windows of San Petronio may still be seen in the church of that name at Bologna; but the injuries of time have left scarcely a trace of their original magnificence. Giacomo himself, to whose heroic obedience this miraculous token was granted, lies buried in the same church where he gained his vocation to religion, not far from the sepulchre of his great patriarch, St. Dominic. He is the only painter of his order who has received the solemn beatification of the Church; but amid the number who have shared the hereditary genius of the Dominican institute, and whose reputation for sanctity has been counted to rival their skill as artists, the writers of the day reckon Fra Ambrogino of Soncino as a worthy inheritor of the skill and holiness of his master, the Blessed James of Ulm.

THE VESSELS OF ST. PETER.

THE fifth century was dawning over the wreck of the Roman Empire. Eight years had passed since the death of the great Theodosius, and his feeble successors were unable to resist the tide of barbaric conquest that swept over the desolated provinces of the west. The whole Gothic nation was in arms under the victorious chieftain Alaric, whose forces had already twice appeared under the walls of Rome, and had twice withdrawn after the exaction of enormous contributions from the citizens. Rome, at the period of which we speak, could be called neither Pagan nor Christian; for, in spite of the triumph of the Cross under Constantine, and the more formal abolition of the pagan rites under Theodosius, there had always remained a strong faction attached to the old superstitions, ever ready to attribute the misfortunes of the empire to the influence of the Christians, and to seize every opportunity for pressing the restoration of the ancient idolatry.

Half of the senate was composed of the supporters of heathenism, and the city itself presented many strange contrasts to the eye; for the basilicas of modern erection stood side by side with the temples of the gods, where the public exercise of the pagan worship had only been discontinued since the edict of Theodosius.

In fact, at the period of which we speak that worship had been already partially restored. Availing themselves of the universal terror which had been excited by the first appearance of the Gothic hordes, the

advocates of paganism had succeeded in persuading the multitude that their sufferings were a just judgment on them for their desertion of the immortal gods; the example of other cities was cited, where, on the approach of the barbarians, the people had restored the sacrifices and divinations practised by their fathers, and had, as they affirmed, been thereby saved from the fury of their enemies. A popular cry had been raised for the restoration of the gods; and on the Capitol itself, where two centuries before the Cross had been so solemnly planted by Constantine, the blood of victims flowed, and the abominable rites of heathen divination were openly practised amid blasphemies against the Name of Christ.

Rome, therefore, was not Christian; but neither was she pagan. Christian churches stood thick upon her seven hills; and far away from the spot where these impieties had been enacted, on the other side the Tiber, the basilica of the Apostles stood in all the glory of its first erection. Since the days of Babylonian greatness, never had mortal eye rested on so wonderful a sight as was then presented by the capital of the world. No devastating hand had as yet been laid upon her matchless beauty; palaces, columns, and temples, baths and theatres, rose upon her hills in countless profusion; and spots now beautiful only in their desolation, lying close to the living city, silent and deserted as the grave, with wild flowers hanging over their columns, and lizards hiding among their ruined walls, were then standing in all their proud magnificence, the wonders of the Roman world. The golden house of Nero still covered the vast space between the Viminal and the Palatine; the Circus and the Coliseum were the daily resorts of the people, whose passion for their favourite sports neither the threatened ruin of their city, nor even the famine which had followed on the Gothic invasion, was able to extinguish. The suburban villas had, indeed, been laid waste at the first visit of Alaric and his army; but many lay yet untouched within the walls,—like that whose ruins still

bear the name of Sallust, with gardens and fountains and every exquisite adornment of the arts, a marvellous display of all that luxury could devise or wealth produce.

Yet to Christian eyes Rome was a sad and melancholy place, and many a heart was filled with dark forebodings of her coming doom. Solemn sounds of warning were borne from the distant cells of Bethlehem, where St. Jerome proclaimed the prophetic woes threatened in the Apocalypse against the great Babylon, and invited all who would not partake in the plagues that should afflict her, to come out of her, and not to be partakers in her crimes. "Leave," he cries, "the proud city to exult in her everlasting uproar and dissipation, satiating her bloodthirstiness in the arena and her insane passion for the circus games. How different are the scenes that invite you hither! where sacred hymns and psalmody are the only interruptions to the heavenly stillness and serenity that reign around." Nor were his warnings disregarded; for whilst the pagan population abandoned themselves to the frenzied enjoyment of their criminal amusements with a recklessness that seemed to defy the dangers that surrounded them, vast numbers of the Roman Christians took refuge from the coming catastrophe in the Syrian and Egyptian deserts.

It was in the spring of 409 that Alaric appeared for the third time under the walls of Rome. The presence of his bands scarcely seemed to inspire the Romans with terror; they were filled with a strange confidence, which had its origin neither in their valour nor in their faith; and blindly trusting in the security of their lofty walls, they scornfully rejected the very thought that Rome should ever really fall before the hand of a barbarian conqueror. The Pope, Innocent I., was then absent at the court of Ravenna, whither he had accompanied the embassy which had been sent to solicit succour from the Emperor Honorius; but though, as we have said, vast numbers of Christians had fled from the city, which

they judged marked by a curse, many still remained; whilst to the clergy and religious the thought of abandoning their flocks and the sacred shrines of the Apostles to barbarian fury never once occurred.

It is to the heights of the Cœlian hill that we must now conduct the reader—to a spot not far from the Lateran Basilica, halfway down the road which still leads from the mother-church of Rome and of the world to the scene of Rome's unnumbered martyrdoms, the Flavian Amphitheatre or Coliseum.

To such of our readers as have once been familiar with the locality, it needs but few words to recall it. They will remember, times out of mind, when standing on the brow of the hill whose summit is crowned by the "Golden Basilica," as the Lateran was often called, they have looked down that long road which slopes towards the west, at the hour when the whole perspective that met their eye was bathed in a flood of sunset splendour. Then they have seen the vast fabric of the Coliseum floating in a golden mist, as though the blood which once watered its consecrated soil were rising to heaven in clouds of living glory; and whilst the light has been reflected back from the walls and windows of the Christian Basilica, they may have felt the contrast between the two buildings as they now stand to be a fit emblem of the triumph of Christian over Pagan Rome.

But at the time of which we speak this contrast did not exist. True, the Golden Basilica rose in even greater splendour than we now behold it; but the Forum, instead of presenting the eye with a scene of deserted ruin and decay, was thronged and busy. All the full tide of Roman life was swarming about its roads and buildings; and out of the arches of the Coliseum, now choked with crumbling ruins and a tangled mass of flowers and creeping plants, there rose the shouts and cries of the vast crowds within, who were in the enjoyment of their favourite amusements of the circus, as little concerned with the thought of danger

as though the hosts of the barbarians had never crossed the Alps. It is not to the amphitheatre, however, that we are about to conduct our reader, but to a house situated, as we have said, on the Cœlian hill, and withdrawn from the public thoroughfare; whose aspect was only remarkable for a look of poverty and neglect which distinguished it from the gay luxurious abodes that lay scattered at no great distance around it. Within one of the chambers of this house two persons were engaged in earnest deliberation; and from the sad and thoughtful expression which was visible on both their faces, it would seem that the subject of their discourse had been of solemn and anxious import. The dress of one marked him as an ecclesiastic; his age and appearance were alike venerable; yet was his age the least title to respect which might be claimed by Zozimus, the deacon of the Basilica of St. Peter. Reverenced alike by all classes, the care and government of the entire Church of Rome rested on his shoulders during the absence of the chief pastor: he in no degree shared the security and indifference of the populace; and the certainty of an approaching catastrophe, with the necessary precautions for protecting the sacred trust committed to his charge, wholly engaged his thoughts. His companion on the present occasion was a woman, whose dress was not less distinctive of the class to which she belonged than was the expression of her countenance. It was that of one who had grown old in the Divine service; who, like Anna, had served God in fasting and prayer, and in that ministry of mercy which was the special prerogative of the virgins and holy women of the early Christian Church.

"Thou art, then, prepared to accept thy charge, Orontia," said the old man; "nevertheless, if thou fearest for thyself or for any of thy companions, thou hast but to speak and St. Peter will doubtless find another treasurer, though, as I think, there is no house better fitted than thine own."

"Nay, father," replied Orontia, "it were scarcely

fair to deprive us of so dear a privilege. There is not one among us who would close our doors to your request, or refuse to give hospitality to the Lord's Apostle for any woman's fear. Rather might we rejoice to shed our blood, if need be, in the defence of his sacred treasury. Thinkest thou that such a death were martyrdom in the eyes of holy Church?"

"Doubtless were it," answered Zozimus; "forasmuch as thou wouldst die, not for the jewels and material gold, which are of little worth in the eyes of one espoused to poverty, like thyself, but for the dignity these vessels possess, in that they are consecrated for the Divine mysteries, and are the property of the blessed Peter, and that among them are relics of priceless value, which it were an act of Christian faith to preserve from sacrilege. However, I trust the risk is not so great: it is rather in the houses of the clergy that the barbarians will seek for the Church's treasures; the poverty of thy dwelling will be unsuspected, and thou and all thy company will be secure from their savage violence."

"And is the danger, then, so near?" asked Orontia. "There is no sign in the city that men are warned of its approach, and all day long the shouts from the circus have rung as wild and uproarious as though Rome were celebrating one of her old imperial triumphs, instead of standing, as thou sayest, on the brink of her doom."

"Orontia," replied the old man, "it is a saying with the Pagans, that those whom God would destroy He first deprives of judgment. These men have despised warnings and calls to repentance; they do not believe because they will not, and because they are blinded, not by ignorance, but by their mad ungoverned passions. Look up to that deep and beautiful sky," and as he spoke he pointed to the heavens, which, rich in all the hues of evening, were to be seen stretching over the sunny heights of the Alban Mount: "we deem it a fair sight, and to Christian hope it seems an emblem

of our rest; so clear and stainless in its purity, that, could we pierce its azure with the wings of the seraphim, we should find naught but distance to keep us back from God. Yet, had we eyes to see it, there hangs over our heads a thick cloud of man's iniquity, which would darken the very noonday sun, and which rises from the city day and night, and calls for vengeance and for woe. Nor will the woe be long in coming."

"Yet there has been no attack upon the walls, nor a single blow struck as yet," said Orontia; "whence, then, dost thou gather thy certainty of a speedy judgment?"

"Because," answered Zozimus, with a smile, "I have not deemed it unbecoming mine office as deacon of the Basilica of the Apostles to be watchman on the city-walls; and few days have passed, since the return of these barbarians, that I have not made my rounds as regularly as though I were captain of the imperial guard. Two days ago the tents of Alaric and his followers lay scattered without order, and, as it seemed, without design or plan, over the whole plain of the Campagna; but this morning there was a busy movement in the camp, and hour by hour you might have seen vast bodies marching from different quarters and congregating near the Salarian gate, a spot which is the worst guarded and the weakest in defence. It is there I look for the attack, nor do I think it can be long delayed. Alaric is famed for rapid and sudden blows."

Something like a shudder passed over the frame of his hearer. "Dost thou fear, Orontia?" he added, in a gentle voice; "thou hast ever looked for this."

"No, father," she replied, "I fear nothing; I did but think, ere another sun had set, how many a soul there may be judged and doomed of those who have scoffed at the warnings of the saints. If now indeed the time is at hand when the words of the beloved Apostle are to be fulfilled, what may we not look for in the hour

when God shall give the great Babylon to drink of the cup of His indignation!"

"Orontia," said the deacon after a pause, "it is written, that when the great day of final judgment has come and gone, and the earth has shrivelled like a scroll before the destroying fire, there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth justice. Even so do the saints deem of this city, which in its pride hath called itself the Eternal: when the judgment hath fallen, and the queen of empires is made desolate and miserable, the blood of the saints and martyrs which has watered its soil will have its own harvest, and God will have His new creation; and this city of Rome, the patrimony of Peter, shall be as holy and glorious in men's eyes as now she is sinful and accursed. Therefore take comfort when thou seest the wrath of God poured out in plagues upon the mystic Babylon; for these things must needs be, before Rome can put on her beautiful garments and shine forth as the new Jerusalem."

The words of Zozimus rang in the ears of the Christian virgin long after he himself had departed; and a solemn expectation of some near and awful catastrophe communicated itself to her soul. It was a peculiar characteristic in the minds of the Christians in the earlier ages of the Church to be ever looking for the day of doom; and Orontia was familiar with the prophecies and woes denounced against the capital of Paganism, and constantly interpreted by the Christians as close at hand. As, therefore, hour after hour passed by, and the shades of evening deepened into night, and the streets of the city were noisy with the sounds of mirth and revelry, in the lonely house upon the Cœlian hill that night was kept in solemn prayer and vigil. Within its walls, little in harmony with the clamour of the world around it, there rose to heaven the cry of intercession; and the feeble voices of a few Christian women might have been heard pleading to God for mercy for Rome and for the world.

Nor were they idle in the charge assigned them. As soon as the darkness rendered his messengers unobserved, Zozimus despatched to the house of Orontia the rich vessels belonging to the Basilica of St. Peter. These were concealed in the remotest chambers, and the community resolved to keep guard over their trust during the remaining hours of the night. They passed swiftly, in watch and prayer: little by little the sounds of merriment without died away; the stragglers in the streets dropped off one by one, and the city was sunk in the most profound repose. Rome soon lay steeped in slumber; and over her palaces and gardens, on this the last hour of their matchless beauty, the summer moon shed a soft and tranquil light; whilst the only sound that met the ear was the night-breeze, as it stirred among the orange-boughs, and shook from their starry blossoms an atmosphere of exquisite perfume.

What echoes are those which ring suddenly through the stillness of the night? Not the watchword of the sentinel, or the song of some late reveller, as he makes his way homeward after a deep carouse. It is a harsh and barbarous music, unlike any strain that might be looked for in the soft effeminate capital. Yet there are some who know the sound too well, and who start from their sleep, with an agony which thrills through every nerve, as they recognise the long shrill blast of the Gothic trumpets. The senators are roused, the whole city is awake and in motion—alas, too late for flight or for resistance! The enemy is in the heart of the city; the Salarian gate, but carelessly watched and thrown open by a traitor's hand, has offered an easy entrance to the barbarian hosts; and already their path may be traced by the flames which light them on their way, and which are to be the funeral pyres of imperial Rome. "They were guided by the burning palaces and temples," says a modern writer, whose account is taken from the historian Orosius, "from the villa of Sallust—a perfect sanctuary and garden of Epicurus—on to the Suburra, the Forum, the Capitol, and,

above all, to the Golden House of Nero. They were led on by forty thousand fugitive slaves, who laboured during that night of horrors to wash out in patrician blood the hateful vestige of their chains. The things, not to be uttered, which Rome had so often perpetrated during the massacres and sieges of a thousand years, were now retaliated on herself. Her nobles were subjected to the most cruel tortures, to wring from them their hidden treasures; whilst the common people were mowed down in such multitudes, that the survivors did not suffice to bury the slain. The Forum, the Circus, and the Coliseum, the Capitol, the streets, and every public place, ran with blood. The palace-halls and chambers were the scenes of unutterable outrages; the seven-hilled city was in flames; its trophies and monuments, in which the lords of the earth had most prided themselves, were the chief objects of Gothic rage; and 't was said, by eye-witnesses of these horrors, that those edifices whose solidity defied the brands of the barbarians were struck with thunderbolts from heaven."*

Yet, in the midst of these dreadful scenes, the leader of the Goths, whilst he encouraged his followers in their wildest excesses of fury, proclaimed one exception to the law of universal destruction. The Basilicas of the Apostles were to remain inviolate; for, like all the barbarian conquerors of Rome, Alaric was filled with an indefinable and mysterious awe of the Christian name. Even whilst he had declared, on his march upon the city, that he was moved not by choice but by a secret and invisible force, which urged him on to do justice upon the devoted spot, he had with the same voice declared that he warred not against St. Peter; and so entirely—we may almost add so supernaturally—had this feeling been infused among the bands of the Gothic invaders, that now, maddened with blood and the thirst for gold, and the thousand passions which, on the sack of a city, generally convert the most

* *Rome under Paganism and the Popes*, vol. ii. ch. vi.

disciplined army into a mob of savages, these men not only respected the thresholds of the sacred edifices, but had even led some of the Christians to take sanctuary within them, that, under the protection of the Apostles, they might be safe from the slaughter which raged around. As soon as the thirst for blood had been a little satiated, the Goths began their work of plunder. We can form no idea of the accumulated riches which fell into their hands. The exquisite works of art which adorned those princely palaces were broken up for the sake of their materials; vases, whose gold and jewels rendered them of far less price than the skill of their chasing and design, were perhaps shivered by the stroke of a battle-axe; and when the houses had been stripped of their more portable treasures, and the work of pillage began to yield less fruit to the rapacious soldiery, they proceeded to torture their prisoners in every imaginable way, to force them to reveal their hidden and undiscovered stores of wealth.

The transfer of the Church vessels to the house of Orontia had not been effected so secretly but that the circumstance had reached the knowledge of some of the citizens; and now, to escape the brutality of their conquerors, and, it may be, to win their favour by the disclosure, these soon offered to lead a company of their conquerors to a spot where their quest of plunder should be satisfied to the full.

The blows that fell on Orontia's door soon betokened to the inmates of the house that they could no longer hope to escape from the general catastrophe. Well knowing the impossibility of resistance, the Christian virgin calmly awaited the approach of the enemy in the midst of her little band of companions; and in a few moments the room, which had that night been the scene of long hours of prayer, was filled with the Gothic plunderers. Their aspect might well have appalled stronger hearts than those in whose presence they now stood. Huge of frame, with their arms and legs bare and dripping with blood, their faces lit up with the

wild intoxication of conquest and the most cruel passions that can possess the human heart, they loudly bade their victims bring forth the gold and silver which was in their possession, or prepare for instant death.

Orontia gazed for a moment at the uplifted battle-axes and the flashing eyes of the men before her: for a moment she hesitated, for the words of Zozimus recurred to her, and the palm of martyrdom seemed just within her grasp. But to what purpose were her death? Her charge was to defend, and, with God's help, to save, the treasures of the Church; and death just then would but have placed them in the hands of the enemy, for an hour's search would have betrayed their hiding-place. Her resolve was quickly taken: without the slightest trace of emotion she replied to one who seemed to act as leader: "You have heard aright that the treasures in my keeping are immense; I will even now display them to your eyes; and, among all the wealth of Rome that you have this night gazed upon, I doubt if aught has met your view like that which lies under this humble roof." So saying, she opened the secret door which concealed a closet in the room where they were standing, and, throwing it wide upon its hinges, displayed to the astonished eyes of the Goth a glittering mass of gold and jewels such as his wildest imagination had not pictured. There were the gifts of Constantine and St. Helen, the massive cross of purest gold, a hundred and fifty pounds in weight, which usually decorated the sacred shrine of the Apostles. There were golden chalices studded with emeralds, and chased relievos of silver matchless in workmanship and design; lamps and lustres of every variety, and all of precious metal, with censers, where the gold of which they were composed was literally hidden by the diamonds with which they were every where covered.

Orontia watched the countenance of the barbarian chief, as he gazed, in savage astonishment, at the unexpected sight; then, with the same composure as before,

she continued: "You see before you the sacred vessels used in the Divine mysteries at the altar of St. Peter the Apostle. If you be so minded, take them and begone; but the sacrilege be on your own head; for me, too feeble to defend them, I shall make no resistance."

"How!" exclaimed the barbarian, with a disappointed tone, "the vessels of St. Peter's altar! My master wars not with St. Peter; it were more than my head were worth did Alaric know I had laid hands on the treasury of the Basilica. And yet, by Odin! the emperor's palace can show no such vases as those jewelled vessels yonder: Alaric must see them, and decide the point with St. Peter himself. Here, Ataulph," he continued, turning to one of his followers, "seek the chief without loss of time: he is not far distant; tell him that fortune has discovered to us a treasury that surpasses the riches of the Golden House itself, but that it calls St. Peter lord, and that I crave to know if it be not his pleasure to let it change its owner, seeing that the blessed Apostle hath but little need now of what they tell us he ever scorned in life."

Ataulph left the house, and his comrades remained awaiting in silence the result of his embassy. The silence was not broken by the Christian prisoners: Orontia, who hardly dared hope that her bold expedient had met with success, was absorbed in painful anxiety for the fate of her charge and of her companions; and whilst they stood motionless and with eyes closed, to shut out the frightful presence of their captors, their hearts were raised to God in fervent but wordless prayer. The brief moments seemed hours; but Ataulph at length returned. "The vessels of St. Peter are to be conveyed instantly and without fail to St. Peter's Basilica," he exclaimed; "and Alaric denounces his severest chastisements on the head of him who shall presume to lay a plundering hand were it on the most worthless vase among their number. Moreover, he would have the women in whose possession they have

been found guarded and protected to the sanctuary of the Apostle, together with all Christians who may choose to join their company."

"Alaric hath his own views in this matter," said the chief, "and his own way of enforcing them: for us, men, if we do not wish to be hung up by our feet over one of the blazing houses, we had best execute them promptly;" and at his orders each man proceeded to load himself with some portion of the treasures which lay before them. They did so with a certain emotion of reverence and superstitious fear. The extraordinary courage and tranquillity of the Christian virgins had inspired them with a respect they could not account for; whilst the name of St. Peter, which had so mysterious a power over their ferocious leader, seemed to fill them with a strange and irresistible awe. The preparations were soon ready for their departure, and, to their silent wonder, Orontia and her companions found themselves placed in the midst of a procession of the wild and savage soldiery, bearing on their heads the sacred vessels, while they directed their course towards the Basilica of St. Peter.

"The convent," says the historian Orosius, "was on the Cœlian hill, so that the entire city had to be traversed—an immense distance—in order to reach St. Peter's. It was then that an astounding spectacle presented itself to the eyes of all. Through the greatest thoroughfares of the city, and amidst all the horrors of that night, a solemn train is seen advancing, with the same order and measured step as if it moved not through scenes of slaughter, violence, and conflagration, but through hallowed aisles, on some joyous festival. A martial retinue of the Goths marched, as a guard of honour, to adorn the triumph with their glittering arms, and to defend their devout companions, who bore the sacred vessels of massive gold and silver aloft upon their heads. The voices of the barbarians are united with those of the Romans to swell the hymns of Christian praise; and these sounds are heard, like the

trumpet of salvation, re-echoing far and wide amidst the destruction of the city. The Christians start in their hiding-places as they recognise the celestial canticles, and crowd from every direction to follow the vessels of St. Peter. Even multitudes of Pagans, joining loudly in the hymns of Christ, take part in the procession; thus escaping under the shadow of the sacred name, that they may live to assail it with greater violence than ever. Joined by fugitives from every side, the pageant seems interminable; and in proportion as it is lengthened by new accessions, the barbarians contend with each other for the privilege of marching as guards on either side, armed with their battle-axes and naked swords."

A more extraordinary or a more wonderful spectacle can hardly be imagined than this midnight procession, or, as it is fitly termed by the Spanish historian, this "triumph" of Christianity in the very hour of the downfall of Pagan Rome. No miracle can be considered more marvellous and evident than the working of that supernatural influence over men inflamed with the worst passions, changing their savage fury, for the moment, into a kind of religious enthusiasm, so that, as the writer before quoted observes, "they left the pursuit of plunder, and wielded their reeking weapons to protect the lives and treasures of their vanquished enemies." They passed on through the smoking ruins of palaces and luxurious villas; they passed through the Forum, lighted by its blazing temples, and the crowd gave way before them, and gazed at them as though on some supernatural spectacle. Then, threading their way through darker thoroughfares, they left the Campus Martius on their right, and stood at length with the broad waves of the Tiber at their feet; while beyond them, on the further bank, rose dark against the moonlit sky the stately Basilica of the Apostles. Glorious as it stands even in our own day, it may be doubted whether the magnificence of the modern church rivals that of the erection of Constantine in the prime of its gorgeous beauty.

As the great procession reached the outer court, which then, as now, lay in front of the Basilica, the eyes of the Gothic chieftain were arrested by the scene of solemn and surpassing beauty which lay before them. In the midst of that open space rose a fountain of strange and mysterious design, adorned with symbols of Christian significance, all executed in the richest materials. There was the cross, and the Agnus Dei, and the palm, all wrought in bronze, or mosaic, or the richest marble. The enormous basin was surrounded by a colonnade of porphyry; and in the midst a fairy pine, of gilded bronze, spread its glittering branches far over the waters, that rose and danced in the moonlight, and cast their feathery spray and sweet melancholy murmur far over the quiet space around. As they drew nearer the great gates of the Basilica, their torches flashed on the gilded tiles and mosaics that decorated its front. At the summit of the vast flight of steps which led to the vestibule they were met by Zozimus, surrounded by the other priests of the Basilica; and we may well imagine what the emotions must have been that filled his breast and that of Orontia, as they met again at that wonderful moment of deliverance.

The barbarians laid their burdens on the ground, and knelt reverently on the sacred threshold. "Father," said the Gothic chief, "we have fulfilled the behest of Alaric, and have brought the servants and the vessels of St. Peter hither in safety. Wherefore we pray you to send us away in peace; for my master would face the legions of the imperial host rather than brave the curse of Him you serve."

"I curse no man," said the venerable deacon; "and for the deed you have done this night I pray that God and St. Peter may give you grace. Depart, therefore, in peace, as you came, and bethink you if the things you have seen this night be not fairer than the bloodshed and rapine which you have left: it may be the day will come when the echo of those Christian hymns will re-awaken in your ears; and then remember that

St. Peter's gates are ever open, and that he is no niggard in his thanks."

The Goths withdrew with the same order as they had observed in their march, and the priests, taking up the sacred vessels, and followed by the whole body of Christian fugitives, entered the church, and gave solemn thanks for their deliverance at the altar of the Apostles.

When day dawned over the Eternal City, where, but a few hours before, might have been seen the glory of the civilised world, there lay nothing but a heap of smoking ruins. A few edifices alone had escaped the general destruction: they were the Christian churches: and as the two great basilicas raised their gorgeous walls unscathed in the midst of the blackened and devastated city, they seemed to claim for the Church that rule and sceptre which had passed from Pagan Rome for ever. Not, indeed, that the great Babylon, whose empire had extended over a thousand years, was to be destroyed by a single blow: by turns she was to be crushed under the feet of the Huns, the Vandals, and the Ostrogoths, before the last breath of life could be trampled out of her; nor was it till all these successive tempests had swept over her seven hills that the last remains of her idolatrous superstitions finally disappeared. This was not effected by any partial destruction, but by one so utter and entire that when, in the following century, Totila determined on the final demolition of the city, the words of his fatal decree proclaimed that "Rome should be turned into a pasturage for cattle."

And this was no empty threat: for as the Goths, after tearing down the city gates, turned their backs on the smoking and ruined heaps, that had once been Rome, not a single human being remained within the circuit of the walls, and "for forty days," says Procopius, "there were none but wild beasts within the city."

Still the first fatal blow was struck by the conquest of Alaric; and when the news ran through the world

that Rome had yielded to the barbarians, a universal feeling spread among the Christians of the empire, that the prophecies of the Apocalypse had begun to receive their accomplishment, and that the judgments of God on the empire of Paganism were about to prepare the way for the triumph of the Cross. Other ages were to see that hope more perfectly fulfilled: the very temples of Heathen worship were to bear the sign of the Christian faith; the day was to come when the statues of the Apostles, dominant and triumphant, were to crown the summits of Rome's proudest monuments; the kingdom of the world was to become the kingdom of Christ; and that obelisk, once the wonder of the heathen world, was to bear on its face the inscription which we may read in our own day:

Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat

यह पुस्तक निम्नांकित तारीख तक वापिस करनी है।
This book is to be returned on the date last stampe

दिनांक Date	उधारकर्ता की संख्या Borrower's No.	दिनांक Date	उधार की स Borro N