GEOFFREY THE LOLLARD

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Author: Frances Eastwood

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The Rescue.–Page 149.

GEOFFREY
THE LOLLARD.

BY
FRANCES EASTWOOD,
AUTHOR OF "MARCELLA OF ROME."

"Blessed are those who die for God,
And earn the Martyr's crown of light,
Yet he who lives for God may lie
A greater conqueror in His sight."
–A. PROCTOR.

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PREFACE.

My chief authority for the facts which are interwoven with the fiction of this story is Fox, among whose horrors many curious and interesting accounts of the peculiar doctrines of the so-called Lollards may be found. Their views on the Sacraments and some other points did not entirely agree with those of the great Reformers, but their purity of life, their love for the Bible and devotion to the

cause of religious liberty, will entitle this spiritual awakening to be called the dawn of the Reformation. Its political aspect–though a very important one–I have avoided entering upon in this volume, and therefore the trial of Cobham and his companions has been very imperfectly described, but the full account of it which Fox gives will be found to be very interesting in an historical as well as religious point of view.

FRANCES EASTWOOD.

CONTENTS

GEOFFREY THE LOLLARD.

CHAPTER I.

The Church Under Ground.

The sun had set some time ago. Only a long, narrow line of crimson could be seen in the distant western sky, and even that was fast disappearing. Darkness had shrouded almost entirely the thick woods and rocky dells of this wild region; and thick clouds rapidly climbing the sky, and chilly winds sighing among the branches of the trees, foretold a stormy night.

So thought the elder of two lads who were leaning against the trunk of an ancient oak that marked the spot where three paths crossed each other, and then vanished in different directions in the forest. He wrapped his cloak more closely around him, and advanced a few paces down one of the paths, paused as if to listen, and then returned, with a disappointed look, to his companion. "Not come yet, Geoffrey?" said the younger. "No, he could not have received the message. It is more than an hour past sunset, and he was to leave Thomas Flynman's at noon. Could he have been discovered? Arundel's men were seen in Bristol, they say, three days ago, and it is not like they came for naught."

The last words were spoken more to himself than to his companion, and again, with hasty steps, he strode away into the darkness. He was coming back again without any intelligence, when suddenly the bushes were parted, and a tall man stepped out and fronted the two boys. For a moment they hardly knew whether to consider him as friend or foe, but the stranger lifted the Scottish bonnet which had shrouded his features, and said in a low voice:

"The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon. That is the watchword, I believe. Have they come? Is all ready? It is through great peril that I have come here, and I must be on my way before the dawn."

To these hurried questions the youths only answered at first by doffing their caps with profound reverence and respect; then a few low sentences were interchanged, and the three struck off down the path together. The elder lad led the way, only breaking the silence by occasional warnings about the road. "Have a care there, that root is high;" or, "Here is a low branch, beware!"

Then suddenly he left the path, descended a steep bank, and, bidding his companions stop a moment, drew from under a large stone a pine torch and a little lamp. Having lighted the former, and replaced the latter in its concealment, he stepped down upon some stones which formed the bed of a running brook, while he held the torch low, so as to show the best stepping-places; and all passed on in the deepest silence.

A long and weary march it was; and all were glad when the guide stopped before what seemed a mere mass of vines and bushes, at the foot of a rock. These he drew aside with a careful hand, and disclosed a low door, through which they passed; the younger lad closed it softly again, and they advanced as before.

But it was now a very different way. The fresh, pure, evening air had been exchanged for the damp, musty smell of this underground passage. The sides

were so close together that two persons could hardly have passed each other; the stranger had to stoop his head many a time to escape a blow from the jutting points of the roof; while the masses of rock which had fallen so encumbered the way that it required, at times, no small skill in climbing, to pass at all. Descending some flights of rough steps, and passing through another door, they found themselves in a much wider space, though it was still all dark and stony, but the roof was higher and the floor was smooth. A low hum of distant voices was now heard, which grew louder as they turned a corner and stopped before a door. A light tap was answered by one from within, and, as the door opened, such a flood of light poured upon them, that they shrunk back, with pained eyes, from the glare.

The light of many torches revealed a low, broad, windowless room, with a raised platform, and rude reading-desk at one end, and between thirty and forty persons–men, women and children. Some were engaged in earnest conversation, some sat in silent thought, while others were attending to the children.

At the entrance of the new comer, all arose and stood respectfully, while he threw aside his long cloak and cap, and stepped up to the platform. The two boys stood at his side, and all turned to him with expectant looks.

He held his hand over his eyes for a moment in secret prayer, and then, opening the huge leather-bound book on the desk, began to read. His rich, clear voice gave emphasis to every word in that glorious fourth chapter of Second Corinthians: "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God," etc. "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed." Here the reader's tones became more firmly joyful, his form grew more erect, his whole countenance beamed. He read on through that chapter, and nine verses of the following one; then turning back to the eighth of Romans, he read on rapidly to the thirty-first verse, when his voice rose until it rang again, and the stone walls echoed back his exultant words: "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? ... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"

Here his voice faltered, and his clasped hands were raised, while the tears, rolling from his up-turned eyes, fell upon his white beard: "For thy sake, we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." All the sorrow had left his tones now, his tall frame was raised to its utmost height, his clenched right hand was stretched toward heaven, the other grasped his robe,

and he almost shouted:

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

His audience, hardly knowing what they did, rose to their feet, and repeated with him the closing verses.

When the last words were spoken, silence reigned in the room, only broken by the low sobs of some of the assembly. Then a feeble, aged voice, near the centre of the room, said: "Let us pray."

Every knee was bent while the old man prayed in simple, touching words for their persecutors, Arundel the archbishop, the king, and others, and then for many near and dear ones who were even then in the persecutors' power. But he prayed more that they might be enabled to hold fast the faith without wavering, than that they might be delivered from bodily pain.

As he mentioned each by name, the deep though suppressed groan from some weeping member of the assembly told where a loving heart was longing for the safety of some dear one. But when they arose from their knees, all were calm and composed, grave but not sad, for the words of comfort had entered into many hearts.

Afterward the preacher discoursed for some time on the disputed doctrines of the day, proving the Lollard views by passages from the Bible, and from the writings of Wickliffe. He closed with an earnest appeal to all to stand fast in the faith. "Lo, friends and brethren, I know the power of Antichrist. Full many times have I suffered bonds and imprisonments for the truth's sake, yet therefore do not I boast. I do triumph, but not through myself, but that Christ may be glorified in my poor body. Yea, the flames and the stake would be welcome to me, if through my pains and steadfastness his name might be glorified and souls turned to him. And now I go to London, and it seemeth to me it is the Lord's will that there I should end this earthly journey. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness. Come then, my soul, and be of good courage. Look at the home prepared for thee in heaven. The smart of the flames is naught when it leadeth to everlasting glory above. Be of good courage, O my soul, for behold, Christ giveth thee the victory!"

Some of the women and children now prepared to depart, but not by means of the secret passage, which was known only to a few. The preacher was surrounded by the men, and eager questions were interchanged in regard to the safety of various individuals. A fine-looking, elderly man, evidently the father of the two boys, related the seizure of Lord Cobham and his trial, his manly defense before the council, his condemnation and imprisonment in the Tower, and the faint hopes which were entertained of his escape.

All this was new to the preacher, who had only just arrived from the south-

ern counties; and he received the tidings with surprise and grief.

"Lord, how long," he said, "how long shall thy people be down-trodden by the oppressor? Look upon thy church lest we be utterly consumed."

Refreshment was now brought to the stranger, for it wanted but two hours of daybreak, and he must soon be on the way.

Geoffrey, meanwhile, had gone through the secret entrance to the wood, to see if any danger were near, if any spy lurked on the road through which the traveller must pass. He had not been long gone before he returned, bringing with him another stranger, also closely wrapped in the coarse, loose cloak usually worn by the peasantry. His garments were dripping with the rain, which had fallen plentifully during the night, and stained with mud; and his wooden shoes were filled with water. Such was the person that Geoffrey, with a wondering, anxious look, presented to his father and the preacher. All he knew was that the stranger had given the pass-word, which entitled him to the secret passage through the rocks. He looked attentively upon the men before him, and then threw away his cloak, and raised the cap from his brow. For a moment they looked at the features thus suddenly disclosed, when, with a cry of joy, the preacher flung himself on the ground before him, clasping his knees, and exclaiming: "My lord, O my lord, alive and safe! My God in heaven, this is too much mercy! What, John De Forest, know you not the Lord of Cobham, the father of the church?"

Great joy was there over their distinguished guest; and ejaculations of wonder and thanksgiving burst forth as he detailed his trial, imprisonment, and escape from the Tower. He concluded by craving protection and concealment from De Forest until he should rest, and find an opportunity for escaping to Wales. Gladly were refreshment and rest given to the weary noble, than whom a better was not to be found in all England: the supporter of the poor, persecuted Lollards; the firm advocate of the Bible and a reformed church; the humble servant of God in the darkest age of superstition, priestcraft, and bigotry.

But now it was time the preacher should depart, for he must put many miles between him and Forest tower before the day broke. He rose, and giving his hand to Cobham, said:

"Be of good courage, my lord, Christ giveth the victory."

"Truly, John Beverly," said Cobham, "the Lord is good, and I shall trust in him. When shall we meet again?"

"In the Lord's kingdom," said Beverly, a smile beaming upon his noble features; and, pointing to the remains of the meal, he added: "At the supper of the Lamb, my lord, who so loved the world that he gave himself to the death for it, and, for whose sake, we are willing to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Thus they parted; the one to linger a few years in banishment and then meet at once his sufferings and reward; the other, with a heart full of faith, went

at once to lay down his life that he might receive it new at the hands of the Saviour he had so faithfully served, both in life and in death.

CHAPTER II.

Putting on the Yoke.

Forest Tower had been built in the time of the Normans, on the site of one destroyed by them, which dated several centuries further back. It was a low, massive building, of gray stone, with a square tower in the centre, from which it took its name. The windows were mere slits in the wall. The moat was well kept, free from weeds, and filled with water. It was crossed by a drawbridge, which had not been raised for some time, judging from the earth and grass which nearly covered it. Within there was little for show, everything for defense. The great hall was dimly lighted by narrow windows, set in immense depth of wall, entirely destitute of glass, and closed at night by wooden shutters. A large fire-place stood at each end, but without any chimney, and the smoke was permitted to escape by the windows, or wreathe itself in thick folds among the soot-hung rafters. Across the upper end was the dais, or platform, raised two steps from the rest of the floor, and containing a stone table and a few roughly-made arm-chairs. Below, down the middle of the room, ran another long table, supplied with benches and stools of the rudest workmanship. The sleeping apartments were still less furnished–a chest for a wardrobe, and a heap of straw covered with a coarse blanket being all they contained, for this old fortalice was a little behind the age, even then, in the luxuries of life.

Forest Tower had been owned by the De Forests ever since its erection. Once its domain had embraced many miles of the adjacent country on every side. Its halls had been thronged with retainers, and Sir Thomas De Forest had led out a hundred yeomen to fight in the Scottish battles under king Edward the First. But times were now changed. The loyal De Forests had refused to acknowledge Henry Mortimer when he had seized the crown, and had taken part in every rebellion that had had for its object the restoration of the miserable Richard the Third. Consequently its fortunes had greatly declined. Manor after manor was confiscated by the crown or sold by its needy proprietors to pay their fines. Its bands of yeomen and retainers had all gone to serve other masters or been slain in the numerous combats, and only a few white-haired old domestics remained

to keep up the shadow of its ancient splendor.

Nor were matters improved when the present John, Baron De Forest, embraced the Lollard faith. Many who had until then been his best friends, became his fiercest enemies. His very servants, with but few exceptions, became spies upon him, and reported his heretical doings to the authorities of the church. But, nothing daunted, he continued to labor for the cause of the Reformation, fully anticipating a martyr's death, but unshrinking in the performance of every duty however perilous.

He had lost his wife shortly after the birth of his youngest son, and his two boys had grown up in close companionship with him, sharing his thoughts, his plans, his spiritual hopes and joys. Geoffrey, the elder, was now fourteen, tall and robust, with a body capable of bearing fatigue and exposure with impunity, and a soul fired with the very spirit of Lollardism.

Hubert, his brother, younger by nearly four years, was cast in a different mould. He had the delicate features and expression of his mother, the gentle Lady Margaret; and while Geoffrey's hair hung in thick, black curls over a low, square forehead, Hubert's high, fair brow, and gentle blue eyes, gave a pensive and retiring expression to his face. It was his dearest delight to pore over an old manuscript Bible which his father, with much difficulty, had procured, and to store his mind with chapter after chapter of its contents. He would sometimes obtain one of Wickliffe's tracts, which he loved to copy out for himself on parchment. Different as the boys were in dispositions, they loved each other with all their hearts; for, with no other playmates, and no mother's love to look to, they were naturally drawn nearer together than most children. Geoffrey, with all an elder brother's sense of responsibility and guardianship, reverenced in Hubert that love of learning which he did not possess; and Hubert looked up to Geoffrey, exulting in his superior strength and fearlessness. They were never long separated, each was unhappy without the other; so sometimes Geoffrey would leave his out-of-door sports to sit by his brother's side, and try to make out the crabbed letters in the big book; and sometimes Hubert would brave the storms and forests to keep Geoffrey company.

It was popularly said that Forest Tower might be divided into three parts, one above ground, one below ground, and one consisting of concealed chambers and passages. The rock upon which the castle was built contained many natural caverns, and these had been enlarged, and connected by artificial vaults, all extending many feet below the hall pavement, where the cheerful sunbeams had never penetrated, and where, at the time of the Norman conquest, many a Saxon had pined away his life. Besides this, there were fearful stories told by old women in the cottage chimney-corners, of rich Jews seized by the old barons of the forest in the reigns of John and Richard. It was said that those who passed near those

vaults at night have heard shrieks for mercy, and cries of agony, and they might also see the ghosts of these unfortunate men wandering among the rocks, and seeking their stolen gold.

The barons took no pains to undeceive the people, for it was greatly to their interest to keep off curious and untimely visitors. During the perilous times of the Border warfare and civil wars, they had had occasion to build many secret retreats–some in the thickness of the massy walls, others in the adjacent rocks and concealed passages leading from the interior of the building far out into the open country in different directions. It was no wonder then that the ignorant peasantry thought they must be aided by supernatural powers, and attributed their miraculous appearances and disappearances to satanic agency.

During the preaching of Wickliffe, John De Forest had become convinced of the errors of the church, but had never taken any very active part in the Reformation, until Lord Cobham had sent a preacher, John Beverly, into the neighborhood, whose stirring appeals had aroused him to a sense of its importance. From that time he had become the most zealous supporter of Lollardism in the West. Refugees from every part of the country bent their steps toward Forest Tower, sure of a retreat in its many hiding places; communication by means of signals, known only to the initiated, was kept up with the principal reformers and preachers, and meetings for worship were frequently held in some of its largest vaults.

The reason why it had been exempted from the visitation of the law was partly on account of the ghostly legends connected with it, and partly on account of its well-known resources for defense or concealment. At the time of which we are writing, the archbishop had sent a band of men to scour the country for heretics, and spies abounded everywhere. Nevertheless, from far and near, the people had gathered, by twos and threes, for this great meeting held in the tower vaults.

CHAPTER III.

Forest Tower and its Inmates.

After the departure of the preacher, Lord Cobham was led up the stairs by his host to where a door in the wall revealed a small room, with a stone floor, and bed of straw.

"It is better to sleep securely than softly, my lord," said Sir John; "our forest beds have no French hangings."

"My Master had not where to lay his head, and why should I, the least of his servants, have more?" replied Lord Cobham; "but now I shall hasten to my rest, for this body is sadly wearied with the labors of the last two days. A few hours will, however, be sufficient, and then, my trusty friend, I would see you again; the Lord be with you."

Sir John bowed and departed, while Lord Cobham knelt on the stones and offered up a simple prayer to Him who thus far led him in safety, and delivered him from those who sought to take his life. They were no Latin Ave Marias or Litanies that he poured forth, nor were his petitions recorded on a string of amber beads. In his own mother tongue, in the sweet and touching words and phrases of the Bible he loved so well, he talked with his God, and angels alone recorded the conversation. And then he laid him down upon his bed and slept like a child–slept as the apostle Peter slept, ere the angel awakened him to go forth from his dungeon.

Meanwhile Geoffrey and Hubert, cross-bow in hand, were rapidly treading the intricate forest paths. It was not the chase upon which they were bent, though a brace or two of birds, and a squirrel, hung over their shoulders; it was not the deer they were seeking when they gazed earnestly down the paths, or peered curiously into the hollow cavity of the oak which was mentioned in the first chapter. Deep holes, formed partly by time, and partly by man's hand, were found among the roots, each opening toward one of the different roads which led off into the forest. This was what might be called the Lollards' general news office or telegraph station. From one of these Geoffrey drew forth a small twig with two branches. After looking at it carefully, he threw it away, saying, cheerfully, to his brother: "No danger there, Hubert; Peter Lainton has seen that all is safe as far as the mountains; that is well for my Lord of Cobham, who will have to pass that way to-night. Now for the southern road." The forked stick was there also, denoting safety; but the next cavity contained a number of pebbles arranged two in a row, while in the centre was stuck a bit of red leaf. The boys immediately comprehended the signal. "Four, eight, ten horsemen," said Hubert, with a troubled look, "brother, is there not danger there?" "Certainly, Arundel's men can not be far off," said Geoffrey, thoughtfully, "probably though beyond Norris's Ford, else Peter Lainton had heard something. I will put the signal for him to be on the watch, perhaps they are only bound for Bristol, where they say there has been some trouble between the troops and the people." While he was speaking, he had been looking around for the twig of a tree. Having found it, he peeled the bark off it in rings, and partly breaking off the top, stuck it in the ground in the hollow opening to the southern road, and scratched two marks in

the ground behind it. "Two hours after sunset," said Hubert, "is not that rather soon? There will be full moon to-night." "Still, father says it were better for him to start early than late, there is no telling when the soldiers may be here. How is it with the London road?" This hole contained two peeled sticks tied with cords in several places, and bent over toward the south-east. Around them were grouped several black beans. Too well the boys knew the meaning of the signal. The road to which it referred led to London. On that road had been seen, that morning, two Lollards, one a preacher, for one of the sticks was pointed a little at the top, and the black beans represented the dreaded emissaries of the church. The boys looked at each other; one name was trembling on the lips of both, but it was too fearful a thought to utter. There had been no preacher to their knowledge in the forest save him whose holy words had filled them with such awe and rapture the previous night. For John Beverly to be taken before Arundel's court was certain death, and death in its most fearful shape, the lingering agony of the chain and the flame.

Geoffrey's face grew pale, and he bent closer over the little signal as though he hoped to discover some additional circumstance that might contradict his suppositions. It was not absolutely certain that the prisoner and the preacher were the same. Beverly had intended to take the northern road; but it was very likely that he had heard of the band of soldiers there, and had turned aside. With this poor comfort they were forced to be content, and silently turned their steps toward the Tower.

Sir John heard their tidings, and construed them even more favorably than his son. The preacher, he said, when he believed his duty called him in a certain direction, was not one to turn back through fear. He had firmly signified his intention of meeting an assembly of Lollards in Flintshire the following Sabbath. At any rate, it were better not to alarm Lord Cobham with these uncertainties. Hubert's spirits rose at this new view of the case; but Geoffrey read in his father's face a contradiction of his words. Still he said nothing, but followed him to the room in the hall.

Lord Cobham laid aside the Bible from which he had been reading, and replied to their respectful salutations that he had slept well, and was quite refreshed. He then turned to Geoffrey, and looked earnestly at his tall, well-proportioned form and sinewy limbs. "Wouldst thou be a soldier, my son?" he said.

"Yea, my lord," replied the boy, "so I be able to fight for freedom and God's word."

The old soldier's face glowed at hearing the brave words; but he said nothing, only turned to the younger.

"And what wouldst thou do, my son?"

"O my lord!" said Hubert, his voice quivering with the strong emotion working in his breast, "could I but preach the word, as doth the good man who has just left us, then were I highly favored."

"The Lord grant thee thy desire, my child!" said Cobham. "Yea, and I think he will; for there is none that striveth to do his work unto whom some part shall not be given. It may not be according to his desire, in the way which he has marked out for himself; but to work in the Lord's vineyard will not be denied him. But come, let us see how thou wilt teach the people. Wouldst thou tell him who has done evil to go and confess him to the priest that he may, by him, be absolved, and then go and sin over again?"

"Nay, surely," answered the boy, his eye kindling, "for the priest hath no power by his word to forgive sins, but God only; neither will *he* do it unless the sinner earnestly repent him of his sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life in the future, by God's help. Unto the Lord only must the people shrive themselves."

"Yet the priests will tell thee that in the Scriptures standeth this verse: 'Confess your sins one to another.' What sayest thou then?"

"Let the priest bend the knee before me and the people, and confess his wickedness; then at the end–if there be any end–I will in my turn shrive myself to him, and to all people, for so saith the Scriptures."

Cobham smiled at the boy's logic.

"True, my son, thou sayest rightly; but suppose then that they put thee to the test, how instructest thou the people then?"

"I shall tell the people," said the boy stoutly, "that there is no more of the real flesh and blood of our Saviour in the wafer and wine of the holy mysteries after the words of consecration than before."

"Yet, my son, beware lest thou then fall into error. Christ doth say when he presenteth the paten and the chalice to his disciples, 'This is my body, this is my blood;' therefore he *is* present under the form of bread and wine in the sacrament, though the substance of the bread and wine be still therein contained. Take heed not to fall into the great error either of declaring the elements to be absolutely changed into the flesh and blood of Christ, or, on the other hand, of denying his perfect spiritual presence in the mysteries he has ordained. Thou hast been well taught; hold fast the form of sound words contained in this Holy Book, then shall our Lord hold thee fast in his heavenly kingdom. But now, my son, thou knowest well that the priest is not convinced by this, but is rather incensed thereby, because he loveth darkness rather than light; and to stop thy mouth he will excommunicate thee as a heretic forever from the church of God. What will thou do then?"

To understand the full force of excommunication, we must remember that the excommunicated person was put under a sentence of absolute outlawry. His

relations and friends were forbidden to give him any comfort or assistance under penalty of the same curse. None might give or sell him shelter, food, or clothing; and at his death his unburied body was cast into unhallowed ground, or left for the beasts and birds of prey to feed upon.

The boy did not shrink from the dreadful picture thus brought before his mind, but said quietly:

"He who hath made the heavens saith: 'I shut and no man openeth, and I open and no man shutteth.' Their power then is only in words which cannot hurt the soul. Having favor with God, who alone is powerful, wherefore care we for the wrath of men?"

"Truly saith the lad, Sir John," cried Cobham, cheerily, "if we have the lion on our side, care we for the barking of the foxes? But listen now: they will not stop here, but will then deliver thee to the secular power, and thou mayest languish long years in a dungeon. What sayest thou to that?"

"Paul and Silas sang for joy in their prison-house, and angels have visited oftentimes the prisons of the saints and loosened their bonds."

"Yet again," said the Lollard, rising and fixing his dark, piercing eye full on the boy's face. "Yet once more: the dungeon, be it never so dark, is too fair a dwelling for the heretic. They will gird thee in an iron chain and hang thee on the accursed gallows, and kindle under thee the smarting flame which will slowly creep up thy quivering limbs as though loath to end thy sufferings. Think, boy, of the smart, of the anguish–think and answer before God and man–wilt thou die for the Lord's sake?"

For a moment Hubert grew very pale–his whole frame seemed to shrink with horror from the thought. Every quivering nerve cried out to him to draw back; but the faith in that young heart was strong, and triumphed. The blood rushed back into his face, and tears, not of sorrow, dimmed the fire of his eyes:

"*I will, so help me Christ!*"

CHAPTER IV.

Farewell To Home.

"Look you, John De Forest," said the Lord of Cobham solemnly, "wilt thou give this thy son unto the Lord, that he may serve the Lord from his youth? God hath surely put his mark upon him in that he hath taken away from him both the

love and the fear of the world. The Lord receiveth not the grudged gift, the Lord loveth the cheerful giver; answer then from the heart before God and man–wilt thou give this thy son unto the Lord or no?"

John De Forest bowed his head upon his hands for a moment, then raised it, and said firmly:

"Yea, truly, as the Lord hath given them to me, so give I them back into his hands."

Silence reigned in the room for some moments; Sir John had sunk his head upon his hands again; then the old Lollard arose, and laying his hands on the boys' heads, blessed them in scripture phrase:

"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord look upon you with his mercy. I pray not that he may give unto you the peace of this world; in these latter days Christ is making true his word that he came to send a sword into the world, and peace is the portion of the coward. The Lord give unto you a Christian warfare, a martyr's death, a victor's crown!"

John De Cobham next proceeded to inform the boys concerning the arrangements which he and their father had made for them. The latter was anxious for them to be away from the Tower for various reasons. He was fully aware that an attack upon it was meditated by Arundel, and he wished his sons, who could be no assistance to him, to be as far removed from the danger as possible. Then, besides, he wished that they should enjoy the instructions of some learned man, an advantage it was impossible for them to obtain in their retired home. Lord Cobham agreed with him, and mentioned a certain Roger Markham, formerly curate of Romney in Kent. The nobleman was also desirous of sending messages concerning his escape and other matters to his friends in London, for which place he wished the boys immediately to depart.

Geoffrey's free, high spirit longed for more of the world than was to be seen from the narrow boundaries of the Tower domain. He had been once to London, and it seemed to him a land of delights; so that the very thought of going there to view all its wonders, and mingle with those of his own age, caused his face to flush with pleasure and his heart to beat fast with hope. Hubert's heart also leaped for joy; but his thoughts were not his brother's thoughts. His prayer was answered; he might now go forth and labor for the Lord, and learn how to preach the glad gospel tidings–gospel in the fullest sense of the word, good news of freedom from Satan's chain, and the galling yoke of popish traditions. He might read the whole of those tracts from the pen of Wickliffe, of which he had only as yet seen fragments. But more than all, he might see a *whole Bible*! The one which his father had procured with difficulty, and kept with danger, was not entire–some chapters from the New Testament were wanting, and nearly all the historical books of the Old. These this Lollard child longed to feast upon with

an earnestness which would shame many a Christian of the present day, whose legible, perfect Bible is ever *at* his hand, but seldom *in* it.

These joyful thoughts were followed by painful ones. Their father, who had been the only companion and protector of their solitary boyhood, father and mother in one, was united to them by no common tie. They had shared, as children seldom do, not only in his cares, and doubts, and sorrows, but also in his joys, and hopes, and consolation. Him they must leave, and also the dear old Tower, every corner of which was associated with pleasant home remembrances, and it must be a long time before they saw either their home or their father again, if, in these uncertain times, they ever should. But the Lord had need of them; they had put their hands to the plough–should they draw back?

Lord Cobham next handed them some folded pieces of parchment. "This one," he said, "ye shall show at such places as ye stop; they will then receive you in my name, or rather"–and the Lollard bowed low–"in the name and for the sake of Him whom I serve. Ye shall tell them of my safety, no more; also that they be of good cheer and hold fast the Lord Jesus Christ, looking to the reward. And when ye arrive at the city, ye shall go straight to the house of Philip Naseby, a trader, who dwells near Whitefriars, just by the bridge. Ye shall give him this watchword–not openly, but in the midst of other words–'The Lord is my help all the day long;' and he will answer: 'How long is the day?' When ye are entirely alone with him, bid him tell Sir Roger Ashton that the bird has flown to the mountain. Will ye remember all this?"

The texts were familiar to both the boys, and besides, they were too much accustomed to the various methods of communicating by signals not to perceive their signification and importance; and having indicated their assent, Cobham continued:

"These letters the trader will give as they are directed; but this last ye shall give yourselves to good Roger Markham, and he will instruct you in all useful and clerkly things, for he is well learned in the schools of Oxford. In due time, my son, thou shalt preach; but see that thou preach only 'Christ and him crucified,' so shall his Spirit rest upon thee and thy labors, and shall instruct thee, as no man can, in the holy mysteries. The Lord bless you both and give you of his work to do, whether it be to sit and wait his good pleasure, or to teach his doctrines unto men, or to die for the truth's sake. He keepeth the reward, and verily it can never fail."

It did not take either of the boys long to prepare for their journey. The letters and a few pages of Scripture were sewed into the inner lining of their tunics, a wallet containing some provision was hung at their sides, and, staff in hand, like the patriarchs of old, they stood. Their father was too poor to give them horses, and the long, weary journey must be made on foot.

It would not have been wise to depart openly, so when the sun had set more than an hour, they, with Lord Cobham, passed along one of the subterranean passages which opened far out into the open country. There they parted with the noble Lollard. He, with their father, who was to accompany him a few miles on his way, turned toward the Welsh mountains; they, with stout hearts, but tear-filled eyes, set their faces toward the east.

Half an hour later they stood on the summit of a hill overlooking the tower. The full moon was casting its sheets of silver over the brown autumn landscape. The storm of the preceding night had entirely passed away, and only left a breezy freshness in the evening air. Far to the west loomed up the mountains of Wales, their peaks already glistening with snow. Far beneath them in the valley lay their home. The gray towers cast their shadows across the moat, and looked even more massive than they were in reality. Only a single light appeared in the buttery window, like a twinkling star. Never had the scene appeared so lovely to the young Lollards as it did when they were about leaving it, perhaps forever. But again the boys' thoughts were different. The elder looked back to the long, unbroken line of ancestry which for so many hundred years had looked upon those walls and said, "They are mine." Far to the right hand and left lay the broad acres of woodland and pasturage which had owned his grandsire lord. Now all was changed. Close and narrow were the lines which bounded the patrimony one day to be his. But why? Were his arms less sinewy, his frame less well-knit than all the Geoffreys, and Johns, and Richards that had gone before? Why should Henry the usurper, who had no more just claim to the throne of England than himself, have a right to take away his father's lands because he would not forsake the cause of his rightful monarch? And now he, and the brother he loved so well, must become dependents on the bounty of others because they wished to read the word of God in their own tongue, and worship him in their own way. Must this always last? Should the oppressor always walk about the earth?

God thinks it right to speak no more to men in dreams and visions, or to point out to them the dim shadows of coming events. Faith in his wisdom is to be our only guide. But do I err when I say that sometimes the Comforter, who is expressly said to take of the things of God and show them unto us, whispers to the fainting soul words of cheering, and lifts, though it be but a very little way, the veil that hides the future? Thus it was with the Lollard boys. A voice in their hearts said to their inward eyes, "Ephatha!" be ye opened! and straightway they saw dimly, but surely, a glorious sight. The looked-for time of refreshing they saw arrived; England, their beautiful England, was free; and the pure Word of God in all its sweetness and power, reigned in every heart and home. The night of popish ignorance had fled away forever, the martyr's blood had ceased dropping its precious seed into the earth, and instead thereof had sprung up an

abundant harvest through the length and breadth of the world. Thus it was that the elder brother's heart responded joyfully to the younger's lips in the sublime words of the prophet:

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing to Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

And then he added the words of a greater than Isaiah: "Verily I say unto you, there is no one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, for my sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this present time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come, *life everlasting*."

One quick glance they cast toward their earthly possessions, and a long eager one toward their heavenly home–then they passed on their way.

CHAPTER V.

In London.

The snow was falling fast and thick in London, covering with its pure mantle the quaint houses which formed that part of the metropolis called White Friars, and making the Thames, which flowed close under their walls, look all the blacker by contrast. Upon one of the bridges spanning this river, stood the two young Lollards. They looked very weary and travel-worn, and the younger had sunk down exhausted on one of the stone seats. They had been more than a month on their journey, having been detained more than once by storms and sickness, so that the month of December was fairly commenced. Hubert had suffered most from the fatigue, cold, and exposure, but even Geoffrey looked pale and weary, though he strove to cheer his brother with the thought of how near they were to their journey's end, and of the wonders that lay before them.

"Look, Hubert! this is the bridge we were told of, and yonder high wall

must be White Friars; it cannot be many steps to good Philip Naseby's." Then as the other did not seem to attend, he added, lower: "We must not be seen loitering here as though we were strangers–Mark Catliffe may have dispatched word of our coming, and it were best to be among friends ere our enemies know we have come."

The boy raised himself with an effort, and they proceeded. Fortunately, it was but a stone's throw; and having passed under the high wall of the monastery, they turned into a narrow lane, and stopped at the open front of a shop. The master stood upon the step; they both knew him from the description they had heard of him; but it was best to be on the safe side; so they approached as though wishing to purchase.

"Have you a warm cloak, master trader, that may serve to keep the snow and rain from my shoulders this cold Christmas?"

The man looked rather suspiciously at the boys' tattered garments, but a glance at their faces changed his tone to one of respect and pity. "The Lord save you, young masters, it is truly but sorry weather to travel in. Will ye not step in and rest a bit?"

"I thank you, Philip Naseby," said Geoffrey, stepping within the shop; "the Lord is truly my help all the day long."

The trader's face lighted up as he gave the necessary answer to the password, and grasping a hand of each, he led them to a little back-apartment, and placed stools for them. He received them as eagerly as though they were his nearest relations, though as yet he knew neither their name nor their errand. Lord Cobham's message explained all, and then they were overwhelmed with questions. Good news always makes the bearers welcome, and the fact that they brought intelligence of Lord Cobham's escape, as well as their father's name, was a full passport to the honest trader's heart.

He called his wife, and having told her who were their guests, she dispatched their daughter to bring some refreshment, while she and her husband removed their torn and soaked outer garments.

"Poor boy!" said the good woman, as she noticed Hubert's bleeding and blistered feet, "thou hast walked far to day?"

"A good twenty miles since midnight," sighed the weary child, the very mention of the distance bringing back, with redoubled force, the memory of suffering.

"But why did you not stop at the house of good Mark Catliffe, the miller of Lianton? He has given a bed and a welcome to many a weary traveler, and especially to those who love the Master."

Hubert's face grew very sad, but Geoffrey's eyes flashed with indignation, and he answered before his brother could speak. "He is a Judas; he hath sold his

faith for silver; the Lord requite him!"

"How! sayest thou that Mark Catliffe is a renegade?" said the trader, astonished.

"Ay, that he hath returned to the bosom of the holy church"–and the boy's mouth curled with contempt–"and has received as a reward for informing where the vile traitor, John Beverly, might be found, the right to levy a large toll on the flour he grinds, and a good chest of white money beside. He saith that it is his firm hope, that those arch-traitors, Lord Cobham and John De Forest, will speedily be taken and committed to the flames, their ashes being scattered to the winds, and their souls sent to their father, the Devil; always praying the saints that he may stand by and see."

The trader lifted up his hands and eyes in horror; but before he could speak, his wife had asked eagerly:

"And how escaped ye, my young masters? Did he not try to deliver you up also?"

"God delivered us from his hands, good dame," said the boy, reverently. "As we drew near to his house, we heard him in conversation with the priest, so while we waited behind the hedge for him to be through before we presented ourselves, we heard his words. We fear he has sent a messenger after us, for he observed us as we ran away; but we kept to the by-paths and so escaped, but found no place to rest. But now, good master Naseby, we will to our beds, if it please you, for we are sore wearied."

The next day, Geoffrey told his host of the message he had from Lord Cobham to Sir Roger Ashton.

"Then it was he who favored his escape," said the merchant. "I thought as much. I am glad that holy man has escaped, but I would it were some other than Sir Roger that must give his life for his friends."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Geoffrey, "not that Sir Roger is a prisoner?"

"Ay, ay," said the tradesman, mournfully, "in the self-same dungeon whence he aided his friend to escape; and they say he is to be tried this week, for treason and heresy, with John Beverly the preacher, and many others; for Arundel is thirsting for blood all the more now his nobler prey has escaped him. There is nothing left for them all but the stake and the flame, and that right speedily."

The boy bowed his head on his hands in deep grief He saw again that noble old man speaking, as though they were his own, the words of the apostle: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Now he was to prove their truth; but the boy felt no fear of his failing; he was rather trying to answer a question of his own heart, thinking whether he was also ready, for never had death appeared so near. But quickly there came to his mind the words of his Master, "I have prayed for you

that your faith fail not," and rousing himself, he spoke cheerfully to his friend:

"Do you think I could see them?"

"I doubt it," replied the trader; "and yet you might if you made friends with the keepers, under pretence of taking them something."

"I will go now," said the boy, rising, "lest it be too late to-morrow. Give me that cloak of russet–I will change dresses with your apprentice, and take it to Sir Roger as though he had ordered it."

In a few moments Geoffrey, with the bundle on his shoulder, had started for the Tower. Philip Naseby accompanied him as far as he dared, then pointed out the rest of the way, and left the young Lollard to go on his perilous errand alone. The first gate was easily passed, as a party was just entering, and having gone through the first, the porters at the inner one did not attempt to detain him.

So far, so well; and, having had the position of the passages and buildings pointed out to him, his retentive memory enabled him to find his way without difficulty. He soon reached the guard-room filled with idle soldiers, who were only too glad to find amusement in questioning, and perhaps teasing the poor 'prentice. However, he tipped his cap a little on one side, and began as bravely as possible.

"My masters, can you tell me in which part of this castle my Lord Sir Roger Ashton, and John Beverly the preacher, are confined?"

"Halloo! who have we here?" exclaimed one of the soldiers, setting down his cup of beer, and wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "What want you with the heretics, the traitors, the sniveling rogues? Hast thou there a nice package of rope-ladder, and other comfortable things, for their great relief and satisfaction, that they may fly out as did that arch-traitor Cobham? Had I been Arundel, he should have had no chance to try his wings; what need is there of a trial for a heretic who worships the Devil? Let the Devil help his friends, say I, and I would hasten their progress to their master by a good bonfire in the market-place. I tell you," he said, bringing his great fist down on the table with a force that made the pewter tankards and plates ring again, "a heretic should have no more trial than my dog that had run mad."

During this speech Geoffrey had been unfastening his bundle, and now held up the cloak before them. "Look ye, my masters, here is no treason," he said humbly, "only a russet cloak which was ordered a week ago, and now my master sends it. I pray you look at it; it is of good cloth, and it were pity they should not see it."

"Ha! of good cloth, indeed! Confess your master stole it; it is as full of holes as the sails of an Indian ship that hath stood many a blow in the lower sea. Well, and how much doth your honest master receive for such a pretty thing?"

This was a rather hard question for Geoffrey, for, having taken up the trade

only for the occasion, he had not the least idea what the usual price of such an article was; so he had to answer as best he might.

"Two nobles, my gentle masters, which same is but little, seeing it is fair cloth. Though not good enough, mayhap, for your worships, it will keep out the rain and the cold."

"Then there is no need of it for those heretics yonder, for we are about to fit on them so fine a garment of gay crimson, that having once tried it on, they shall never more feel the cold and rain as we poor fellows have to, but shall dance as gayly as harlequins at a fair. It will be a sight to do the heart good of a true son of the church. Holy Virgin! I would take an extra year in purgatory rather than miss that sight."

The boy's heart grew sick, and his cheek pale at the thought of the fearful fate to which the soldier's jesting words referred; when another man, with a pleasanter face, filled a cup and pushed it toward him, saying:

"There, drink that, my lad, and it will bring back the color to your face. When you have fought a few battles in France under king Harry, and waded ankle-deep in the blood of the fine French gentry, you will have a stouter heart. Come now, quit your trade and be one of us."

Geoffrey drank, and did feel stronger; but just as he was about to answer, a stir within turned the attention of the whole company another way. The door opened wide, and the Lieutenant of the Tower entered, followed by the sheriff and other officers leading two men heavily fettered.

Geoffrey looked up and recognized in one of the noble, kingly-looking old men, the preacher he had come to seek, and he had no doubt but that his companion was Sir Roger. In a moment the soldiers, at a word from the Lieutenant, formed in a line on each side of the sheriffs, and prepared to escort the prisoners to the place of trial. The boy had nothing to do but to follow as fast as possible, and he saw the whole train pass quickly through the various courts to the river-gate, and there embarking in some barges ready manned with stout rowers, they passed out of sight around an angle of the building.

CHAPTER VI.

The Trial.

Arundel sat in his seat of judgment in the great hall of one of the monasteries

belonging to the Dominican Friars. Beside him, in full canonicals, sat the bishops of London, Winchester, and others, ready to assist him, by their learning and authority, to cleanse the church from the stains of heresy and schism. Below the table, where clerks sat ready with pens and parchment to take down the evidence, there were men of every degree and class. Friars in black, and friars in gray, friars whose portly persons reminded the spectator more of midnight wassail than of midnight prayer, and friars whose pale, hungry-looking faces, gaunt bodies, and knotted scourges hanging at their sides, were in strict conformity with the stern rule of Saint Benedict.

Pilgrims with "scallop-shell and sandal shoon," were gathered in little knots, discussing the various merits of the different shrines and holy places they had visited. One tall, stalwart-looking fellow related that, after walking bare-headed, with dried peas in his shoes, to the tomb of the holy St. Thomas à Becket, he had been suddenly cured of an ulcer in the leg which had troubled him for five years. Here a little man with a shrill voice interrupted him, and declared that nothing could equal the efficacy of the holy water from the altar of our Lady of Lorreto, and that her shrine was covered with offerings made to her by those whose prayers for safety from danger and recovery from sickness had been answered, even though they were far away. The sonorous voice of a vender of reliquaries was now heard, declaring that a morsel of the finger-nail of St. Bridget, which he had there in a leaden box, would keep a sailor from even wetting his feet during the hardest storm that ever blew on the Channel. He had also a crucifix, blessed by the Pope, containing a hair of St. Joseph which would give to whoever wore it next his heart long days of uninterrupted happiness and prosperity, and all this for a single noble! A little at one side stood a pardoner with his little pieces of parchment inscribed with pardons for every imaginable sin, and covering various periods, from a week to a lifetime. The prices were graded according to the enormity of the offence, and the length of time; one poor fellow who had knocked down a priest having to pay a mark, while another, who had only taken a chicken from his neighbor's yard, went off happy and secure from all transgressions for the next month, on the payment of a few groats. As he turned to a new set of applicants, a sturdy begging friar went around beseeching, or rather demanding, charity, in the name of all the saints in the calendar.

But now pilgrim, pardoner, and beggar turned alike toward the judgment-seat, for the crier had called upon John Beverly, Sir Roger Ashton, and many others, to come into court, and the men-at-arms were beating back the crowd, to make room for the prisoners to approach the table. All eyes were turned upon the nine-and-thirty men who marched between soldiers armed to the teeth, up the long hall, and took their places before their judge. A boy, who had just edged his way through the crowd, stood, with flushed cheeks and panting breath, as

near to them as he could get, and then the trial began.

The crime alleged to have been committed by John Beverly and his companions, namely, that of attending meetings for other worship than the church allowed, and reading the works of John De Wickliffe to the people, needed no proof; they gloried in what their enemies called their shame, and ever since their arrest had only confirmed the accusation by their conduct in prison. They were mostly men of little note, but with Sir Roger Ashton it was different. He was a man of influence and position, who, until very lately, had been considered a faithful son of the church; and even now his character stood so high among the people, that could he be induced to recant, it would restore the ecclesiastical body to that popular favor which they had lost by their treatment of the favorite Lord Cobham, and at the same time strike a heavy blow at the progress of the reformed religion.

Having therefore read his accusation, they began to question him concerning the disputed points of faith.

As to the grand "test" question, as it was called, whether the body of Christ is really present in the sacrament, he answered so boldly and distinctly as to set the question of his Lollardism completely at rest. Fearlessly he declared that the bread and wine were no more blood and flesh after the priest had pronounced the words of consecration, than was that which was daily served at his own table; nevertheless, they were in a measure holy, having been set apart to commemorate the Saviour's death, and as such, were to be reverenced, but never worshipped.

Here the Benedictine friar raised his hands and eyes in holy horror at the very thought, and a hum of indignation was heard through the hall. The guards, however, soon enforced silence, and Arundel put the next point.

Drawing out a small, richly ornamented crucifix from under his robe, and holding it up before Ashton, he said: "What think you of this?"

Many of the assembly dropped on their knees, and all bared their heads before the sacred symbol; the nine-and-thirty alone stood upright and unmoved.

"It is a pretty bauble," said the prisoner, "and as such I would put it away carefully lest it should be harmed."

"Know you not that that is the cross of Christ through which salvation is come into the world? Infidel! saith not the scripture, 'God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Christ'?"

"Yes, truly so saith it, but not in a poor bit of gold. It is not the wooden tree that doth save me from my sins, but he that died thereon. Him do I worship, and to him do I bow the knee. Cast aside these idols, these vain things that draw away the hearts of the people from the only God; pray to the living Jesus, and carry about with you holy works and righteous deeds, and it will be of more service to your souls than a houseful of glittering toys, or dead men's musty bones."

"Holy mother of Christ, and blessed saint Patrick!" exclaimed the relic-vender. "The finger-bone of St. Catharine and the tooth of St. Jerome of no avail! God help the poor sinners then, for they must surely perish."

"My Lord," whispered the bishop of London to the Primate, "were it not best to end this scene, lest the common people be led away by these blasphemous doctrines? There can exist now no doubt of his being a heretic, and that of the most dangerous kind."

The archbishop was anxious to return to his palace, where an episcopal dinner was to be given that day, and so agreed with him perfectly. He therefore turned to the prisoners and said:

"It doth fully appear that ye are all confirmed heretics, holding devilish doctrines which the church doth declare false and blasphemous; therefore, that we may cleanse the church of Christ from all stains and blemishes, we, in our office of vicegerents of God on earth, do command you to leave off these your abominable ways, and return as penitents to the bosom of Holy Mother church, who is ever ready to receive her wandering children when, with true repentance, they turn to her for pardon and mercy. Bethink you of your ways, and of your poor wives and children, confess your grievous sins, perform the pilgrimages and penances which your spiritual fathers shall appoint, and then, having thus shown your sorrow for your past offences, be received into that church which now stretches out her arms of mercy toward you."

At the words "wives and children," some of the poor men's countenances fell, as they thought of the households which must be left desolate, and their babes crying for food. But at that moment a woman stepped from the crowd with a little one on her arm, and advancing toward one of the prisoners, exclaimed:

"Hold, Jacob Simmons! think of naught but the Lord's honor. I am strong, and the children likely, and God will never suffer the widow and orphan to want. Be not a coward; sell not thy soul for temporal comfort. Art thou a coward? fearest thou to die? Up! be a man! that this, thy child and my child, may be proud to call thee father!"

The woman disappeared in the throng the moment she had uttered the last word, but the noble appeal had strengthened all their hearts, and not a head but was held more upright, and not a soul but responded to the answer of their spokesman, Beverly.

"My Lords the Bishops and Clergy, in answer to the charge brought against us we do not deny, but rather affirm, that after the manner *ye* call heresy, we worship God. We do not regard the images and pictures which ye place instead of God, nor do we rest our hopes of salvation on the remains of dead men, sinners like ourselves, or in journeys to famous shrines, as though God were nearer Canterbury and Loretto than London and Westminster. As to the church to which

you invite us to return, it is *not* Christ's church, for it doth not profess his doctrines, nor follow in his footsteps, and we will have none of it. Nay, more, we fear to remain under its shadow, knowing that it must shortly fall, warring as it does against the Most High. And as it is a great anti-Christ, so shall its fall be great, and it will sink utterly into perdition. We do not need to trust in its offers of pardon, for we know that that Christ whose we are, and whom we serve, will freely pardon all our offences through his most precious blood. And when with your flames ye shall have freed our souls from the clogs of this mortal flesh, He will give unto us crowns of glory which fade not away. God, who knoweth our hearts, knoweth that we lie not."

Arundel's face was white with passion, but he suppressed his feelings by an effort, and pronounced their sentence:

"Since ye will not heed the offers of mercy, listen to the words of judgment. On the fourth day from this, at such an hour as shall be hereafter appointed, ye shall be led from your prisons to the field of St. Giles, and there ye shall be hanged alive in chains, being burned while hanging, and your ashes scattered to the winds, that the church may be cleansed from the foul blot of heresy, and the honor of Christ vindicated from the attacks of the Devil."

A solemn silence reigned in the assembly during the enunciation of this terrible doom; but of all that band upon whom all eyes rested, not one showed a sign of fear. After a few moments, the clear tones of the preacher's voice rose again, as firm and unwavering as before, and, raising his right hand, he pointed, with his extended fore-finger toward his judge.

"Arundel, archbishop of York, I stand before you this day as a messenger from God. Thus saith the Lord: In the time when thou dost not expect me, I will draw near; suddenly as in the night, I will come unto thee, and require of thy hand the blood of my elect. And because thou wilt have no answer for me, I will cut thee down in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Men shall seek thee, and shall not find thee, and in the place where thou wentest to and fro thou shalt be no more seen forever. Shall my elect cry unto me and not be avenged? I count the sparrows that fall, and shall my chosen ones perish and I not know it? saith the Lord. Behold I hasten and tarry not, and the cup of my wrath I bring with me. Thou shalt look for help, and there shall none aid thee; a horrible darkness shall fall upon thee, and none can deliver out of my hand!"

The speaker ceased but still he stood, his mantle gathered closely around him, and his piercing eyes fixed on the shrinking, cowering man, at whom the terrible right hand still pointed. Arundel's face had turned from its usual ruddy hue to a deathlike pallor, and he shook as though smitten with an ague. At length a shriek burst from his ashy lips. "Care you not that he hath bewitched me? Away with him, take him away, he hath a devil!"

A grim smile passed over the old man's features, but still he relaxed not his gaze, nor the out-stretched arm, till, with a cry that rang in the ears of those who heard it for many years after, the primate of England rose from his seat, and flinging away his cloak, lest it might impede him, fled from the hall. Then, after a few moments, the arm was slowly dropped, and the preacher turning, passed with his guards down to the door, the crowd pressing back to give him room.

A few months later, while Arundel was sitting in the midst of his friends, the hand of the Lord smote him, and in his speechless agony he looked from side to side, but there was none to help. A moment after, the distorted features had settled into the icy rigidity of death. The Lord *had* come to him, suddenly, as it were in a moment, and required at his hand the blood of his saints!

CHAPTER VII.

As the Stars forever and ever.

Calmly and brightly the sun rose on the morning of the fourth day after the trial; as calmly and brightly he climbed toward the zenith, as though he were not to look down upon one of the most fiendish deeds that ever disgraced England's soil. In the field of St. Giles, in the outskirts of the city, workmen were busy putting finishing touches to a strange piece of carpentry. A row of holes had been dug at a distance of about six feet from each other, and in these were placed stout beams of wood. Another row was then put about ten feet from the first, and the same kind of posts being inserted, crossbeams were fastened from a spot of one row to the corresponding one in the other. Another construction of the same kind was placed on one side of the first, leaving an open space of some twenty feet in width between. On each of the crossbeams were fastened heavy chains, each terminating in a large iron ring. Meanwhile other men had been arriving, bearing fagots of dry wood, which were arranged in order under the chains, and then the men all paused and looked toward the town.

Not long had they to wait. A procession soon appeared, headed by a guard of foot-soldiers, who encircled the rows of gallows, for such they were, and so made way for the rest of the train to approach. Next came the executioners, some with lighted torches, others with blacksmith's hammers. Then came the thirty-nine prisoners, each accompanied by a friar of some order, followed by another guard, and lastly the rabble, consisting of all the mob of London, clustered as

closely as the troops would permit them. Some of the Lollards looked pale and haggard, and their limbs, so long chained in damp dungeons, seemed hardly capable of dragging them along. Each, as he reached the spot, cast a glance at the instruments of torture, but none drew back, or shrank from the fearful sight. To their illumined vision those piles of fagots, those bars, those chains, were but so many Jacob's ladders, gates to heaven.

Beverly mounted to his place as a newly anointed king might step for the first time on his throne. Turning to his friend he said in his clear, unfaltering voice: "We have breakfasted in a world of tribulation, we shall sup with Christ in the kingdom of glory. I am three-score years old, brother, and I thank God I have lived to see this day!"

But Ashton's heart was heavy; not for himself, but for the cause, the people, the land he loved so well. "I fear me this is a grievous day for England," was his reply.

"Christ giveth the victory!" said the preacher, his face lighting up with intense joy. The fierce gaze of the executioners standing around was abashed at the unearthly beauty of that look. He had no veil that he might, like Moses, draw over his beaming countenance, and "all men, seeing his face as it had been the face of an angel," marveled. In so loud a tone as to be heard by every one of the awe-struck assembly, he continued:

"Fear not for England, brother, the Lord hath a mission for her, and in his good time she shall accomplish it. Antichrist is great, but his end approacheth; and in this our pleasant land he shall receive his worst death-blow. Fear not, 'commit thy way to the Lord, and he will bring it to pass.' And look you, brethren, the names which our enemies scorn shall shine in the Lamb's book of life as the stars forever and ever!"

The executioners had meanwhile fastened the iron girdles with a few blows of their hammers, under the arms of each of the prisoners, and were now applying the torch to each pile of wood in succession.

Sir Roger Ashton heard them not, saw them not, knew not that the tiny flames growing larger each moment, were leaping up beneath him, and longing for their prey. It was still early, and in the east, just sinking behind the horizon, was the morning star. He knew that it was only setting to rise again in renewed glory, and he kept repeating, his eyes still entranced as though by a glorious vision: "As the stars forever. As the stars forever and ever!"

Above that pyramid of fire, above that fierce cloud of smoke that rose as though seeking to hide from heaven the foul deed then enacting on earth, were "the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!"

"As the stars forever and ever;" even so. Many have shed their blood that England might add to its domain countries, and provinces, and islands of the sea,

or drive from her soil the hateful foot of the invader, and their deeds are justly commemorated in sculptured marble; but the names of those who broke the first link in the chain that bound Britain an abject slave to Rome, stand as far above the former in their glory as the stars do over the warriors' graves. Foremost among those thousands who have come through great tribulation and washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb, stand those glorious English martyrs, the pioneers of the Reformation–"As the stars forever and ever!"

CHAPTER VIII.

Quiet Days.

On the afternoon succeeding this fearful tragedy, a venerable old man of more than three-score years entered the room where Hubert still lay with a low fever brought on by exposure and fatigue. He was Roger Markham, of Romney in Kent, to whose care the boys had been consigned. He had long since been deprived of his curacy, but, beloved by all his former parishioners for his saintly life, he had continued to dwell among them, supported by the labor of his hands, and ministering to them in secret that spiritual food which they sought for in vain from the parish priest.

He gladly accepted his charge, and declaring that Hubert would be better when breathing the fresh air, appointed the next day for them to set out on their journey to his own home.

Accordingly, the next morning they left the friendly trader's house, where they had found so safe an asylum, and proceeding to the outskirts of the city, met Markham with his old white pony, on which they mounted Hubert, and so went slowly on their way. They rested at an inn that night, and it was not till the next afternoon that they approached their new home. The setting sun was lighting up the snowy meadows and the clustered cottages with their low roofs laden with snow. At the entrance of the village they were met by several of the peasants eager to welcome back their friend; and, seeing that he had with him two pale stranger lads, they each contributed from their humble store refreshment to cheer them after their journey. They pressed the travellers to enter their cottages and rest awhile; but the old man wanted to be back at his own fireside; so, passing on through the single straggling street to a house that stood a little apart from the rest, the last in the row, the pony stopped of his own accord, and Markham,

opening the latch, which, in those simple times, alone fastened the door, bade the wearied lads enter, for this was their home.

It was a low-roofed cottage of only one room, and furnished with the most perfect simplicity. Above, the oaken rafters, blackened by time and smoke, were plainly to be seen, and were festooned with strings of dried vegetables and herbs. The floor was of well-trodden clay; and a rough table, a few stools, a chest, some straw beds, and an oaken armchair, curiously carved by the old curate himself, completed the furniture. A sort of rack, or shelf, on one side, served as a dresser to hold the wooden platters and horn drinking-cups; while on pegs inserted in the wall, hung a sword, a cross-bow, and various garden-tools. The old man seemed to forget his own fatigue in ministering to the comfort of his guests. Geoffrey aided him, by bringing in fagots, and soon a bountiful repast, consisting of bacon, cheese, cakes, milk, and eggs, was ready to satisfy their hunger.

They were soon settled in their new home. The boys passed their time partly in study, and partly in aiding the old man to prepare his little garden for the summer crops. The cow, too, needed their care; when the snow had melted from the meadows, she must be driven to pasture in the morning, and brought home in the evening. This fell to Geoffrey's share, and gave him two long and pleasant walks a day, while Hubert attended to the humble dairy, and felt almost as proud when he had furnished the larder with a fine cheese or a trencher of golden butter, as when he had recited to his master, without failing, his longest Latin lesson. The reason why the old curate accepted no help from without, but shared the most menial labors with his noble young pupils, was because in those troublous times the only chance of safety for the poor persecuted Lollards was in being as retired as possible, and especially in keeping their Bibles, if they possessed them, from the sight of those who might at some future time betray them.

Their life was quiet, and fully employed, but not without its pleasures. Markham was not only an excellent scholar, but he also loved to impart his knowledge to others. The cottage was not their only study; in the quiet lanes and sunny meadows, on the sea-shore, and in the grand old forest, he taught them all that was then known of botany and natural history. In the clear, still winter evenings, he called their attention to the stars overhead, their names, and positions, and motions, and told them how the sailor found his way upon the deep by their assistance. He showed them the signs of the Zodiac, among which the sun and planets pursued their yearly course; he pointed out to them the "bands of Orion," the Pleiades, and "Arcturus with his sons," mentioned so beautifully in the book of Job; also the dog-star, that exerted such a baneful influence when in the ascendant, and Charles's Wain, whose two pointers always directed to that strange polar star, which, of all that bright company, seemed never to move from

its place.

But one thing he taught them which would seem very strange to the youngest school-boy or girl in these present more enlightened days. He told them that this earth, being a flat plain, was the centre of all the universe, and around it, in their stated time, sun, moon, and stars revolved.

Nor did he fail to remind them of the Magi, who, by the leading of a star, found the infant Christ.

But this peaceful life did not last long. When the field of the old curate was ready for the reaping, he died. Calmly and joyfully, with a hand clasped by each of the boys, he passed away from earth; and as they closed his eyes, his last words still rang in their ears: "Stand fast for the Lord, my sons, even unto death!"

CHAPTER IX.

Hide and Seek in Forest Tower.

Two months later found them in London, the guests once more of the Lollard trader, Philip Naseby. Before the winter came they found another home on the Yorkshire coast. There dwelt Humphrey Singleton, a man who had lost friends, fortune, and home because of his faith. He had seen his wife and children turned from their burning cottage one bitterly cold winter night by the soldiers of Arundel, and now he was alone in the world, dwelling in a place, half hut, half cave, near the summit of the Yorkshire cliffs.

There the boys found him, sitting at the door of his hermitage in the autumn twilight, feeding a lamb with grass and leaves. He gladly received his guests; and there, in that lonely place, they hoped to be permitted to remain till they had finished their studies. As it had been before, Hubert staid quietly at home, studying, while Geoffrey oftener pursued a more active life, gathering sea-birds' eggs among the cliffs, or catching fish in a little boat far out in the bay.

One evening there came a messenger to them. He bore the Lollard password, and so was eagerly received. When he had refreshed himself, they all gathered around the fire to hear what news he might bring. They had heard already of Arundel's awful end; how, when he was sitting at a feast with his friends about him he had been struck by the hand of death. Not a moment had been given to his wretched soul to prepare itself to meet its Judge. Not a word had his palsied tongue been able to utter; only the writhing features showed his

agony. Now, to their grief, they learned that his successor, Chichely, was following in his footsteps. The search after heretics was even more rigorous than before.

"Have you heard aught of what has befallen Forest Tower and its noble Lord?" said the stranger.

Geoffrey started to his feet. "Nay, we have not heard. Speak out, man, and tell me of my father."

"Your father is safe, master Geoffrey," said the man, rising and bowing respectfully to the boy. "I knew you not at first. Sir John is safe, and in Wales, by the Lord's mercy; but the archers pressed him sore, and thirsted like wild beasts for his blood. Blessed be the Lord that delivered him from the flame, and gave him wings to his feet."

"And the Tower?" said Geoffrey, breathlessly.

"There is no such place; they have not left one stone on another; I saw it myself."

Geoffrey groaned aloud, then, raising himself to his full height, he lifted his clenched hand to heaven and cried:

"It is mine! It is mine! Mine by the same right that king Harry holds his throne! They shall give it back, stone for stone, or this right hand shall lay them as low as its ashes are. I will—-"

Here his hand was grasped from behind, and his master's voice said, half sternly, half sorrowfully:

"Boy! art thou to fight for an earthly habitation, or a heavenly? Hast thou renounced all these for Jesus' sake, and art so ready to snatch at them again?"

The boy sank down ashamed of this demonstration of useless anger, and listened quietly to the man's story.

We will go back to the time of the boys' departure from home, and trace the history of Forest Castle and its proprietor.

When De Forest had seen Cobham safe on his road to Wales, he had returned to his home, now so desolate. Contrary to his expectations, he had remained unmolested during the whole succeeding winter and spring; indeed, he had been so free from interruption, that Oldcastle had more than once ventured from his place of concealment to attend meetings for worship held in the castle or secluded woods, and to meet such of his friends as could be allowed to know the secret of his hiding-place. Through the summer there were rumors of danger; the archbishop's soldiers had come within a few miles of the place, but, for some reason, had turned back, and, as the fall advanced, the little signals at the foot of the oak-tree pronounced all safe.

One chilly November evening, when the first snow was beginning to fall on the leaf-strewn forest paths, and bare tree-branches, Lord Cobham sat in the

hall at Forest Tower talking with its owner. Since the departure of the boys, it had been necessary to confide the secrets of the signals, the various passwords, and the concealed entrances to some one, and Sir John had chosen for this important post a young peasant, Charles Bertrand–he who was afterward to tell the tale of his misfortunes to the young master.

This person interrupted the conversation of the friends by announcing that a king's officer and a band of men had appeared suddenly at the gate, and were crossing the draw-bridge.

Whatever might be their errand, Cobham must not be seen; so he went quickly out by the opposite door, barely having it closed upon him by the faithful Bertrand, when the visitors admitted themselves by the grand entrance.

[image]

The Trial.–Page 76.

Sir John rose to greet them with dignified courtesy. The soldier did not seem to notice the greeting, but striding up to the table, demanded if he were Sir John of the Forest.

"I am," was the reply, given in such a quiet, fearless tone, that the soldier's rough manner was somewhat modified.

"Then I arrest you for heresy and treason. Men, guard the prisoner and bring hither the guide!"

Some of the men surrounded De Forest, while others led, or rather dragged in a peasant, who seemed ready to sink through the floor with shame and terror.

"Now," said the commander, when he had advanced to the table, "look up, fellow, and tell us if this be your master or no."

The man glanced up for a moment, but his head sank again when he encountered the piercing glance of his betrayed lord, and he muttered his answer almost inaudibly: "Yes, sirs, I know him."

"And where is Cobham, who you say was sitting here not an hour ago? Come, the truth, or–you remember my promise," and he shook in the man's face a rope, knotted into a noose.

The wretch threw himself on his knees in an agony of terror.

"My life! You said you would spare me if I brought you hither!"

"Ay, thy life, and a gold angel to boot; but the truth first–where is the traitor?"

"Truly, my masters, may I never speak another word if I tell you false. It is always so; he has slipped away. He comes often to the Tower; but though I have

watched the gates day and night, I have never seen him enter, or pass out. May the saints preserve me, but I believe it is an evil spirit, and not a man!"

The captain, finding he could gain nothing more from the fellow, ordered two men to guard the prisoner, and with the rest of the band, went to search the house, carrying the unwilling guide with them.

When they had gone, one of the guard took up the flagon, and, finding it empty, demanded with an oath where the heretic kept his wine. Sir John courteously directed him to the buttery; but scarcely had the man closed the door, when the prisoner sprang on his guard, and with one well-directed blow struck him senseless. He then lost no time, but stepping to the immense open fireplace, touched a spring at the bottom of the jamb. A little door, scarcely a foot wide, opened; he passed through; it closed upon him, and no one could have told where the apparently solid stones were joined. A moment later the soldier returned, but only to find the room vacant except for his groaning comrade.

His first impulse was to recover the stunned man by dashing the contents of a water-bucket in his face, and inquire what had become of the Lollard; but as he could only discover that his companion imagined himself to have been assaulted by the Evil Spirit the guide had spoken of, who had cast a spell upon him, he turned impatiently to the doors to summon assistance, but found them fast bolted on the other side.

"It is all witchcraft, I tell you!" exclaimed the half-stunned soldier, his teeth chattering both from fear and from the cold bath he had received. "If I had known it was the Devil the archbishop was chasing, I should have staid at home. I saw the fire flash from his eyes, and by my faith, he smelt of brimstone or ever I came in the room!"

When the captain of the band returned from his unsuccessful search for Cobham, and found that his guards had lost their prisoner and been locked up themselves, his wrath knew no bounds. He ordered the unlucky soldiers to be chained and guarded, and threatened them with hanging; and then proceeded to search the castle anew, stamping on every stone in the pavement, in hopes of discovering the spring of the secret doors with which he had heard the building was well supplied. He did indeed find several, and the infuriated soldiers sprang in with howls of delight; but it was all in vain; the cells, cut in the thickness of the wall, seemed to have no connection with each other, and were quite empty, except for some owls and bats, that, aroused from their sleep by the flash of the torches, hooted, and flapped their great wings in the men's faces, appearing very like the evil spirits that the invaders of their territory half believed they were.

At last wearied with their useless efforts, they all returned to the hall for a carouse, for which the well-filled cellars of the knight supplied abundant provision. They were all, the captain as well as his men, not a little superstitious;

and they were only too glad to drown with wine the feelings of dread and uneasiness which the strange events of the day and the gloomy look of the old hall had occasioned. It was not long before the strong drink had done its work, and they had all sunk down in various attitudes of drunken slumber. The captain himself, who had been sitting in the knight's own chair and drinking from his silver cup, though rather stronger-headed than the rest, began to feel drowsy; and so, having thrown some fresh logs on the fire, and taken the precaution to draw the bolts of the doors and drag a heavy settle across each, he settled himself for a sound nap.

How long he slept he did not know; but his first sensation on waking was one of suffocation, and when he tried to raise his hands to discover the cause, he found they were tied behind him, and his mouth tightly bound with a cloth. He next discovered that he was stretched full length on one of the oaken benches and fastened to it, so that the only movement he could make was to roll a little on one side. Wide awake now, he immediately made use of this one privilege that was left him, and looked about the room. His companions were very much in the same condition as himself, but evidently perfectly unconscious of it. The fire had been newly built up and was blazing brightly, giving all the light that was needed, and, sitting in the arm-chair which he himself had so lately occupied, warming himself by the fire, sat the man he had been seeking, Cobham the outlaw, while Forest was sitting on a stool by his side watching some wine that was warming in the silver cup.

The soldier was almost beside himself with rage and mortification to see the man for whom, dead or alive, such large rewards were offered, sitting there as complacently as though he had not an enemy in the world, while *he* was unable to stir either hand or foot or to cry for help. For some time he lay there thus, rendered more furious, from time to time, by the grim smile that played on Sir John's face, whenever he turned it so as to encounter the enraged glances of the prisoner.

As the soldier became cooler, however, he began to wonder how the room had been entered. He lay so that he could see all the doors, still bolted and barricaded as he had left them; but just as he was looking for some opening in the wall, or a rope hanging from one of the windows, there came a partial solution of the mystery.

The morning light was just beginning to struggle through the windows when a low whistle was heard, to which De Forest instantly replied, and then threw upon the fire a handful of something which he drew from a bag at his side. A dense black smoke arose in a cloud, obscuring for an instant, the whole fireplace, and when it cleared away, another had been added to the group at the fireside. It was Charles Bertrand, whom the captain had already noted as in

attendance on De Forest.

"Is all ready?" said Sir John to the young man.

The latter looked suspiciously around, and then, stooping so that he might be heard by none but his master, he said:

"The horses are not ready, my Lord, and there is a signal out that the mountain-road is dangerous. It will not do to try it before evening, at any rate."

"There is nothing for it but to crouch in our holes for another day, then," said the Lollard cheerfully, and he turned to communicate the news to Cobham. They agreed to remain in their hiding-places till the next midnight; then Bertrand was to bring the horses to the entrance of one of the long, concealed passages leading from the castle to the open country, and they were all three to make the best of their way to Wales.

Cautious as they were in general, they raised their voices a little too much in the discussion, for although they had gagged their prisoner's mouth, they had forgotten to stop his ears, and although he only heard a word here and there, he had wit enough to put them together, and make out pretty clearly what was to be their plan. Fearing, however, lest they should kill him if they suspected he had overheard them, he did not let his feelings of satisfaction appear in his face.

The three men seemed now about to depart, and the soldier watched with all his powers of eyesight to discover, if possible, how they would leave the hall First, the knight took down from the wall his suit of mail, and, by the aid of Bertrand, put it on. He then threw over it his mantle which hung on one of the deer's antlers almost directly over the captain's head. He also chose, from several that were lying about, a good sword, and handed it to Cobham, who handled it as though he were well accustomed to its use, albeit his hand trembled a little from age. Meanwhile, Bertrand had loaded himself with a large flagon of wine and a joint of meat.

When everything was ready, Sir John went round among the sleeping men, and, after examining them all carefully, chose the one who seemed likely to sleep the longest, and unfastened one of his hands. He then went back to the fireplace, and they all three stood close to the hearth.

"Is all ready, my Lord?" said Bertrand, leaning carelessly against the jamb of the fireplace.

Sir John replied by drawing a handful from his pouch and throwing it on the embers which he had drawn out to the front of the hearth. The pungent smoke, which immediately arose in clouds, made the soldier wink his eyes, and when he could see clearly once more, Cobham and De Forest were still there, but Bertrand was gone. A second time the stifling smoke arose, and though the captain stretched his eyeballs almost out of their sockets, he only knew that Sir John and Cobham had vanished as unaccountably as their companion. The only

thing he could do was to await, with all the patience possible, the time when yonder drunken log should become animate and release him from his bondage.

Had the captain's vision been able to penetrate the smoke, he would have seen that Bertrand, in leaning against the chimney-piece, touched a secret spring, which, as soon as the smoke of the herbs Sir John had thrown on the fire had obscured the view, opened noiselessly the narrow door, which was as noiselessly closed when all had made their exit. Could his eager gaze have converted those opaque stones into glass, he would have discovered the Lollards in a very narrow passage which wound along some distance, hollowed out of the solid wall. More than once they seemed to have arrived at a spot where their journey must terminate, but again a secret spring was touched, the obedient stones rolled back, and so they passed on till they came to a little turret-chamber, lighted by slits in the wall, which were concealed from all eyes without by the heavy screen of ivy which hung over them.

Here they paused and threw themselves down on some heaps of straw, and then, covered with their cloaks, slept as peacefully as if they had not a foe in the world.

CHAPTER X.

The Birds Flown to the Mountains.

The sun had risen high before any of the soldiers awoke, and even then they were helpless till their still sleeping comrade, who was to be their deliverer, should be aroused. This was at last accomplished by one of the men, who dragged himself along the floor so as to give him a hearty kick, but it was still some time before he came sufficiently to himself to comprehend the situation of affairs and release both himself and the others.

The first thing that their captain did, after he had stretched his stiffened limbs, was to discharge a volley of oaths at them, the Lollards, and the world generally. He had determined not to relate the whole of his midnight adventure to his men for two reasons: one was, that he was afraid of rousing their superstitious fears, and making them insist upon leaving instantly a place which they would surely believe to be haunted by malignant spirits; and the other was, that he was a little ashamed of being thus caught napping by his enemies, and did not wish the story to be told against him to his superior officer. He was, however, fully

determined to ransack the castle before the time fixed upon by the Lollards for their departure, at the same time guarding all the places of exit.

He met with no better success than the day before; but soon a bright thought struck him, and his face glowed with malignant pleasure. He ordered his men into the woods to gather brushwood, and this, together with some straw and grain, he piled up in the apartments of the castle and set on fire. When it was fairly blazing, he mounted his whole troop, carefully removing all the horses from the stables, and placed his men in such positions that they might be able to watch all the roads, and be ready for instant pursuit should the Lollards attempt to flee.

He himself sat grimly on his war-horse, surveying the work of destruction; waiting till the noble men, smoked like rats from their holes, should be seized and brought triumphantly before him. He already imagined how he would dispose of the reward when he presented the three heads to the archbishop.

If this gallant soldier had been able to look downward a little way through the ground under his feet, his vision would not have been quite so rose-colored. Let us go back to the three men whom we left sleeping so quietly in the little turret-chamber.

They were not aroused from their slumber till the fire had begun to rage, for they were so embedded in the stone that the heat and smell took a long time to penetrate to them; but at last the ivy on the outside caught, and the flames were roaring "from turret to foundation stone." The smoke which then poured in through the narrow slits aroused Bertrand, who soon understood the plot. It was with great difficulty that he and De Forest could get Lord Cobham through the narrow passages, for they were all almost suffocated with smoke, and the heat in some places was nearly unbearable. In more than one spot the walls had fallen in and choked the way with rubbish, but fortunately the soldiers were all outside, guarding the blazing ruins, so that they could pass easily through some of the more open rooms, and so into the vaults. Here they rested awhile, but not long, for they feared lest some arch should give way and cut off their retreat. They therefore passed along the subterranean passage mentioned in the first part of the story, which opened in the direction of the road they intended to take.

They were in doubt where they should procure horses for their journey, but their trusty friend and servant, Charles Bertrand, had a plan in his head which he did not at first communicate to his master; but leaving them sitting on a block of stone in the passage, he crept through the little door concealed by brushwood, and closing it carefully behind him, stole along the bed of the stream, and then up the bank on his hands and knees. All this was done without noise, and he crouched down in the bushes not ten feet from the spot where the captain sat on his horse indulging in his day-dreams.

Presently the soldier dismounted, and began to examine the animal. "Not a bad brute!" was his muttered comment, as he noticed the fine muscular development of his chest and the fire of his eye; "not a bad brute, nor an ugly one, and far too good for an heretic to ride. I have not had a better mount for years; and as for you," he added, bestowing a kick on his own abandoned charger, which had been degraded to the office of carrying some of the plunder from the castle, "you shall henceforth carry my wife, Ivan, to market, when she wears the new red cloak which I shall buy her in London; she is a good dame, and a handsome one too, and—-"

What further plans were in his head for the benefit of himself and wife can never be known; for just at that moment there was a shout in the direction of the burning building, and he, thinking that the rats had at last been smoked out of their hiding-places, did not stop to ride round by the road, but, hooking the horses' bridles on a branch, he flung himself down the steep bank in the direction of the castle, shouting to his men to "save them alive."

Charles Bertrand chuckled with glee at the turn things had taken. It took but a moment to loosen the beasts, cut the pack from the one, and lead them both down into the wood. He then gave a whistle, and in a shorter time than it takes to relate it, Sir John was mounted on his own horse, Cobham on the captain's discarded steed, with Bertrand behind him, and all were spurring forward toward the blue mountains, whose snow-capped peaks invited them to a safe and happy asylum.

The chances were much against Ivan's ever riding to market on the old gray war-horse, decked in the scarlet cloak purchased by the price of the three Lollard heads!

For a mile or so both horses went at full speed, Sir John's steed urged on by his master's voice, and the trooper's abused charger showing itself not much the worse for wear, by carrying double almost as fast as the other bore single weight. They had need of all their exertions, for they had not been off more than fifteen minutes before the whole band was in pursuit of them. They gained a little time, however, by their pursuers taking a wrong road, and it was not long before the November twilight closed suddenly upon them, aiding still more their concealment in the gloom of the forest.

It was nearly midnight before they dismounted, and then, though wearied with their journey, and chilled by the sleet which had fallen during the last few hours, the place at which they stopped did not seem at all likely to afford them any one of the traveller's three requirements–bed, food and fire. All seemed to be well acquainted with the spot. It was an old ruin of what had probably been a fine house in the days of Henry the First, but which had been destroyed, like many another, and its owner's name blotted from existence during the wars of

Stephen. Bertrand dismounted, and led the horses carefully among the stones, into what had been the courtyard of the castle. There he sheltered them under some broken arches, while their riders entered a low room, still left almost entire, but so situated that a careless person passing by, would fail to distinguish it from the masses of rubbish by which it was surrounded.

The air within was damp and chilly; but De Forest pulled aside a loose stone in the wall, and from the recess behind it drew out some fagots of dry wood, a pitcher of common wine, a loaf of bread, and some hard Welsh cheese. A cheerful fire was soon blazing on the stone floor, after De Forest had hung his cloak over the opening by which they entered, for the double purpose of keeping the cold air from blowing on the backs of those within, and the firelight from revealing itself to those who might be without. Then, after warming their benumbed limbs, they were quite ready to do justice to the simple fare.

This ruin was one of the meeting-places of the Lollards. Wales being their great asylum, it was convenient to have some spot a little beyond the foot of the mountains, where they might come, and find out whether it was safe to proceed any farther. There was always a small stock of provisions and firewood kept there, so that in case any preachers were obliged to spend the night there, they might not have to endanger themselves or others by venturing to any of the neighboring cottages. There was also a set of signals here, conducted on the same system, and connected with those at the foot of the oak near Forest Castle, and Bertrand carefully deciphered them and arranged them anew. He learned that the road was clear as far as the mountains for those going thither, but that no one from the mountains had better venture down. He then placed such marks as would indicate to those who should read them the number of the archbishop's soldiers, the burning of the Tower, and the escape of De Forest and Cobham. So perfectly had this system of signals been arranged, and so well was their secret kept, that he knew in a few days the news of the escape of the two reformers would be known and rejoiced over by all the Lollards for many miles around, while their enemies would wonder how the intelligence was spread, and lay it all to the account of that diabolical assistance and knowledge of sorcery which they firmly believed was possessed by these outlaws.

Before they retired to their rest, Cobham stood up and recited the ninety-first Psalm: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." How true and precious did these promises appear to those homeless fugitives! Each took to his own heart such passages as seemed most appropriate to his own particular case; but each found in them the same great comfort–the blessed fact of God's guardianship over those he loves, and their absolute and eternal safety, however earthly cares may oppress, dangers threaten, or sorrows impend. The soldier, Cobham, realized in the God whom he

had learned to worship untrammeled by priestcraft and juggling tricks, a shield and buckler far stronger than he had ever borne in the wars under king Harry. The gray-haired knight, who had that day seen the home where his ancestors had lived and died, the birth-place of himself and his two sons, the inheritance which he had thought to leave to a long line of posterity, razed to the very ground by his enemies, and who now felt that he had no home in the wide world in which to shelter his gray hairs, crept up, as it were, to the promise, "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, in him will I trust," and with child-like faith, taking his Heavenly Father at his word, cast away his sorrows and cares.

Bertrand, the peasant, who had abandoned the old faith and followed his feudal lord into the new, but who had never imbibed the spirituality of the reform; who had cast aside the bondage of Rome, but who had not yet bowed his head to the yoke of the gentle Jesus; felt that night as he had never done before, and his aroused feelings were never quieted until he came, with no priestly mediator between, to the feet of his Saviour, and found peace in believing.

Nor was the impression lessened when Sir John poured forth a simple, earnest prayer to their great Protector. There was no word of complaint in it, still less of anger toward their persecutors. He besought, with earnest pleadings, that as they were now Sauls in persecuting, they might become Pauls in defending the faith. And when the thought of his ruined home and desolate possessions came across his mind, he prayed that those mansions might be bestowed upon his enemies as well as himself, which are not made with hands, and whose treasures no moth nor rust can corrupt, no foe break through and steal.

Then they laid them down and slept, calmly and peacefully, for so did they realize God's presence, that the rough stone walls seemed to them like the fingers of his almighty hand, stretched around them to guard them from their foes.

CHAPTER XI.

The Lesson of Forgiveness.

When Charles Bertrand–for he it was who was their stranger guest–had further narrated how, the next day, the two Lollards had easily passed over the few miles that lay between their night's resting-place and Cobham's mountain retreat in that wild country which gave asylum to outlaws of every kind, he told them that Sir John still had his habitation in Wales, but frequently ventured down into

the valleys of his own land, traversing several counties under various disguises, to attend and encourage meetings of the Reformers. Patiently they were all waiting for the time when, bursting over the land as the sunbeams after a thundercloud has passed, Bible truth, liberty, and toleration should make themselves to be known and acknowledged by the world. Patiently and trustingly they waited, for they had no doubt of the fulfillment of their Master's promises; but, alas! it pleased that Master, whose will must be unquestioned by human intellect, long, very long to delay the deliverance which was yet surely to come. The child that was then at its mother's breast grew up to boyhood, manhood, descended to old age, and then returned to his native dust, long ere that day came which those fond, simple hearts believed to be even then at the dawn. The nation was not yet sufficiently purged, men's faith not sufficiently tried; that precious "seed of the church," the blood of holy martyrs, had not yet finished dropping into the earth, nor had it yet been sufficiently watered by widows' and orphans' tears for the precious harvest to spring up, which now is yielding to every soul speaking the English tongue, the priceless boon of perfect liberty of conscience toward man, and toward God.

Bertrand was glad to stretch his limbs by the hut fire after his journey; and after the simple worship, which always closed the day's labor of these people, all betook themselves to rest.

All but one. Geoffrey could not sleep; so he arose softly, and, wrapping himself in his cloak, bounded up the cliffs by a path so narrow and rocky, and close to the brink of the precipice, that only so firm and steady a foot as his own would care to tread it by night. As he passed out of the shadow of the cottage, a man lifted up his head from behind some bushes, and shook himself as though wearied of a confined posture. Still, he did not stand boldly upright, but crouched again, keeping in the shade, and then throwing a look of malignant hatred at the little hut and its quiet sleepers, he muttered an oath of satisfaction, and crept stealthily upon the boy's track.

Meanwhile, what were the thoughts of the young Lollard?

Geoffrey and Hubert were both Lollards, but in a very different spirit. Geoffrey, the heir of a noble baronetcy, saw his patrimony destroyed, his father outlawed and hunted, himself dependent on the charity of the poor for a place of shelter, and his very soul went out in opposition to the oppressors and to their religion. In Lollardism he found a freedom which agreed with his notions of right, and a purity of morals suited to his taste. The younger brother embraced the reformed religion, because he found in the doctrines it taught, a way of relief for a sinning soul–because they brought to him, free, and untrammeled by superstition and the traditions of men, the Gospel of the Cross, "the sweet story of old." Geoffrey was a Lollard, because with all his strength he hated Rome, and

desired to break its yoke from the necks of his countrymen; Hubert, because he loved Jesus, and longed, with all the fervor of his spirit, to convey the tidings of deliverance from a far greater power than that wielded in the Vatican, to the priest-ridden, ignorant poor of his native land.

It was natural, therefore, that the former should have many a bitter thought rising in his mind as he thought of the smouldering ruins of Forest Tower. The insult and wrong which had been heaped upon his noble race seemed more than he could bear; his whole soul revolted against the tyranny.

"It is mine!" he cried aloud, as he reached the top of the cliff, and drew his fine though boyish figure up to its full height in an attitude of defiance–"mine by every law. King Henry holds his throne by no better right! I care not how strong they be, they shall give it back, or may a curse rest on them every one–may they all, from king Henry down to his hirelings, be as homeless as I am this night! Send down, O God of Justice!–if there be such a God–fire and sword upon their houses, as they have brought them on mine; curses on their meat and drink, curses—-" He paused, then sank down on the ground and groaned bitterly. Had he not been so enrapt in his fiery thoughts, he might have noticed a face peering at him with malignant satisfaction from the shadow of a rock scarce ten feet from the spot where he stood in full moonlight, with his clenched right hand raised toward heaven, calling down vengeance for his wrongs. But now, as he sank to the earth, the figure stooped and became invisible, for at that instant another footstep was heard along the path, and a still more boyish form sprang across the little open space.

"Geoffrey! dear Geoffrey!"

"What are you doing here, Hubert?" cried the elder lad, springing to his feet, like all other lads displeased at being found giving way to his emotions. "Get you back to the cottage; this is no place for you, on the mountain-top at night!"

"Do not be angry, brother!" said the younger beseechingly. "I saw you rise and go out, and I followed, it is so wild and desolate for you to be here alone, and you so miserable."

"Miserable!"–the word was spoken in a contemptuous tone–"that is for a woman to say. I am a man now, I must stand up for my lawful rights; I must pursue to the death those blood-hounds, those hirelings of the foul fiend himself, whom may Heaven—-"

"Geoffrey! Geoffrey! stop; do not say such words. We may not curse, we must pray–we must bless!" And the boy clung to his brother in passionate entreaty. Geoffrey flung him off.

"You are a child, Hubert! you do not understand these things. Go back to your bed. I choose to be alone." He strode off to the furthest extremity of the

little rocky platform, close, close to the lurker in the shadow! When he had styled his enemies blood-hounds, he was not far from the truth; for dearly they loved to track silently their victim's footsteps, to spring upon him when he felt most secure.

"Geoffrey," said the little pleading voice, "it is very cold, I thought you would wrap me in your cloak."

The hard, stern look passed from the lad's face at the words; he turned, sat down by his brother, and clasped him tightly in his arms. Neither spoke for some time; at last Hubert broke the silence.

"How beautiful the moonlight is to-night!"

It was indeed a glorious sight. Sheer down two hundred feet and more below them lay the calm, mirror-like sea, reflecting the moonbeams in a pathway of silver, stretching far, far into the horizon, till it ended in a distant speck on the great North Sea. The stars were paled by the radiance, but still stood out gloriously in the clear still atmosphere, like specks of shining foam dashed up from the silvery sea below. No sound broke the stillness but the low beating of the surf and the scream of a sea-bird skimming through the air after its prey. It seemed in that lone, desolate spot as if there might be no other living creature in existence but the bird flitting across the landscape. The two lads nestled under the cloak and–the watcher!

"The moon was at the full, you know, when He died, Geoffrey, and fell upon his cross and his tomb. I wonder if it falls as brightly in that far-off land as it does here? Father Humphrey told me all about it the last time the moon was full, just before he died. How sad, and yet how glad a thing it was for Christ to die, Geoffrey! I can hardly tell where the sadness ends and the gladness begins, they seem so mingled in it all. May I talk to you about it now?"

"Yes, if you are warm," and the arm was drawn more tightly around the slender form.

"Oh! yes, I am so comfortable now;" and then he began, and in sweet, touching eloquence detailed the well-known story of the persecuted Nazarene. He drew the picture of the lowly manger, of the carpenter's workshop; he spoke of Him as homeless, hungry, thirsty, weary, desolate, despised, rejected, betrayed. He followed him to the garden, the judgment-hall, the cross. He described in burning words the gibes, the mocks, the sneers, the insults, the cruelty, the hatred that followed the meek and gentle Jesus from the cradle to the grave.

"And He forgave them, Geoffrey," said the little speaker, as he closed the account, "he forgave them every one."

"He was a God," said Geoffrey solemnly.

"Yes, but he was a man too, and out of his man's heart, as well as his God's heart, he forgave them."

The elder lad's face had softened strangely; there was a moisture on the lashes which shaded his downcast eyes.

"He taught us our 'Pater Noster.' He had a right to teach us to say: 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.' It is hard to act it, but then we must, for we have so many sins to be forgiven–so very, very many, Geoffrey. I think it is an awful prayer to say, though it is so simple and short. It is like Jesus himself, so perfect, so heart-searching. I tremble often; for just think, if we should have just the least little revenge in our hearts, we are praying for condemnation."

Lower, lower on his bosom sank the proud head of the young noble.

"I said it to-night, Hubert." The words came in a trembling whisper.

"Then you must *act* it, quickly, quickly, before God answers it against you."

The boy had roused himself, and in his eagerness had caught both his brother's hands in an earnest grasp. What Geoffrey would have replied to this appeal cannot be known, for just at that moment there was a rustling among the stones, then the rush of a falling body, accompanied by one of those horrible screams of mortal agony, which those who have once heard them can never forget.

Both boys sprang to their feet with a cry of horror. Geoffrey's clear, cool head first comprehended what was the matter. He ran as near the border of the precipice, as he dared, and then, creeping on his hands and knees to the very edge, looked down. There, far below him, but as far above the water, caught in a scrubby tree that grew out of a cleft in the rock, lay a dark object, only just discernible in the moonlight; and again came the cry for help, but feebler than before.

"It is a man over the cliff!" shouted the boy. "Run, Hubert, for Bertrand and a rope; quick, or it will be too late! He is hanging in the elf oak!"

Then, when his brother was gone, he shouted words of encouragement to the unfortunate man. "Hold hard, man! help is near, and the tree strong, but trust not to the upper branch, it is a dead one; hold fast but a little while."

The man was in too great a state of terror to hear or understand, but kept exclaiming that he was lost, and vowing candles to every saint in the calendar, and pilgrimages to a dozen shrines; but his voice grew fainter and fainter, and had ceased entirely, before Hubert returned, accompanied by Humphrey Singleton and Bertrand. It took but a moment to uncoil the rope and fasten one end around a rock; then Geoffrey hailed the stranger:

"Ho! friend, help has come; courage! We will send you down a rope; have you strength to tie it round your body?"

No reply came. All shouted together, and then waited breathlessly for an answer, but none came.

"He is dead, or he has swooned," said the old master; "may the Lord have

mercy on his soul! We can do no more."

Meanwhile there had been a tumult of varied feelings in Geoffrey's mind. Who can this stranger be? had been naturally his first thought when he saw the accident. There could be but one answer–it was an enemy; none other would have been concealed at such an hour on those lonely cliffs. One of Chichely's spies must have been lurking behind the rocks, and, missing his footing, had fallen to what must be his certain destruction if not speedily rescued. And this was the man whom certain feelings of humanity in his heart were calling on him to save at the risk of his own life–one of the very men, perhaps, who had aided in making his father a homeless outlaw; nay more, who had been but a few moments before thirsting for the blood of himself and his venerable protector. Was it not the dictate of common prudence which incited him to send a cross-bow bolt after the wretch, rather than rescue him to go on in the commission of crime?

But however passionate Geoffrey might be when roused by a sense of his wrongs, in his calmer moments he was always ready to be led by the Bible laws of right and wrong, which had been taught him from his infancy. "Thou shalt not do evil that good may come," was a precept which had been impressed upon him by his father's lips more than once, and now the conversation he had just held with his brother brought a still more forcible argument to his mind. "He died for them even while they were murdering him." "Forgive us our sins as we forgive them who sin against us." He was decided: he would, as Hubert had said, act the prayer, and in a moment–for it took him far less time to think all this than it has to relate it–he stepped forward, and flung his loose cloak out of the way.

"Nay, father, there is yet hope: I will go down and help him."

"You!" exclaimed the old master and Bertrand in a breath. "Boy, you are mad! It is almost certain death; and know you not that this is without doubt a spy, sent to hunt all of us to the scaffold?"

"He is a fellow-man," replied the boy undauntedly, "and a sinner too; perchance his soul may be hanging over the gulf of perdition, as his body is over yonder ocean. If it please God"–here he raised his cap reverently from his brow, then flung it down on the ground–"if it please God, I will save both!"

He then stepped toward Hubert, and bending low so that he might not be overheard by the rest, said: "Brother, I am going to act the prayer; you have saved me from the vengeance of God!" There was one tight grasp of the hand, and then, before they had sufficiently recovered from their surprise to prevent him, Geoffrey had seized the rope and commenced his perilous descent.

The next few moments, so full of agonizing suspense, were spent by Bertrand in pushing bunches of dried grass under the rope, to prevent it from cutting against the sharp corners of the rock, and by the rest in prayer. The dangerous descent was not quite unknown to the young Lollard, as but a week or

two previous he had climbed down to that very tree to pick up a bird which he shot, and which had lodged in its branches; hence his warning to the man to beware of the dead bough. But then he had had the light and heat of the sun at noonday; now he must guide himself over slippery rocks by the uncertain light of the moon, which, glaring on the patches of snow, served only to render the shadows deeper; still the boy, naturally fearless, was now inspired with a supernatural bravery by the holy thoughts in his soul. Every sense was stretched to its utmost; with firm hands he grasped the rope, and with unerring feet sprang from rock to rock with a speed and sureness of footing which seemed to those who watched him from above almost miraculous, till at last he sent up a joyful shout:

"I am safe, and the man is only stunned; but send us down another rope, and that speedily, for the tree is loosening."

The rope was not so readily procured; and for some time the boy had to remain in the tree called the "elf oak" by the people around, on account of the strangeness of its situation, and support the moaning wretch who lay there, and whom his voice had recalled a little to life. He occupied himself by chafing the man's limbs, and striving to regulate their weight so as to press as little as possible on the tree, which, jarred by the fall of the heavy body upon it, was becoming more and more loosened from its frail tenure in the crevice of the rock.

At length the other rope was dropped to him, and he fastened both round the man, who seemed incapable, either through terror or injury, of giving himself much assistance. Then, supporting himself partly by the rope, but more by clinging to the jutting points of rock, with a hand ever ready to steady the swinging body or turn it aside from a dangerous angle, he clambered up, and then sank down on the grass, wounded, dizzy, and exhausted, but with a strange calmness at his heart, and a great love burning there toward all mankind, and an intense feeling of gratitude toward God for his preservation from a danger whose full horrors he only now began to understand; for, just as he was mounting the last few feet of the ascent, he had heard a crash behind him–the old oak had torn itself from the rock, and was being dashed in fragments by the surf below.

CHAPTER XII.

Caught and Caged.

The man whom Geoffrey had saved was indeed his greatest enemy. He was no other than the captain of the troop who had so lately burned Forest Castle and driven its lord into exile. Enraged at losing the reward which he had considered already his own, and mortified beyond expression at finding himself outwitted by the despised Lollards, he had found the traces of Bertrand like a bloodhound, and having followed them so far, had discovered the retreat of the children of his enemy.

Bertrand recognized him the moment the blood and dust were wiped from his face, and nothing but the positive command of his master's son prevented him from killing him on the spot. Still all precautions must be taken for their safety, and they bound their prisoner securely, placing him in an out-house near the hut, while they prepared everything for instant flight. Their precious pages of Scripture were divided among them and concealed in their garments. Such of the old man's few effects as they could not carry with them they buried or concealed, and partook of a hasty meal.

Their plan was to leave sufficient food and firewood near their prisoner to last him till he should recover or his friends come to seek him. For this purpose Bertrand went to carry him meat, but returned in a moment with a face expressive of mingled wonder and alarm.

"He is gone!" he exclaimed. "Gone, and we are undone! Why did I not strike him down at first? Fool that I was! why did you hinder me, master Geoffrey? We are indeed lost if he escape, for his band is but a short league off in the village. He may have had time to warn them even now;" and Charles Bertrand sprang to the door, cross-bow in hand; but when there, he stopped. Gleaming in the gray twilight which was heralding the morning, he saw the spears of quite a numerous band of soldiers approaching the hill on which the hut stood, from three sides, slowly but surely compassing their prey.

"It is too late," he added more calmly; and in a whisper to Geoffrey, who had followed him, "*We* might by a rare chance break through–but not *those*;" and he pointed with the butt of his weapon to the old man, exhausted with the labors and excitement of the night, and Hubert, pale and unused to hardship.

"Go you, trusty Charles," said the boy, grasping the rough hand of the man-at-arms in both his; "I knew not that I had periled their life and yours as well as mine own; go you alone by the rocky path: it lies still in shadow, and they will not see it I stay to die with them."

"Hold, young master," said the man, affecting a rough manner to conceal his emotion; "you do not know Charles Bertrand if you think he will basely flee and leave the old man and the child to perish alone, not counting the heir of his lord's house. Nay, I will stay and bring down more than one of the wretches ere they cross the threshold."

"Not so, friend," said the young Lollard. "You have not my permission; for my father's sake, you must escape to tell him of our fate, and beside, you being free, may do somewhat for our liberty in planning some way of escape, while you can do us no good by shooting down one or two of yonder troop. I command you to follow yonder path to the first turning, then to the right, till you see a rock like a horse's head, then ten paces to the left, is a bush growing close to the cliff. Pull it away, and there is a hole large enough for one to lie concealed. Go, Bertrand; there is not a moment to lose, do not say a word."

The man looked still reluctant; but there was such an air of decision in the flashing eye of the young man that he could not disobey, but bounding up the hillside, disappeared as Geoffrey turned to the hut.

"Up, father!" he said in a firm voice, lending his arm to the old man, at the same time motioning Hubert to his side. "Father! you have taught us how to live as Lollards and Christians; now teach us to die like them, for the time is come!" and he led them out to the rocky platform in front of the door.

Scarcely had he ended when a dozen men leapt up to the top of the hill, and as many hands were laid on their unresisting victims, while the morning air was filled with their shouts of delight at their cowardly victory. Some tied them securely, some went to search for the missing soldier, while others threw firebrands about the hut and set it on fire.

Then, driving the boys before them, but disregarding old Humphrey Singleton as a piece of worthless booty, they descended the hill toward the village, where they had left their horses. There each of the boys was fastened to a horse behind a soldier, and by the time the sun had risen they were on their way toward York.

The captain, while looking with the utmost care to the safety of his prisoners, kept as far as possible from the boy whose kindness he was so shamefully repaying. Though his heart was pretty well steeled by many years of rough service as a soldier of fortune, and he was deeply impressed with the hatred of the Reformers which pervaded all classes, yet he had a little conscience left, and it pricked him sharply when he looked on the sea, and thought that but for that lad's strong arm and courageous heart he would there be dashing about, a lifeless, mangled mass. His better angel whispered to him that he might still partially retrieve his error by using his influence with his band to let them escape; but then rose the thought of the disgrace which the escape of Sir John and Lord Cobham had thrown upon him, which could only be atoned for by the capture of these "whelps of rebellion," as the archbishop styled them. Besides, his greedy palm itched for the golden angels which he already saw poured out to him by the delighted ecclesiastic.

So at last he determined to divide matters with his troublesome conscience.

He would not take them to York, where they would certainly be killed, but would leave them at a convent near by, where they might not be kept very safely, and thus escape, without the odium resting on him, or the loss of his reward. He therefore ordered his troop to turn into a side-road, and galloping on before, led them to a gloomy, fortified building, surrounded by thick woods, and known to all as the convent of "Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows."

The porteress looked surprised and a little doubtful at the sight of such a band of armed men; but the archbishop's livery, worn by some of his retainers, and the assurance of the captain that he came on holy business, procured them an audience with the head of the establishment.

Mother Beatrice, the prioress, was a tall, dark, hard-featured woman, who, being an importation from Spain, had brought with her all the austerities to which she had been accustomed from her childhood, and meted them out with unsparing hand to the nuns, novices, and pupils over whom she exercised her sway, and soon made the convent as famous for the rigor of its discipline, as she herself was for sanctity and devotion to the Church.

It seemed as though there was scarcely an hour in the twenty-four in which the clanging of the bell did not arouse the luckless inmates to repair to the chapel for prayers, and woe to any one who were so unfortunate as to break any one of the strict rules of the house, for the slightest punishment of the abbess was a thing to be dreaded. Perhaps it was to lie for hours stretched in the form of a cross on the cold pavement of the cell or chapel; to stand in a painful posture before some shrine, till the offender fainted from weariness; to go day after day with the least possible quantity of the coarsest food that could keep soul and body together; or perhaps, in extreme cases, the holy lady would herself apply the scourge to the naked back of the criminal, accompanying each blow by a pious exhortation, or a passage in the life of a saint, until both voice and hand were too wearied to perform their part any longer.

"And now daughter," she would say, as her victim was led away, "go in peace; may this slight correction save thee from the pains of hell! Go in peace, and forget not in thy prayers to thank Our Lady and the saints that thou hast been placed here, where thy soul is so well cared for!"

It was quite doubtful whether the offender ever experienced the gratitude which was expected of her for the benefits received at the reverend Lady's hand, but it was thought that Mother Beatrice quite enjoyed these little opportunities for doing good, and either found, or made them, as often as possible.

It was after one of these occasions, when she was resting from the benevolent fatigue she had just undergone, that the porteress came bustling in, with an unusual air of excitement, to inform her of the arrival of the captain and his men.

The abbess received the soldier with the cold dignity befitting her situation; but as soon as she had heard the story, her heart palpitated with joy and triumph, in a manner quite unusual to one covered with the serge robe of her order. Her ruling passion was for governing, and forcing those around her to an absolute subjection to her will; and she had lately begun to weary of the contracted scope given to her powers in this quiet convent. The sins which she was called upon to punish were, after all, mere peccadilloes, and her subjects were so subdued by severity that there was no hope of a serious enough rebellion among them to excite her faculties in putting it down; but here were intrusted to her two heretics, made all the more interesting by being of the opposite sex, and yet not old enough to bring a scandal upon the convent if it received them within its walls. She promised the captain to do all she could to draw from them the secret of their father's hiding-place and that of Lord Cobham, and to keep them safely till the archbishop, who was then in London, should return, and decide what was to be done with them.

When the captain and his troop had departed, she ordered her prisoners to be brought into her presence. The boys had at first been rather rejoiced at the thought of being placed under female care, but one look at their stern jailer was sufficient to alarm them. Hubert shrank to his brother's side, but Geoffrey drew himself up proudly, and returned her scrutiny by an unabashed and not very polite stare.

The wily prioress noticed this, and determined that they were very different characters, and as such must be differently treated. "Come hither, my pretty boy," she said, throwing as much tenderness as possible into her voice; and, drawing him gently toward her, she questioned him concerning his journey and his fatigue in such a way that his answers, at first confined to monosyllables, became more full, and he was soon talking with her quite freely, unheeding the signs by which Geoffrey, who was standing moodily by the door, tried to check him. At that moment the convent-bell pealed out its summons, and the abbess, arising, said, "Come, my little page, we will go to hear some of that music you were just telling me you loved so dearly;" and before the elder lad had time to put in a word, the superior and her charge had left the room. As the door closed behind her, another opened, and the porteress, entering, bade him follow her. He obeyed, though secretly determined not to be led to chapel, as he conceived Hubert must have been. His fears were groundless, as he soon discovered; it was not the abbess's plan to try him that way. He followed his guide through several passages and courts to a low damp-looking cell, and when Sister Ursula had shown him the pitcher of water and piece of bread for his refreshment, that were placed in a niche serving for a table, she withdrew, and bolting the door, left him to his own reflections.

His first impulse was to examine his prison. The only light admitted was from a small window, or rather slit in the wall, which was well barred; and it was not till his eyes became somewhat accustomed to the dim light, that he found he was in a good-sized room, some twenty feet square, and built entirely of stone. It had evidently been originally intended for a cellar; but that it had sometime been used as a prison was also evident, as there was a chain fastened to the wall, and the door was strong, and well provided with bolts and bars. On a shelf covered with cloth, at the side, stood a crucifix, and behind it hung a rude sketch of the Virgin, with the legend, "Ora pro nobis, peccavi!" in black letter. The boy gave a scornful glance at this, and then threw himself down on the heap of straw in the corner intended for his bed.

At first he buried his face in his hands in anxious thought, but soon started up, and began a careful examination of the walls and floor of his prison. His object was this. In the arrangements for flight at the hut on the cliff the preceding night, it will be remembered that the sheets of parchment containing parts of the Bible had been divided among the people. Geoffrey's share he carried in a bag under the cloth jerkin that he wore, and he was afraid lest the prioress should undertake to search him, and so discover those precious pages, which he would then not only lose forever, but which would prove witnesses sufficient to send him, without further question, to the stake. He therefore wished to find some place where he might secrete them, if a search seemed probable.

In the darkest corner of the room, partly concealed by a recess, he found a door, which had evidently, by the cobwebs gathered thickly over it, not been opened for a long time. Induced by the decayed appearance of the wood, he applied his shoulder to it, and one forcible push sent it bursting in, and nearly choked him with dust. At first his heart beat high, for he thought he had found a way of escape; but he was soon disappointed. It only opened into what seemed to have been an entrance or vestibule to the old cellar, for there were marks where some steps had been fastened into the wall; and a doorway, half-way up the side, had been built up with a different kind of stone. The walls were, however, much thinner, and the window larger. After making himself sure that there was no way to it except through the outer cell, he placed his parchments in a crevice under the window and returned to the other room, replacing the door so as to make all look as much as possible as it did before.

He had now time to consider his situation, which was by no means a promising one. He had noticed the deep ditch and massive wall which surrounded the building as he approached it, and the character of the place was better known to him than the prioress had supposed. He knew there were other ways of ridding the kingdom of heretics beside the open trial and public execution. He also knew that he and his brother would be especial objects of interest to

the ecclesiastical authority, as it might be supposed that they could be induced to reveal the place of their father's retreat, or even draw him from his concealment, if he heard that his children were held as hostages for his appearance. He saw that great exertions would be made for their conversion, and he was very angry with Hubert for being so easily entrapped and led away, and he imagined him subjected to all kinds of questioning before he had opportunity to warn him how to answer so as to conceal most perfectly their secrets. He had worked himself into such a passion with the child for his "singing folly," as he termed it, that when the bolts were suddenly drawn back, the door opened, and his brother ran and threw himself sobbing into his arms, he repulsed him rudely and contemptuously, and began walking up and down the room, too angry to speak.

"Geoffrey! Geoffrey!" began the child in a trembling voice, springing up from the straw where the elder's rough push had sent him, but not daring to approach the irritated lad, "Geoffrey! I did not kneel, I did not kiss the image, though they told me they would let us go in the garden if I would, and the porteress says they will kill us soon. O brother! don't send me away; we always said we would die together!"

"They may kill me, but not you, Hubert," replied Geoffrey with a sneer. "They will rather keep you for one of their singing-birds; after that you may be a fat monk, and, who knows? his Lordship of Canterbury one of these days, and light up the land with Lollard bonfires perhaps; but"–he stopped suddenly and sprang to his brother's side, changing his tone from harshness and sarcasm to tenderness and anxiety–"but they have done you hurt; they have wounded you, the hounds! Why did you not tell me? You are bleeding fast!"

The blood was indeed trickling down the child's pale face and mingling with his tears, while he was vainly endeavoring to stanch it with his hands.

"It is not much," he sobbed; "she struck me with her keys because I called out to such a pretty young lady who passed us as we came out of chapel. I am sure we saw her in London at the preaching in the brickyard. She was walking with the nuns, and looked very much surprised to see me; but they hurried her away, and then the porteress struck me."

"There," said Geoffrey, whose rage against his brother had quite disappeared now that he had so much better an object to vent his spleen upon, "the old hag has not done you as much damage as she meant to, I think; it is but a little cut, and will scarcely leave a scar. Sit down here, and let me cover you with my cloak, and we will eat the supper our good jaileresses have provided; we have had nothing since daybreak." They were both exhausted with the fatigues and excitement of the last twenty-four hours, and their prison-fare was not much coarser than that to which they had been accustomed; so they ate it thankfully, and then lay down to rest in each other's arms.

Much more tranquil was their rest than that of their betrayer, who, tossing on his pillow in his inn at York, was suffering from remorse in a manner different from any former experience. The conversation he had overheard on the cliff; the fright of the fall; the brave face that had looked into his with compassion as he lay in the tree; that same undaunted young figure standing at the hut door as his captors surrounded him; the patient, reproachful face which he could not help continually turning to meet during the long morning ride–all these rose up before him one after another, and not even the thought of his bag of gold pieces was able to restore the soldier's natural recklessness.

CHAPTER XIII.

Kate the Quick-witted.

When Geoffrey awoke the next morning, it was to find a single, long beam of sunlight streaming down into his prison, by which he knew it must be already late. Both boys felt refreshed, and more prepared for the unknown trials of the day. The younger having climbed on the shoulders of the elder, peeped out of their high window, and described the prospect to his brother.

"Only a little, square, stone court, Geoffrey, with some steps, four of them leading up to a door in the house and another door opposite, in a low wall. The wall seems to join the tower close here by the window. I guess it must be a garden on the other side; I see some branches hanging over the wall. The window is not more than two feet above the ground, but it is too narrow for me to get my head through, even if it were not for the iron bars."

"Come down, now," said Geoffrey, "I cannot hold you any longer, and besides I want to show and tell you something."

From the position of the little room which Geoffrey had discovered the preceding day, he concluded that its window must open on the space beyond the wall; and after explaining to his brother the hiding-place of the parchments, and charging him to watch the outer door and alarm him if he heard footsteps approaching, he went to see what prospect of escape that opening afforded.

Hubert's conjecture proved right. The wall bounded the convent-garden, which was laid out in the stiff fashion of the time–long winding walks, bordered with box, beds of various kinds of herbs, an oval grass-plat with a sun-dial in the centre, some fruit-trees and flowering shrubs scattered about, peach-trees

fastened to the sunny side of the wall, and a bower.

All this was sufficiently new and pretty to have interested Geoffrey; but he scarcely noticed it now, for his attention was immediately attracted by a figure approaching down a long wall that ended directly in front of the window. It was that of a young girl apparently near his own age, neither very tall nor remarkably graceful in her movements; but there was nothing plebeian in the delicate hand and foot, or in the carriage of the small, well-shaped head. She was well-dressed, according to the fashion of the time, in fine dark green cloth, with a cloak of brown camlet, and hood of the same; but the latter was now thrown back, exposing a goodly quantity of chestnut-brown hair, partly escaping from the crimson snood which confined it; for the same sharp wind which had given her cheeks their glowing color, had been mischief-making with her morning toilet. There was good-natured firmness in the lines about her mouth, and mirth mingled with thoughtfulness in her large blue eyes. Her voice, as she tried to coax a little robin to approach her, had that musical sweetness which is so very attractive, to some even more fascinating than decided personal beauty.

"Come hither, little frightened thing," she said, as the bird, alarmed at her advance, hopped behind a bush, and seemed about to take flight for a still safer place of refuge. "Dost thou think *I* would make thee a prisoner, pretty creature, I who know so well what it is to pant and sigh for liberty–I, who would give all I possess to be able to fly over these high walls as thou canst, and be away to dear old Estly Court? I would but touch thee, and smooth that soft breast of thine; nay, do not go away, even if I may not come closer, for I must talk to thee awhile. Oh! but this is such a dreary place; and, birdie, thou art the only living thing that I can talk to as I please: and talk I must, for I am wearied to death with this stillness. Nearer now, a little nearer, and here is some of my breakfast for thee; I venture to say thou wilt find but scanty fare here even for thy small appetite." The bird hopped closer to her as she scattered the crumbs of bread, growing bolder at every mouthful, and its benefactress continued:

"O birdie! I wonder if that Father above, who, they say, sees even a sparrow that falls, has forgotten the lonely prisoner in Our Lady's Convent, and never means to take her back to home and Guy, and mamma; and I wonder if He is ever coming to set all of us free through all dear England again?"

"The Lord tarrieth, but He is surely coming," said Geoffrey from his window.

The girl started with a half-suppressed scream, and frightened her little companion so that he made use of his graceful wings to mount into a pear-tree at some distance. She looked above, and behind her, and on every side for the source of the voice; and it was some time before she spied the opening so near her feet.

"Do not be afraid, lady," said the boy, when she at last caught his eye; "I am

only a poor prisoner like yourself, and cannot harm you."

The girl blushed a little, and tried by a quick motion of her hands to smooth back her hair and replace her hood. By this time, Geoffrey had had time to realize that he had spoken to a stranger, and that stranger a pretty young lady, so that when she stooped down and peeped in at him, his cheeks were crimson, and his eyes cast down, so that it was now her turn to re-assure him.

"Nay, now, this is a right pleasant meeting, since we are fellow-prisoners, and it were a pity we should frighten one another. We must be friends, for all others here are our enemies. It is not often that a lady stoops to a gentleman, but even that is better than breaking one's back by leaning over; so I will sit me down here where we can talk, hoping that you will one day be as much above me on your horse as you are now beneath me in dungeon-walls." So saying, she seated herself as close as possible to the opening, and continued with the utmost frankness:

"But who are you, and how came you hither, and are you brother to the young lad I passed yesterday on my way from chapel? Is he much hurt? I saw sister Ursula strike him, and she hath a heavy hand."

Her simplicity had made the boy quite forget his bashfulness, so he replied: "Nay, lady; except you bestow on me an extra tongue, how can I answer so many questions?"

"Oh! one at a time, one at a time!" replied the girl laughing. "We shall have at least half an hour to tell each other our histories, for the nuns have gone to breakfast, and we will not be disturbed till the bell rings; so pray you begin your tale, sir captive knight."

"No captive knight am I, only plain Geoffrey, son of Sir John De Forest, an outlaw for conscience' sake, and it was my brother Hubert whom you met. We were brought here yesterday by Chichely's men, having been seized in our retreat on the coast. My father's castle is in ruins, and he himself hunted like an evil beast upon the mountains. But I think I saw you at London last summer, when there was preaching in the brickyard."

"You did; I was there with my mother. My tale is not so very unlike your own. I am Lady Katharine Hyde. My father was Lord Hyde, of Estly Court; but he has been dead a year, and my uncle, the earl of Harcourt, has taken me away from my mother and little brother Guy, and brought me here to try and cure me of the heresy my mother taught me. I have heard that his orders were to use pleasant means at first for my conversion; but if at the end of six months I still prove obstinate, I am to be given up entirely to her tender mercies. So they allow me now to walk for a while every day in the garden; but I don't suppose that favor will be granted long, and then I shall be completely caged, unless I do like my friend, the robin–when I am frightened, fly over the wall."

"That were a feat I should hardly imagine your ladyship performing," replied Geoffrey, glancing up at the massive stone-work, and then at the lady's not very sylph-like form.

"Ah!" said Katharine, shaking her head, "there are other ways of flying beside going over yon mountain of stone. I have many plans working in my brain, and what have I else to do in this weary cage, but think how I may best break the bars? They called me Kate the Quick-Witted at home, and it will be hard but that I shall deserve the name here also."

"God give you good success," sighed the young Lollard; "but when you shall be free, I pray you sometimes to give a thought to the two forest boys shut up in a gloomy dungeon, or perhaps lying in a bloody grave."

"Hush, hush! master Geoffrey," said Lady Katharine, dashing away a tear from her bright eyes, and then relapsing into her merry mood. "Lollards are hard to catch, and harder to keep, and I promise you I will not go forth alone. Since they have made us companions in captivity, we will see if we cannot be the same in freedom. And now I mind me of it, my mother told me a long tale about our being of some kin in a mingled sort of way, but I, giddy girl, paid little heed. So we are in some sort cousins, Geoffrey, and now that I have set you the good example, see that you call me Katharine, or better still, Kate, on peril of my displeasure. But how came you here in this old cell? I did not think that Mother Beatrice would put a companion for me in any place having communication with this garden, her own private one."

The boy began to tell her about the old door he had broken down, and about the parchments; but just then the convent-bell clanged, Lady Katharine sprang to her feet, and saying hurriedly that the abbess would be there in a moment, went off down the walk, while Geoffrey as instantly retreated to his own cell. He found Hubert very anxious to know what was the matter, for he had heard the voices, but, faithful to his trust, he had remained watching the door, as his brother commanded. He was of course very much interested in the history of their fellow-prisoner, and delighted to hear that they had at least one friend, however helpless, in their prison.

CHAPTER XIV.

Remorse and its Effects.

Mother Superior of Our Lady's Convent did not think it best to press an examination on her prisoners, or attempt any active measures for their conversion, until their hot heads had had time to cool in the damps of their dungeon, and their obstinacy had been overcome by hunger and solitude. She then hoped to find them quite willing to obtain their liberty by recantation, and to purchase her favor by the betrayal of their secrets; but she little knew the characters with which she had to deal.

Boys who are thrown wholly on their own resources, and forced to act for themselves, in stirring and dangerous times, soon grow up to manhood in mind, if not in body. Geoffrey had been bred up in habits of self-denial, and inured to every kind of hardship, and was besides possessed of a disposition of that unyielding nature which, when guided by reason and exerted in a right direction, we call firmness, but when uncontrolled and directed to merely trifling things, we denominate obstinacy. His was a spirit which is as much strengthened by persecution as fire by oil; it only roused him to a fiercer action. He could meet defiance by defiance, and taunt with taunt; and Lollardism having been once assumed, there was little danger that it would be ever thrown aside, unless it might be weakened by a long course of prosperity.

Hubert was equally invincible, but his armor was of a different kind. He had neither the power of body or mind which his brother possessed, but in his very weakness lay his greater strength. His delicate health had caused him from his earliest childhood to receive many indulgences which his brother had been taught to scorn, and he had early learned to prefer the chimney-corner and the crabbed letters of an old manuscript, to the pleasures of the chase. Had no new principle been awakened within him, he would, most probably, have become effeminate; but it was not so. The doctrines which he had learned from Lollard preaching, and the fragments he possessed of the Bible, had become a part of his very being, and endued his tender spirit with that supernatural courage which is far more difficult to conquer than mere physical bravery. His mind was so thoroughly imbued with holy thoughts and heavenly aspirations, that earth could offer him few temptations, while heaven seemed to him so near and real, that dangers were but lightly regarded.

Notwithstanding all this, their prison-life began to tell upon them both. They had been so long accustomed to out-door life and abundant exercise, that the damp and confined air of their dungeon soon banished the color from their cheeks, and made them almost loathe their coarse fare. Then Kate's quick wit showed itself to some purpose.

"It is a foul shame," she said, during one of their conversations at the window, as she noticed Hubert pressing his face to the bars as though struggling to get as near as possible to the fresh morning air; "it is a foul shame to keep two

such young eaglets chained to a rock. This window is not so small; if it were not for the bars, we might pass through, and you might exercise in the garden at night. Let us see: I venture these irons are none of the strongest; see how the rust has eaten them."

This thought inspired them with renewed vigor, and they began to test each bar by a vigorous blow. One yielded almost instantly, and another, after a few efforts; but the rest were still immovable, in spite of the pushes and pulls from Kate and Geoffrey, one working on each side. At last the latter bethought him of the bolts on the broken door. He soon wrenched them from the decayed wood, and brought them to the window. One they used as a lever, and another, which was a pointed bit of metal, Hubert sharpened, by rubbing on the stones, to pick out the mortar. This furnished occupation and amusement for all three for many days, for there were only certain hours when they could work without fear of interruption, and many and merry were the conversations that took place. The boys described to their young companion Forest Tower and their retreat on the cliffs, and she in her turn told them stories of her home at Estly Court, near London, of her little brother Guy, and her sweet, loving mother. She told how delighted lady Eleanor would be to welcome them, and how tenderly she would nurse Hubert when his head ached so badly. In the account of Charles Bertrand, she appeared very much interested.

"If he is only safe, and knew what had become of you," she observed, "he might work outside, while we arranged matters within. It would do us small good if we were this moment in yonder forest, if we had no one to help us on our journey. That was what I could not think how to manage; there was never a garrison yet that had not one traitor at least in its midst, if one only knows rightly how to influence him; and I think I know of one or two in this convent whom Mother Beatrice has not yet turned into stone and built up into the walls."

But meanwhile, what had become of the faithful Bertrand?

Remembering well his young master's orders, as soon as the soldiers had retired, he came out of his hiding place, and, having done what he could for poor old Humphrey Singleton, he set about sending information of the boys' capture to their father. He, however, found that the Lollard communications had been much interrupted lately, and that it would be necessary for him to go himself and carry the message.

He and De Forest, with other refugees, consulted together concerning the best means of escape. Sir John determined to forsake his unhappy country, and dwell, for a time at least, in Denmark or Germany. He decided that in the early spring he would go to London, in hopes that his sons might meet him there, and then all flee together. Bertrand was to try and find out where the children had been carried, to wander round in disguise, and, if possible, open communication

with them. All the details were left to his own inventive powers.

He therefore returned to York, entering it one snowy winter's evening, footsore and weary, and not a little despondent. His disguise was that of a minstrel, as best calculated to give him admittance into various places where he might chance to hear somewhat of the objects of his search. He was a tolerable performer on the crwth, or Welsh violin, an accomplishment he had picked up in the course of his wanderings, and he was glad to be able to turn it to such good account.

So far he had been entirely unsuccessful, and cold, wet, and hungry, his chief desire was to find some inn or hostelry where he might obtain refreshment. He turned into one of the humblest, as befitting his station, and approached the fire, where a dozen rough-looking men were drinking beer and cracking low jokes with each other, accompanying each with a round oath and a burst of laughter. It seemed that most of their witticisms were directed toward one of their number, who either could not or would not reply, but sat in moody silence, with his back partly turned to the company, drinking an immense quantity of beer, perhaps with the hope of getting himself into a better humor.

"Now, by our Lady," said one, "I tell you Dick has cracked his pate."

"By the mass," said another, "he acts just like my dog that ran mad, last year; he refuses his victuals, can't stay still a minute, and snaps at the hand of his best friends."

"And he won't fight," said one long-legged fellow who sat cleaning his sword and patting it affectionately; "he, who used to go into a quarrel as a child goes to a show, with a hop, skip, and jump. Hola! Sir Minstrel, sing us a song of the wars of king Harry, to put a little spirit into yon lazy dog, who has grown afraid of his own cross-bow."

"By your leave, my merry masters," said Bertrand, "I will first put a little spirit into myself; I am as wet as though I had swam across the German ocean." So saying, he drew a stool up to the cheerful blaze, and raised an immense leathern flagon to his lips.

At the sound of his voice, the persecuted individual in the corner turned around suddenly; but the stranger's face was buried in his drinking-cup, and he soon relapsed into his former state.

"So, so, friend, feed first, and sing afterward; take a good pull at the liquor, and then sing us a song of Dick Redwood, the coward who trembles at his own footsteps."

Dick here turned round somewhat fiercely, and muttered: "I can fight, ye know that well enough, ye fools; there's not an arm here or in Yorkshire that can swing a battle-axe like mine. Would'st thou see if it is any weaker than it was when it tossed Gaspard, the Frenchman, over the wall, like a ball out of a

culverin? Look!" and the man bared the muscular limb, and thrust it under his companion's nose.

"Ay, ay, he can fight; see that?" said one of the men, with a shout of mocking laughter.

"True, with a cat," said the tormentor coolly, laying down the sword and taking up a corselet, which he proceeded to rub with the most perfect indifference to the gathering rage of his victim, who at length burst out, his voice trembling with rage:

"Knave, thou liest! down on thy knees, or I will shake every bone from thy carrion body! Down, like a dog, as thou art!"

The man shook the other's grasp from his collar, and, stepping back a pace or two, cried: "I recant! I recant! Hear all! I take back what I said touching the most worshipful master Dick Redwood, having therein uttered a foul lie, and do positively affirm that he cannot fight with a cat, except the poor animal be somewhat weak in the legs."

Amid the roar of merriment which followed this sally, the infuriated man seized a huge cleaver, and swinging it round his head as though it were a feather, soon cleared a circle around him, and was about to spring on his tormentor, who was somewhat alarmed at the spirit his taunts had at last aroused, and all dreaded a combat with a man whose personal prowess had been undisputed before this unnatural sullen fit had come over him.

There was a death-like pause; then suddenly the eye of the soldier fell on the minstrel. The change that one look caused in him was marvellous. The color fled from his inflamed face, his eyes stared wildly, his limbs seemed scarcely able to sustain him, and the arm wielding the weapon dropped nerveless at his side. He put his hands to his brow, and muttered something of fiends pursuing him, and blood on his head, and then with one bound he cleared the circle, and dashed out of the door into the darkness.

"I told you he was mad, Tom Jennet. Why did you hunt him so? He is crazed no doubt, by a fall he had over the cliffs some weeks ago, and has been strange ever since. Come, Sir Minstrel, now for your song, to drive this crack-brained fellow from our thoughts."

But when they turned to look for the minstrel, he was gone. He had slipped out unperceived, and was making his way as rapidly as possible through the muddy streets, only intent on putting as great a distance as possible between him and the madman, whom he had instantly known as the great enemy of his master's house, and who, he found, remembered him.

He had gone, however, but a few rods when he was stopped by a heavy hand laid on his shoulder; it was the Captain's voice that sounded in his ear.

"Hold! I am a friend; be silent and follow me. God and our Lady know I

mean you no harm, but may tell you that which will be to your advantage."

Bertrand was very much surprised; but resolving to see the adventure to an end, followed his strange conductor in perfect silence through many narrow and crooked streets, to another hostelry, meaner than the one they had just left. The room was quite deserted, but the soldier drew him into the darkest corner and called for liquor. For some moments he did not speak, and Bertrand's curiosity had been raised to its highest pitch before it was satisfied.

"It is all along of my wife Joan," began the Captain at last, with the air of a man forced by some dreaded power to do something much against his will. "You know who I am–everybody knows me, I think, and calls me coward. He saved me, and I sold them, and the demons are on my track. My wife Joan says it is all the wind; but can I not hear? am I not all ears for their horrible mockings? One of them will creep around my bed at night when all is still, and come up close to me, and then shriek, 'Judas! we have found our Judas again!' and then shake great bags of gold before me, and laugh so devilishly. 'Ay, Dick,' they say, 'thou art one of us now; thou makest a famous Judas! He sold the One who died for him, for only thirty pieces, but thou hast an hundred.' Then they yell, and dance, and shout again and again: 'Hail, Judas! King of the Ingrates!'"

The soldier paused to wipe his damp brow, then continued, his voice lower and hoarser than before:

"Yestermorn I was wandering by the shore–the demons make me wander far and wide; as I was thinking, I picked up something at my feet–*it was an oak branch*! I tossed it into the sea, for it burnt my hand. But, look you, comrade! the waves mocked me, and threw it back at my feet, and then they laughed and shrieked: 'We know thee, Judas!' Even as I went back, I met two innocent-faced boys, but they kept the other side of the way, and methinks they shouted 'Judas!' also, but I ran on.

"So then I told Joan, for I could no longer contain, and she bade me seek you out, and without delay try to free the lads, and then, mayhap, the fiends will leave me."

"In truth, man, I marvel not at the demons," said Bertrand; "but now, if thou really wishest to undo thy devil's work, we are well met. I am fully purposed to bring my master's sons out of their dungeon, or be put in one myself."

"Come on then, for the love of heaven," said Dick, rising, and pulling his companion by the mantle. "Come on to my wife Joan; she is as quick with her mind as with her body; she will tell us what to do, and we will cheat the devils yet."

They passed out of the city gates into the open country beyond, the soldier striding along at a pace which would have been too much for his already wearied companion, had not the renewed hope, and prospect of assistance where he

had least expected it, excited him, so as to make him almost forget his fatigue. They discussed the whole situation of affairs as they went along, and Dick at first seemed much relieved, but presently his voice sank to the old hoarse whisper.

"What if it is *too late*! TOO LATE! Judas repented, Judas went and flung the pieces down, and tried to save Him, but the blood was on his head and on his children's! You see I know it all; the old man read it out of a book that night I was watching, and then the little one told the whole story upon the cliff. The blood is on my head, I tell you, and if I cannot save them, I shall do as Judas did. I will! I must!"

Bertrand strove to calm the agitated man by preaching to him some of the Lollard doctrines, but found his memory much at fault, and he longed for either his young or his old master to pour the balm of consolation into the heart of this their former enemy, whom he had begun to pity sincerely. But this talk served to beguile the time, till they arrived at a lonely cottage in the forest. A light twinkled in the window to welcome them, and both were glad to enter the cheerful-looking room, and warm themselves at the bright fire.

Joan had a warm supper ready for her husband, though it was quite late, and she was glad to divide it with the man whom she thought most able to help her husband in his distress. She was what might be called a picture of comfort, for the middling class of those times.

She was dressed in petticoat of dark blue cloth, surmounted by a waist or bodice of crimson, that showed in full perfection her well-rounded form. Above this again was a snowy kerchief and cap, so jauntily arranged as to display to the best advantage the clean white skin of her throat and neck, and the brilliant bloom of her round fat cheeks. A pair of bright black eyes looked out over a rather short nose, somewhat on the retroussé order, unless when she happened to laugh, when the visual orbs disappeared, and you became rather interested in her well-set teeth, which she took care should every one appear.

On a solid oaken table, which she drew as close as possible to the fire, she spread a steaming supper, talking all the while, as she moved from the board to the fire, sometimes to her husband, sometimes to his guest, and sometimes to the cooking utensils, the fire, or the meat.

"There!" as she set down one smoking dish before Bertrand's hungry gaze; "there's not such another pair of hares in the county. Lie still on your backs, ye fools; lie still, I say, like Christians! Little Dick caught them himself, with his new net, in the forest."

At the sound of his name, up popped a little black head, from a bed on the floor in the farthest corner.

"Ay, father, that net is a brave one; I will have two pair the morn!"

"Down with your head, ye saucy brat!" said his mother, making a pretense

of throwing at his head the gridiron she had just taken from the fire. "Whist! ye little fool! would'st have Moll and Meg awake, and clamoring for supper? Be still, and there'll be a bone for you the morn."

The child's head disappeared, and she continued apologetically, "The naughty lad said he would not sleep till he saw his dad, the brats are so fond of their father; but I did not think the little fool would keep his word;" and the good dame put her hands on her hips, the gridiron still in one hand, and a long wooden spoon in the other, and laughed at her son's disobedience, before she could go on dishing out the meal.

She then turned to the dogs, who were lying under the table. "Out, ye brutes! away, ye hounds! ye had no share in catching the game, and ye shall have none of the meat." But even as she spoke, she belied her words, by throwing them some very liberal bones.

"A truce to your tongue, woman," said her husband at last; "the meat is good, but the sauce tasteless; we have other business on hand to-night!"

"And ye'll have no business done except I help you," she replied, not in the least cast down by the rebuff. "There was never a matter yet, but it was made or marred by a woman. If ye will not go my way, I will have naught to do with it. Eat your fill, and sleep your fill, then in the morn ye shall talk your fill, for then your heads are clearest. Ye may well trust to me, for from me ye get your victuals, and, as the proverb says: 'Always keep friends with the larder.' Yon lazy loon has not brought me enough meat to feed the cat these many days, with all his dreams and vagaries; but he had better bestir himself at daybreak, if ye want a breakfast, for it is hard getting a meal out of an empty cupboard, not to mention that I would not give it to you if I could, seeing ye will not work."

All this was said in as harsh a tone as the good dame could possibly force herself to use; for though she tried to make it appear that she was cross and stingy, she was the most liberal provider, as she was the most absolutely good-natured little woman in all the big county of York.

CHAPTER XV.

Plots and Counterplots.

Christmas had come and gone without bringing any change to the prisoners, except that they saw less and less of Lady Katharine, whom the abbess, using as

an excuse the severity of the weather, confined more and more to the house. But all this served only to excite the quick-witted Kate to renewed exertion, and day and night she planned and schemed how she might best free herself and friends. Her bright face and lively manners, as well as the genuine sympathy and kindness she showed to those around her, had endeared her to all with whom she came in contact–all except the head of the house.

Mother Beatrice decidedly disliked and perhaps feared her. She felt that the girl read her character, mocked her pretensions, and was ever on the watch to thwart her plans. She was in her way decidedly, in more senses than one. She had long hoped, by the influence of Lord Hardwick, either to increase the splendor and power of her present convent, or to be removed to a less secluded one near London; and as she knew him to be very fond of his niece, however anxious he might be for her conversion, she did not dare to use harsh measures toward the willful girl, who was setting a dreadful example to the simple nuns, and did not seem inclined to abandon a single one of her heretical notions. Such a grand conquest, too, as it would be if she could only subdue her! She was very matter-of-fact, and not much given to indulge in day-dreams; nevertheless she had caught herself more than once imagining the time when the noble Lady Katharine Hyde should bow her proud head to receive at her hands the black veil of the order, while Earl Hardwick was in the little parlor signing the deeds of conveyance of the whole estate to the Convent of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows.

But Mother Beatrice would have felt even less secure had she known what was going on in her own proper domain. She had not dared to seclude the young girl from all society, but she did not know how well acquainted she had become with all the sisters, and how she was using them for her own purposes. The little plotter was trying, as she had told Geoffrey, to find the weak spot in the citadel, and she believed she had at length discovered it.

If the one who guards the gate can be won over to the side of the enemy, there is little hope for the garrison, however strong; and though Lady Katharine could make no impression on deaf old Ursula, who wielded her symbols of office with as much authority as the mother superior herself, yet in the person of the assistant who had been granted her on account of her infirmity, she found an excellent point of attack.

The convent porteress was not a nun, for it was her business to attend to all the out-door affairs, and thus keep up that connection between the recluses and the world they had abandoned which was necessary and convenient. It was her duty to purchase stores of provisions and clothing, to attend to the poor who came regularly to the door to receive their dole of charity, and to see that the tenantry of the convent lands paid their dues.

The young girl who assisted her in these often arduous tasks, and who

hoped some time to take her place when sister Ursula had exchanged her seat in the entrance-gate for a more quiet resting-place in the crypt of the convent church, was the eldest daughter of dame Joan Redwood, a buxom lass of twenty summers, who had inherited much of her mother's good nature, but very little of her good sense. She was not a little superstitious, and very vain. Although the dress she wore was not entirely conventual, it gave no opportunity for displaying trinkets or bright colors; yet she loved nothing better than to gather a little store of bright kerchiefs and ribbons, in which she arrayed herself when quite alone, and marched up and down her little cell with the greatest complacency, though she never dared carry it any farther.

This had not escaped Kate's quick eyes, and she laid her plot accordingly. She surprised her one day when making her finest toilet, and having first frightened her with the idea that she would immediately report it to the abbess, she soothed her by the gift of a necklace of red beads, and made her her devoted follower from that moment.

The next day being a market day, the first face that presented itself at the wicket of the convent-gate was dame Redwood herself. She was standing beside a sturdy little pony, half hidden by two enormous panniers.

Her daughter's face was covered with blushes, caused partly by pleasure, and partly by the fear of a certain good-natured sort of scolding, which the dame thought it her duty to bestow whenever she had not seen any of her children for a time. She therefore put on her most demure look, and smoothed every fold in her apron before she descended from her post of observation to open the gate.

"A laggard as usual!" said the dame, shaking the snow from her wooden shoes, and running her quick little eyes all over her daughter's person to find the next best point of attack; and before they had gone far they encountered Lady Katharine's present, which the vain girl had put on under her kerchief, but had not sufficiently concealed. She pounced upon it, greatly to poor Phoebe's confusion.

"Ye idle spendthrift!" she said, "ye have been spending the half-noble your father gave ye for your new kirtle on these follies, have ye? Then ye shall go barebacked for all he shall ever give ye again!"

"Nay, mother, do not be angry; the half-noble is safe in the green purse. These are a gift from a noble lady, oh! so beautiful! and she is shut up here because she is a heretic. I don't know what that is, but she seems to me as good as the mother herself."

Now, mistress Redwood's errand to the convent, though ostensibly to sell her eggs, cheese, and milk to the cook, was really to find out what was going on in the house where the prisoners were confined, how they were treated, and, if possible, to open communication with them; thus fulfilling her contract with her

husband and Bertrand, who having eaten and slept, had concluded, very wisely, to leave the first steps of the undertaking entirely to her. She did not wish to question her daughter directly, for fear of being overheard, or her remarks repeated; but she knew Phoebe very well, and was well aware that but little pressing was necessary to make her tell all she knew on the subject. She was a little surprised to hear that there was another Lollard prisoner there, and wished to find out something more about her; so she tossed up her head with an air of incredulity.

"A pretty young lady, indeed! That is a story for old folks, not me. And where should a pretty young lady in Our Lady's convent get red bead necklaces to throw around to whoever will pick them up? Tell me where you got it, Phoebe, and I'll not be hard on you."

"I said but the truth, mother–I did, indeed," said poor Phoebe, only bent on proving her innocence, and, forgetting a strict rule which forbade what was seen or heard indoors being repeated without, she told her mother–for the latter still appeared incredulous–all she knew of Lady Katharine Hyde. She also told her, in the hope of distracting attention from the subject in hand, about the arrival of the two heretic boys who were said to have done very wicked things, and were shut up safely in the dungeon under the east tower.

The dame was getting the very information she most wanted, so she demanded, forgetting her caution: "And have ye seen the lads? And is one pale and sickly, with light hair?"

"Nay, mother, I cannot tell: Sister Ursula never sends me with their food. I only saw them the day father brought them here, and then there were so many in the court-yard, and such a trampling of horses, and I had to bring so many tankards of beer for the soldiers, that I minded naught beside."

At this moment there was another summons at the gate, and when Phoebe had opened it a poor woman entered, bearing in her arms a sick baby, and leading by the hand a miserable-looking child just able to walk. They had come for medical assistance from the nuns, who were famous as leeches in those days. A few moments after one of the nuns appeared with Lady Katharine, who was herself well skilled in the art for one of her age, as it was then every lady's duty to be able to order, as well as prepare, the simple medicines then in use, for her family and peasantry; and this was a part of the education which a convent was expected to bestow on those brought up within its walls.

While the two were standing behind the grated window where they received all such applications, Lady Katharine's eyes were wandering round the busy scene in the court-yard, whose occupants had been increased by the arrival of other peasants–some beggars, more sick. This little glimpse of the world was a rare favor for her, and a great treat, so she resolved to make the most of it. Sister Agnes was deaf herself, and was talking to a deaf old woman, so she felt

wonderfully at liberty. She noticed dame Redwood, and with her natural quick perception of character determined that she was a person she could trust. In a moment she had devised a plan of operations. She called to her a little child who was standing near.

"Dost thou see yonder stout woman, little one, standing by the gray pony?"

"Ay, lady," said the child; "she is talking to my mother."

"Then run and tell her I have somewhat for the pain in her back."

When her astonished patient came at the summons, she drew her to the farthest corner of the window.

"Good woman, are you a mother?"

The woman looked down at the bright face, now pale with excitement, which was lifted up so beseechingly to her, and a tear glistened in her black eyes, for she easily recognized her from her daughter's story.

"Ay, lady, that am I. Two knaves and two lassies at home, beside a well-grown wench that serves here under Sister Ursula."

"Are you Phoebe's mother? Oh! then think how you would long to see her or the others, if they were shut up in a dreary castle far away from you and all that love them! Would not your heart be very sad for them, and would not you pray to God that some one in that distant place might be kind to them, help them in their troubles, and nurse them when they were sick?"

"That would I, indeed!" said the dame, her motherly heart quite overflowing at this appeal; "and none the less gladly would I help them, lady," she continued, lowering her voice, "if they are of the new faith, for by our Lady, I think not so much of the old as I did a few weeks ago."

"Say you so?" said the young girl joyfully. "Then I have found the very friend I want; but it is not so much for myself that I need your aid as for two poor lads who are shut up here. One is sick, and cannot eat the food they give them, though even that is little enough, and I fear he will die here all alone. He has no mother, but only a father, who knows not what has become of his children."

"Can you see them and talk with them, lady?"

"Not so often as I used; they watch me more closely. It is through great danger that, when I walk in the garden, I can speak to them at a window." She went on to tell her in as few words as possible, how they had become acquainted, for she feared interruption, and she received in reply the welcome news that Bertrand was actually at her cottage plotting their release.

"I will bring the best I have for the poor child to-morrow," said the dame; "but how shall I get leave to see you, lady, when I come?"

"Might not the pain in your back be rather worse to-morrow morn?" replied Lady Katharine mischievously, "and who but Kate Hyde can fit a plaster for it? See also that you bring a bottle for the medicine."

"Hear her now!" laughed the merry dame, delighted at this little bit of diplomacy. "Thou'lt never die for want of wit to know the way to live. The saints preserve me, but the pain shall be bad enough, and the bottle big enough, and the holy Mother Beatrice none the wiser for the business. And be sure, pretty lady, that naught would cure a pain in my back, if I had one in earnest, so soon as carrying you on it out of this dismal place."

The plotters were now obliged to separate, but each retired well pleased with her interview.

As for Lady Katharine, she could hardly conceal her triumph as she took her tapestry frame and sat down as demurely as possible at the Mother Superior's side in the convent parlor. "There!" she said to herself as she stitched away diligently at the eyes of a St. George whom she was trying to make look fiercely at a flaming dragon which lay, as yet, only in outline, at his feet. "There now! I have found out not only a weak point in the garrison, but a standpoint beyond; and what with friends within and friends without, and a messenger to go between the two, out upon you for a silly thing, Kate Hyde, if with all this you cannot balk Mother Beatrice in all her well-laid plans!"

CHAPTER XVI.

The Convent Ghost.

Dame Redwood hastened home with light panniers and a lighter heart; and so eager was she to tell her tale, that she made poor pony trot at a rate to which his old legs were quite unaccustomed. When she entered the cottage door and presented herself to her husband and his guest, her cheeks were several shades rosier than usual with exercise and excitement. Nevertheless, she would not vouchsafe them a word till she had scolded the children all round, brushed up the hearth, and put the dinner on the fire; after which she began, but would always stop at the most interesting points in her story to stir the porridge, or drive the dogs from the door. The little woman felt her importance, and was determined to make the most of it.

"Was ever man so plagued by woman!" was poor Dick's exclamation when she went off to get some water just as she had begun to tell how the boys had broken through the old door in their dungeon.

"Now there is an ungrateful man!" said the dame on her return. "Better say,

never was man better served by woman. What would ye have done, I'd like to know, if it had been left in your hands? Ye would have blurted it out at the gate, and had the whole convent at your heels. I warrant ye would never have come home with whole bones, let alone the knowledge ye were seeking."

"A truce to your tongue, woman," said her husband impatiently. "Where did you say was the door the lad broke through?"

When she had told him he sat for a moment in deep thought, then brought his great fist down on the table with a blow which made every platter on the shelves rattle.

"How now, man!" said his wife with a start. "Wouldst thou bring the house down around our ears?"

"I mind not of the house now," he replied eagerly; "but this I know–if they are in the dungeon under the east tower, and have opened the door into the old cellarer's vault, by our Lady, there is not ten feet of solid earth betwixt us and them, as sure as I am Dick Redwood!"

Both of his auditors were much surprised at this sudden declaration, and the dame even forgot her stew-pans in her curiosity.

"Twenty-five years ago," continued the soldier, turning to his guest, "before ever I knew Joan Gilfoy yonder, I was ever ready for a light job that was well paid for, and knew how to hold my tongue about it when it was done. Often one would come to me and say: 'Dick, here is a bit of work and a noble for thee, and if thou forgettest all about it, at the end of the year thou shalt have another.' So I know many a thing about this country that few, if any, others do; but never did anything come to hand so well as this."

"How is it? Tell us now, for mercy's sake," said Bertrand as the soldier paused.

"Why, you see," replied the Captain, "in the old time, before Mother Beatrice's day, they led a different life at the convent from what they do now. But though the prioress was easy herself, she was not enough so for some of the sisters. They wanted to come out sometimes and take a walk in the woods by moonlight; so they got me and two others–dead and gone long ago in the French wars,–to mine a way for them, opening by one end into the entrance to the cellarer's vault, under the east tower, and by the other under the bank at the spring, where the convent wall runs along the edge of the precipice. It is many years now since they made the beer-vault on the other side for fear of the damp, and when the new prioress came, all the nuns' fine walks were stopped; so I warrant you there is not one in the convent now who knows aught of it. If the way be not too much stopped up with rubbish, I could walk, in half an hour, from here straight into the lads' prison–that is, if they know how to open the door, for the spring is on the other side."

"We will see to that matter at once," cried Bertrand, rising and snatching his cap; and in a few moments they were striding along, as if on a race, down one of the forest paths. They went on for some time till they came almost directly under the grim-looking convent walls rising from the top of a steep bank. They could see plainly the spot where the entrance had been, but to their great chagrin, found it was impossible to try whether it were still there, for the drifting snow had been piled up in the little dell in such huge drifts that they had to abandon all hope of removing them.

This was a great disappointment, but they both knew that the only thing to do was to wait for a thaw, and meanwhile Bertrand determined to send word to Sir John of the state of affairs, and make what preparations he could for conveying them to London as soon as they could escape.

The next morning, there was an unwonted confusion in the ordinarily quiet convent of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows. In spite of all the strictness of Mother Beatrice's rule, there was an audible hum of voices in the refectory, and a look, half of terror, half of delight, on every face. For what earthly power could keep still the tongues of fifty women, when such an excellent subject for gossip had arisen in their very midst? Some told the story one way, and some another, but one thing was plain–a ghost had appeared to several of the inmates of the convent the preceding night. Sister Hilda, who had fallen behind-hand with some aves and paters which had been given her by way of penance, had been in the chapel on her knees before the figure of the Virgin at midnight, and she declared that just as the last stroke of the bell died away, she lifted her head, and saw a very tall, white figure pass through the choir, and out at the door behind the altar. Sister Ann had been passing down the corridor leading to the infirmary, as it was her duty to watch Sister Agnes, who was ill, when the apparition had brushed by her and passed up the tower stairway.

Poor Phoebe was the most frightened of all, though she did not dare to relate the horrible encounter *she* had had with the spectre, for reasons which will shortly appear. It was her duty to hand the great bunch of keys to the abbess every night, and on the preceding evening when she got into bed, she suddenly remembered that she had left the key of the garden-door hanging in its lock. In great terror lest her forgetfulness should draw upon her some severe punishment, she had stolen softly down-stairs to recover it before it should be found in the morning; but just as she came to the door and had taken the key out, a tall white figure approached, and laid a deathly cold hand on hers. She had shrieked with fright, dropped the key, and run as if for her life; and now the key could not be found anywhere. The prioress had not yet missed it–that was the only comfort; the weather was not pleasant enough to make the garden an agreeable resort, and it might be some days before she was disgraced, but it must come at last; so

she did not care to give her experiences with the ghost.

When dame Redwood appeared at the grate to ask for the plaster Lady Katharine had been so kind as to promise her, she noticed her daughter's pale face, but was too much occupied with her particular business to ask her many questions. It seemed so long to her before the lady came that she feared lest something should have happened to prevent their meeting altogether; but at last she appeared, walking as demurely as Mother Beatrice herself. As soon as she was sure of being free from observation, however, she raised her hood and showed to the dame a face so expressive of hardly repressed fun, that the good woman could not help catching the infection.

"Ah! my poor afflicted sister!" said Kate, imitating the nuns' tone, "how is that emaciated back of thine to-day?"

Fortunately the dame never laughed very loud; she only screwed up her round face and shook her fat sides for a minute or two, and as soon as she had indulged in this irresistible fit of merriment, she answered:

"Ah! lady, it is not so much about me as about the bottle you'll be asking, and here it is, and a little meat in this package, if you can hide so much."

"That can I," replied Kate, opening her cloak and showing some ingeniously arranged pockets. "A nun's garb is good for hiding, if for naught else. But here is another matter: do you think your good man could make another key like that? Phoebe told me he had replaced one once that had been lost, but that he needed a copy." Here she produced, with a mischievous twinkle in her eye, the identical key which had caused the poor under-porteress such trouble and fright. "It is the key of the garden-gate, and it is very necessary for my comfort that Mother Beatrice and I should each have a means of entrance there."

"The saints preserve me, lady! but how got you hold of a key that not even my Phoebe herself would dare use without Sister Ursula's permission? She has told me as much herself."

"Ah! I have a way," said Kate, her mouth twitching with fun; "and as to daring, I dare anything–for those I love," she added to herself; but the very thought sent a flush of color to her cheek, and moisture to her eye.

"As to the key," said the dame, turning it over and over in her hands, "it is as like as a twin to the one that opens the big oak chest at home. I know it well, for I have handled it now nigh upon forty years."

"That is good news," replied the young schemer. "I am to go into the garden to-day, but with Mother Beatrice. When she turns her back I think I can throw a string with a stone at the end over the east side, close by the tower turret. Could not Bertrand fasten the key to it then, so that I could draw it up at the next turn? They would not notice such a little thing from the windows."

This led to a full account of the hidden entrance, and when they parted, it

was with the agreement that a note should be thrown over the wall by a string in case of any emergency, and, until Bertrand and Dick could clear out the passage, the prisoners should remain quiet, and be, above all, particular to excite no suspicion.

Mother Beatrice being now pretty well assured that her prisoners were subdued by hunger and long confinement, thought it high time to begin the work of their conversion, and on this very day she had sent Father Paul, one of the confessors of the convent, to have a conversation with them.

When he entered the room it was afternoon, and some sunbeams which had lost their way among these grim walls and towers, shot through the grated window and rested on the face of a pale, thin boy, who was reclining on the straw in the corner, partly supported by the wall, while with his long, thin fingers he was braiding some straw into fancy shapes. Beside him knelt his brother, trying to pin around him a tattered cloak in such a way as to keep off the cold air from the window. He sprang to his feet as the door opened, and placed himself as if for a shield in front of the sick child.

"Do not be afraid, my sons," said the monk, softening his tones involuntarily at the sight of such suffering. He drew a wooden stool to the side of the bed, and laid his hand on the boy's high forehead with such a tender touch that Geoffrey's fears were for the moment disarmed.

"Thou art very ill, my son. Wouldst thou not like to leave this sad place and go out into the bright world? It is almost spring now–the flowers will soon be out in the woods."

The boy did not answer for a moment; he only gave a long, deep sigh, but it was such a longing and yet patient sigh, that Geoffrey's brow waxed dark with indignation, and he walked away toward the window to conceal his feelings.

"Ah! Father, if you had been a prisoner all these weary months, you would not ask that question."

"Then, my son, all thou hast to do is to kneel down here at my knee and confess thy sins, and then thou shalt go free out into the sunshine; for I think thou hast borne penance enough for all the wrong thou canst have committed, poor child!"

Geoffrey turned with an angry answer on his lips, but Hubert's quiet voice was already replying:

"I shrive me to God morning and evening, and Christ hath long since borne my penance. He only stands betwixt my God and me."

"How!" said Father Paul, amazed at finding such opposition at the very outset. "So young, and a heretic already! Dost thou set thyself against the holy mother church and all her teachings?"

"By all the saints ye worship, sir priest!" Geoffrey burst out, no longer able

to restrain himself, "your holy mother church hath showed herself but a sorry jade of a step-mother to us. What obedience do we owe to one who has robbed us of our home and our friends, and who thirsts for our blood? You had better choose another place to preach the papistrie in than this foul dungeon!"

"Boy!" said the monk sternly, "I came to bring you a message of peace, but you will make me turn it to one of wrath and justice. If you are old enough thus to brave authority, you are old enough for the rack to force from you more seemly speech."

Geoffrey was cooler now, but none the less determined. He stood before his visitor with such resolution in his hollow eyes, and stern contempt in the rigid lines about his mouth, that the monk involuntarily stepped back a space. He spoke in a low, deep tone:

"Look you, sir priest, ye and your fellows have razed to the ground the home of my ancestors; ye have made my father a penniless exile; ye have slain with fire and sword our dearest friends; ye seized us when we were living quietly and peaceably, not even seeking to teach to others these doctrines which you call heresy; ye have shut us up here in this noisome place, having done no wrong, and having never even had a trial; ye have taken away from us the light and air of heaven, and I wot well ye think never to let us forth again. So be it. Hunger and thirst and weariness will soon open for us gates which ye cannot shut, and give to us a home which ye can neither destroy nor ever inhabit."

The boy's highly-wrought feelings had proved too much for his feeble frame, for though his voice rang clear and high to the end, he sank down the moment he had finished and burst into a violent fit of sobbing. Hubert, excited by the interview, had become flushed with fever, and he seemed to have partly lost consciousness of the subject of discourse; but, catching the last words, he began in a weak and wandering way to talk:

"Home? Oh! yes, I think it is time we went home, Geoffrey; they want us home, and it is warm and bright and beautiful there. Take hold of my hand, brother, and let us go home together!"

The monk turned again to the bedside, and drawing from under his robe an illuminated missal, held up before the child's face one of the pictures.

"My son, seest thou this Agnus Dei, the Lamb of God?"

"God's lamb?" said the child dreamily. "I know he is the Good Shepherd; but tell me, doesn't a shepherd sometimes forget one poor little lamb, and leave it out on the mountains alone, with the wind roaring, and the snow falling, to die?"

The monk only shook his head, and turned to a picture of the crucifixion.

"I know! I know!" cried Hubert, roused almost to eagerness. "He died for you and me, for us all, and so we are safe; his precious blood is on me, and all my

sins are forgiven; nothing else is wanted. I am his little lamb, as he is the Lamb of God; and he cannot forget one for whom he suffered so much. He will soon turn back on his way and take me up in his bosom, and I shall be so warm while he is carrying me home! But the rocks are so cold and hard! Do you think he will soon remember me, and come?"

Father Paul's stern features were working with emotion; perhaps it was to hide this that he bent lower down over the child and felt again his forehead and hands.

"Are you a minister?" said Hubert, suddenly looking up into his face. "I wish you would tell me some of Jesus' words, you know so much better than I do. Tell me about the Bridegroom coming in the night, and being all ready."

Poor Father Paul! In all his long life–for the hair left by the tonsure was already beginning to turn gray–he had never heard those sweet, solemn words in his mother tongue, and so hastily and carelessly had he repeated them in Latin when the service required it, that he could not recollect them now. Instead, he commenced a prayer in Latin but Hubert interrupted him:

"Not now, please; my head is so bad I cannot say my Latin task now. Geoffrey, just say one verse before I go to sleep."

Geoffrey rose in an instant, and pushing the monk away, knelt at his brother's side and repeated the whole passage.

"Ready, ready," murmured the boy; "yes, I think I am ready. I wish he would come to-night. I know it is only to trust in Jesus, and I think I do that. I am very glad, for that brings peace now, when everything else is so full of pain and weariness. Are *you* ready too?" He lifted his large, earnest eyes full in the face of the ecclesiastic.

Father Paul turned abruptly and left the room. He drew each bolt and bar with energy as he fastened the door behind him, as though by closing that oaken portal he could shut out certain new and very painful thoughts which had arisen in his mind; but it had no such effect; and thinking perhaps that a little fresh air might blow away such dungeon damps, he procured the key which Phoebe had just found suspended in its usual place, and with his cowl drawn over his face paced for some time the little garden.

The truth was, that a mighty problem had come up before his mind, and would allow him no rest till he had solved it. If that Master should come, whose advent might even then be nigh at hand–if he, as Judge, were suddenly to appear, was he ready for his coming? Paul Hyde had not entered the church merely as a matter of taste, as did many of his companions, but as the only means of escaping the consequences of a wild and wicked youth. He was the brother of Lady Eleanor; but so completely had he withdrawn himself from his family, especially after rumors of his sister's Lollardism began to float about, that though he knew

somewhat of their movements, he was to them as one dead, and Mother Beatrice was entirely unaware that her favorite confessor was also the uncle of her troublesome charge.

He was a man of rather a contemplative than active disposition, and not so inclined to cruelty as many of his brethren. He had studied thoroughly the business he had undertaken. His prayers were numerous, his penances and mortifications incessant, his fasts frequent and severe, and all this discipline he had been taught, and learned to believe, had atoned for all the evil of his former life, and made him not only pure, but worthy in the sight of God. But, strange to say, a few words from the lips of a sick child had shown him, as by a lightning-flash, that all this sin had only been covered, not driven out–concealed, but never canceled, and that all the sins of his youth were ready to spring up and confront him–ay, and confound him in the great day of account.

In vain he considered, again and again, his austere and holy life; he could not see that one sin had been lessened in its enormity by it all. Father Paul had a clear, vigorous mind; it had been slumbering for many years under the influence of the sleeping-draught which Popery always administers so skillfully to its victims; but now that it was aroused, it grasped, systematically, the arguments, and rapidly drew its conclusions. Sin and its punishment, man's utter depravity and God's just wrath, were painted in glowing colors before his eyes. His natural sense of justice told him that we only perform our duty in living the holiest of lives, for we cannot be more perfect than his laws. How then can we lay up any righteousness in one part of our lives, to balance the wickedness of another portion?

Lower and lower sank the monk's head on his bosom, wilder and fiercer rushed through his mind thoughts of remorse, horror, and despair. He gave one glance toward Heaven for aid, but the thick leaden clouds seemed placed there for a sign that Heaven was barred against his prayers, and the words of supplication to which he was accustomed, seemed as though they would pass from the lips of a wretch so utterly, so hopelessly vile!

Just at that moment the convent bell tolled, but he had to pass his hand several times across his brow before he could remember that he must perform vespers in the chapel. He turned his steps toward the vestry door; there was no escape for him from that duty, though the thought seemed pressing him down to the earth that he, with such a fearful weight of unforgiven sin hanging over him, was to kneel at God's holy altar, and lead the devotions of yonder band of simple, dependent women. All noticed his haggard look and abstracted air, and the weak, almost tottering step with which he mounted the chancel steps; but it was Easter Eve–doubtless the holy Father had sunk under the austerities he had been inflicting on himself during the Lent just passing away, and they gazed

on him almost with awe, as a being elevated above the world by his voluntary sufferings–so little do we know each other in this world!

Easter Eve! a day full of deep and holy thoughts for thinking minds. Sad, as it brings over our minds the shadow of the garden tomb; joyful, as it points to the glories of the coming morrow.

Father Paul never thought of seeking his couch that night. Back and forth he strode the length of his cell; rest seemed banished from him forever. Again and again he passed each argument in review–those which justified God grew more and more powerful; those which justified himself broke one by one like a flaxen band in the flame. More than once he flung himself at full length on the stone floor, and groaned aloud in his anguish.

At length, almost unconsciously, he took up his missal which lay on the table beside him, and opened it. The faint gray streaks of the coming daylight revealed to him the very picture he had been showing the sick boy, and with the sight came back the child's words:

"He died for you and me, and so we are safe. His precious blood is on my head, and all my sins are forgiven; nothing else is wanted."

He laid the book down softly, then seated himself and buried his face in his hands. That one thought, like the command of Christ, had driven out the demons who were tormenting and mocking his soul. Like Christian, he had come to the foot of the cross, and his burden had fallen into the open sepulchre. Self-righteousness he saw must be exchanged for Christ's righteousness, and, as in a vision, he beheld the Lamb of God submitting to the punishment due to his sins, and saw how beneath the cross God's justice might clasp hands with his mercy, how God might be justified, and yet the sinner be pardoned. The morning had dawned, the Easter sun was lifting itself from the horizon, and climbing by golden ropes toward the zenith; but far more gloriously was the risen Sun of Righteousness shining in the long benighted heart of the Benedictine monk!

Again the convent bell sounded, but this time he joyfully obeyed its summons. If all had wondered at the priest's appearance the preceding evening, they wondered still more at his conduct in the morning. As he passed up the choir, through the crowd of country folk who had gathered to keep the holy day, his "Benedicite" had a depth and fervor of tone in it which none had ever heard before from the stern, cold man. His very face was changed. It was very, very pale, with deep lines and furrows around the compressed mouth, and eyes sunken deep in their sockets; but the expression of joy, peace, and thanksgiving that rested upon it was unmistakable. When the service was over, he mounted the pulpit and began his sermon.

Never had such a discourse been delivered within the time-worn walls of Our Lady's church. He took no text–his theme was the story of the cross. Never

had it seemed so wonderful, so simple, and yet so majestic before. He drew such a picture of divine love and compassion, the slain Lamb washing away sin with his own blood, God smiling at the sinner over Calvary, that there was scarcely a head in the whole assembly that was not bowed down to hide the falling tears. Then he bade them notice the snow which, under the bright beams of a returning sun, was melting away to be replaced by flowers and fruits, and he compared it to their dead faith and affections which Christ's resurrection should rouse to life and activity.

Lower sank his voice, more solemn, more thrilling grew his tone as he spoke to them of the second coming of that Lord and Master who had risen from his tomb more than fourteen hundred years before, and he seemed so to realize in his own mind the fact that at any moment, even that very day, the angel's trumpet might call priest and people to the judgment, that his eloquence fell with irresistible force on even his most careless or ignorant hearers; and when at last he descended the pulpit-steps, his last words were ringing like a death-knell in many a trembling heart, for they were spoken for the first time in their own tongue:

"Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh. What I say unto you, I say unto all, *Watch!*"

Mother Beatrice met her confessor in the convent parlor soon after the sermon. She stood more in awe of him than of any one else with whom she came in contact. Perhaps it was because she could not understand him: we are generally afraid of characters whose depths we cannot fathom, unless we are exceedingly ignorant or conceited–then we despise them. But however this was, she feared and reverenced him, and these feelings were not likely to be lessened by the new expression of his countenance.

"Well, Father, how have you found our prisoners? I have strong hopes for the younger; he is but a child, and not yet hardened in iniquity, perhaps. Think you he is yet convinced of his folly? I heard such tales of Lollard wiles and witchcraft, that it behooved me to put them in safe keeping."

Only yesterday had Father Paul talked with those children. Could it be possible that between one sunset and the succeeding one, so fearful a conflict could have been fought, so glorious a victory won?

"Daughter," he replied, as soon as he could arrange his thoughts, "no bolts or bars can keep that younger child with us. There is a Deliverer approaching before whom we must all bow."

"How, Father?" said the startled lady; "who is it will take them from my guardianship? Has the archbishop sent—-"

"Nay, daughter," said the priest solemnly; "the deliverer I spoke of is greater than he, and will pass through yonder dungeon walls without asking our favor.

The lad is dying."

"Dying!" Mother Beatrice appeared really shocked. "I meant not that; I may have kept them over strictly; they are but children."

It may have been the kindly influences of Eastertide, it may have been the result of thoughts stirred up by the sermon she had just heard–whatever it was, the abbess was strangely softened. Father Paul saw this, and took advantage of it.

"What shall I do, Father? They are heretics–enemies of our holy church."

"Then, daughter," replied the monk very gravely, "think how Christ forgave his torturers, and let this be your Easter sacrifice, far more acceptable in his sight than the rushes with which you have strewn the chapel in memory of his resurrection. Let us forgive as we have been forgiven."

CHAPTER XVII.

A Midnight Supper.

At midnight on the preceding night, when the convent was still, and even the inmates of the dungeon under the east tower were sleeping, Geoffrey was aroused by a tap at the door which led into the inner cell. He did not seem at all surprised, but arose and opened it. As he expected, Kate stood on the other side, a white sheet thrown around her, and a lamp in one hand. The brilliancy of the light seemed to dazzle him for a moment, but perhaps it was Kate's own bright face, looking in so suddenly on his loneliness.

"I come, you see, as I promised," she said, passing him into the room, and setting down her lamp on the shelf occupied by the crucifix, which she pushed aside without scruple to make room. Then, with nimble fingers, she pinned a dark cloth over the window, lest the light shining without should betray them, and continued, as she unburdened herself of several packages:

"I have not been a very bad purveyor, I think. This bottle of wine our good friend dame Redwood brought, and the chicken, too; but see here, now, this is what I call fair spoil. This piece of venison is cut from the haunch prepared for the abbess' own dinner to-morrow, and this pastry was meant as a tid-bit for Sister Ursula's breakfast, to reward her for the privations of Lent."

Even Geoffrey, who did not smile often now, was moved to laughter at this history of their feast, and Hubert tried to raise himself at the mention of

such luxuries. They had no plates; but she, like a dainty housewife as she was, contrived to set it out quite tastily on the floor beside the bed, using the sheet for a table cloth. The pastry and the venison she put one at each end, the bottle of wine in the middle, the chicken and bread and cheese by way of side-dishes.

"We might as well do it in style," she said, laughing. "I am Lady Katharine Hyde of Estly Court, and you are the heir of Forest Tower."

But her gayety was mostly put on to hide the tears which would come welling up in her eyes, as she saw the famished looks with which the two boys regarded the provision.

"Let us say grace first," said Hubert. And slowly, and reverently, the sick child thanked God for his great benefits to such unworthy children, and prayed that if it were his will, they might soon all go home. This over, they began their meal, and it was touching to mark how Geoffrey pressed each bit upon his brother, unwilling to taste any himself till he had seen him satisfied, and how Hubert watched each dish lest he should receive more than his share. It was but little, after all, that the younger could eat; the wine seemed most refreshing, and brought a little color to his cheeks; but to Geoffrey the food was life itself. He went on eating and eating, hardly looking up at Katharine till he was quite satisfied, while she watched him with smiles playing about her lips, but tears glistening in her eyes. At last the boy stopped, actually unable to eat another mouthful.

"There, now, you have left a little, after all. I began to think that the very cloth would not be left to take me back in safety. Now, do you not want to know how your supper got here?"

"That would I, indeed," replied Geoffrey with some compunction in his tone. "Forgive me; I think I have forgotten what courtly manners I ever had since I came here, and I was so hungry. But how could you enter the garden at this time, and how could you get at the abbess' own larder?"

"Ah!" said Lady Kate, roguishly, "you may thank the convent ghost for that, or, as it will be called by future generations of nuns, the walking lady of the convent."

"What do you mean–a ghost?" said both boys, surprised.

"That is just it: a ghost, but with a substantial body attached. But I must begin at the beginning," and she settled herself comfortably, ready to begin her tale, for dearly Lady Katharine loved to talk, and she seldom had a chance in the convent.

"You see, it just came into my wise head, that though it would never do for *me* to walk about the house and pry into things a little, there was no law against a *ghost* doing it; so I wrapped myself up in this cloth. It was so funny to see Sister Hilda's look when I passed her in the chapel! I guess she forgot after that how

many aves and paters she had to say. But I did not think of meeting any one there. I went in to practise gliding on the pavement, and she frightened me almost as much as I did her. But Phoebe was the best of all. I was in the garden refreshing myself, when she came stealing along, ready to jump at her own shadow. I meant to try to speak with you after I had secured the key; but when she screamed, I was afraid it might arouse the house, and hasted back to my room. The next night I had to try it again, in order to put back the key. That silly Phoebe thinks it must be one of the saints, to whom she prayed so earnestly, who brought it back and hung it on its own nail, and who kept Mother Beatrice from wanting to go in the garden that whole day. Now, I do it for the fun of the thing, and, as you see, I have made famous pockets in my robe, and go foraging, as the soldiers say, for truly I think we are in an enemy's country, and if they won't give us enough to eat, and won't let us go where we might have it gladly, I think we have a right to take it wherever we can find it. But now that I have brought you a supper, will you help me in a bit of work?"

"Ay, that I will gladly," replied Geoffrey, with a look of admiring wonder. "Kate, I always thought it was a man's place to provide for the ladies, but you are taking care of us."

"Never mind that," replied the girl, blushing partly from confusion and a feeling as if she might have been too bold, and partly from pleasure. "The time will soon come, I hope, when you and I can take our proper places, and then I will be more ladylike and useless, and then"–she hesitated, then finished her sentence with a laugh–"then you may take care of me if you wish. But come, I think I can show you somewhat in your lodging that you never knew before."

[image]

Leaving the Convent.–Page 277.

With lamp in hand she led the way to the inner room, and began examining carefully the stones in the wall under where the steps had formerly led down from the closed doorway. Geoffrey meanwhile, his curiosity roused to its greatest height, watched her every movement. At last she found a little stone let into the wall, and slightly marked with a triangle at one corner. On this corner she pressed with all her strength, at first unsuccessfully, but at last it rolled back, and with it a part of the wall, disclosing a narrow doorway leading to some steps; beyond, all was darkness.

In her delight she would have entered at once, but Geoffrey drew her back. He was far better acquainted with such places than she was, and conjectured that

since it had evidently been closed so long, the steps might be in too dilapidated a condition to bear her weight. He therefore insisted on trying them by blows with a stick, and on being the first to descend; but, except for the dust, and a confined smell, they appeared as if they might have been in daily use. Down some twenty feet they descended, Geoffrey leading, and carrying the lamp, Kate breathless with excitement, yet talking as fast as possible, explaining the secret entrance and its former object. Soon they found themselves stopped; the passage was filled with rubbish; from this part they must depend on their friends outside. And hark! even now they could distinguish a dull, thumping noise. Dick was at his work in the midnight; at every blow deliverance was coming nearer.

According to Kate's direction, he measured with some cord the distance from the foot of the steps to the obstruction, in order that Dick, who knew exactly the length of the passage when it was first made, might be able to judge whether it were possible to remove the rocks and earth. They then returned to tell the news to Hubert.

He was suffering from great oppression and exhaustion, so that he did not appear either as surprised or as delighted as they supposed he would. His breath came in hard, short gasps, and Kate seated herself so that his head could rest on her shoulder, while Geoffrey bathed his face and moistened his parched lips.

"Sing to me, Kate–the song you sang the other night about Jesus."

"I will," she replied. And her voice, though at first trembling and husky with emotion, soon rose, as she became roused with her theme, to that clear, calm tone which is so soothing to the sick. She sang a Latin hymn, written by a monk in a far southern land, but sounding none the less sweet to those three Lollard children in their cold and gloomy dungeon.

"Jesu dulcis memoria
Dans vera cordi gaudia;
Sed super mel et omnia
Ejus dulcis præsentia.

"Nil cantitur suavius,
Nil auditur jocundius,
Nil cogitatur dulcius,
Quam Jesus, Dei Filius.

"Jesus, spes poenitentibus,
Quam pius es petentibus,
Quam bonus te quærentibus,
Sed quis invenientibus!

”Nec lingua videt dicere,
Nec littera exprimere;
Expertus potest credere
Quid sit Jesum diligere!”

”Sweet memories of thee impart
True joy, dear Jesus, to my heart;
But far beyond all sweets will be
Thy holy presence, Lord, to me.

”No sweeter song can chanted be,
More joyful news be brought to me,
Or sweeter thoughts to think upon
Than Jesus Christ, God’s only Son.

”Thou hope of every contrite heart,
Since them so very glorious art,
To those who SEEK so good, so kind,
What must thou be to those who FIND?

”No language can the story hold,
No words the mystery unfold;
Experience alone can prove
How good it is our Christ to love.”

There was silence for several minutes after the hymn was finished, then the sick boy seemed quite revived.

”Thank you; how good that is! I feel stronger now, and I would like to talk with you both. Sit close to me, Geoffrey, and wrap my cloak around you; you are shivering.”

Geoffrey *was* shivering, but not with bodily cold–it was that chill that creeps over us when Death suddenly appears, and dropping all disguise, shows us his stern features. He had long felt that this great sorrow was approaching, but since he had had so strong a hope of restoration to liberty, he had imagined the fresh air and bright sunshine bringing back a healthy glow to those pale cheeks and vigor to that wasted frame. But now he saw, all at once, his mistake. Death would not thus be robbed of its victim. The bolts and bars through which he was to break were such as no man could fasten; the sunshine in which he was to bask

would be the light of his much-loved Saviour's face.

"Do you remember, Geoffrey, that day before we left dear old Forest Tower, how Lord Cobham told me I might have to die for the truth's sake? I am very glad to go. I did not think it would be so easy; but I would have liked to be able to preach Christ before I went. I am sorry to leave you, brother, but perhaps when I am gone they will take pity on you, and let you go. When you are free, you will go away together, you and Kate–I have prayed God for that. And when you are happy together, you will think often, won't you, of the days we have passed together in our prison? See, I have made these for you; they are not much, but it is all I could do, and father will like to see them, and you will tell him about to-night, and how I loved you both." He drew out from under the straw two little bags, or flat cases, made of plaited straw, and placed them in Kate's and Geoffrey's hands.

"There are some texts written on parchment in each; I wrote them last summer because they are so beautiful. I wanted to tell you more, but I am very sleepy now. Good night!"

The low, faint voice had grown fainter from exhaustion, and he sank down in a deep sleep on Kate's shoulder as he finished. She laid him carefully down, for the convent-bell was warning her that it was time to go. Wrapped in her sheet again, she passed, with Geoffrey's aid, through the narrow window, and as he stood and watched her by the white gleam of her drapery among the leafless trees, it seemed as though all the light that was left for him in this world had departed with the bright words and kindly smile of Lady Katharine Hyde.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Free Again.

Very much surprised was dame Redwood when, the week after Easter, she received a message that the abbess of the convent of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows wished to see her on particular business, that very morning.

"I have been at no tricks, mother," said poor frightened Phoebe, who was the messenger, "unless it might be about the key, but that has been hanging on its nail ever since. Do you think she means about me, mother?"

"And why should she not be meaning you, you heedless thing?" replied her mother, though in her inmost heart she believed it *was* for her own tricks she was

to be called before that high dignitary, and foresaw nothing but the loss of her farm, if not something worse. But she would not let her daughter see this; so she went on scolding her with all the breath she could spare while running round to get ready for her departure.

It was a pair of very frightened women who presented themselves to Mother Beatrice as she sat erect and stately in the convent parlor. The good dame, however, was thinking less of her own safety than how she could manage to keep from criminating Lady Katharine in case her part of the plot had been discovered.

"You may go to your work, girl," said the abbess in an unusually gracious manner, when they had made their courtesies to her. "Dame Redwood, your daughter will make a good porteress if she is as prompt in her duty as you are."

This took a load off both their hearts, and the dame could listen quietly to the long speech which the Mother Superior addressed to her as soon as Phoebe had closed the door. She told her how she had there with her for safe keeping, and, if possible, for restoring to the church, two young heretics, committed to her care by his grace Chichely, archbishop of Canterbury. She told how the younger was ill, and that she was about to show the extreme clemency of the church toward its wayward, by letting them go free on condition that they should leave the country, and never set foot on English soil again. Moreover, as the one was ill, and the other not strong, it might be necessary for them to rest and recover before their departure, for which she would allow them the space of one week, which time she wished them to pass under the roof of so faithful a tenant of the convent as dame Joan Redwood. Furthermore, she would hold her and her husband responsible if, during that time, they held communication with any other Lollards, and if at the end of that period they were allowed any further shelter.

The dame had great difficulty in concealing her delight at this turn of affairs; but she managed to account for her smiles and agitation on the ground of the unexpected favor just bestowed.

"And now, think you," continued Mother Beatrice, "your good husband could bring some one with him and come this evening while we are at chapel? Phoebe shall have them ready to go."

In her delight, happy Joan managed to get down on her knees and kiss the hem of the abbess' robe, which gratified her, and made her so condescending that it was with difficulty they could conclude their respective blessings and courtesies, and have the door fairly shut between them.

Never had the road appeared so long between the convent and her home, though the good woman trudged along it almost on a run. When she imparted the news to her husband, his delight almost exceeded hers, for the demon of remorse had been tormenting him again since he had heard of Hubert's sufferings. Now,

however, it seemed as if his sin had been expiated, and he was to be certified of this by having the boys placed in his hands to minister to their wants, and serve them in every possible way.

It seemed also a most favorable coincidence that Bertrand had just arrived that morning, having appointed that the boys should meet their father, if it were possible for them to escape, at the house of Philip Naseby the trader, which had been their asylum soon after they left home. Bertrand and Redwood employed themselves in making a rude litter of boughs, cushioned with all the dame's skill, and furnished with many a soft wrap to shield the sick boy from contact with the cold air.

They had hardly finished their preparations before the hour designated by the abbess; but as the bells were tolling for vespers they stood in the convent court-yard eagerly waiting for their expected guests. Bertrand and Dick waited without, while the dame and her daughter went with Sister Ursula to bring them out; but when they at last appeared, the men could hardly recognize in the gaunt, haggard-looking boy who came feebly along, with a bewildered look in the hollow eyes which he was trying to shield from the light with his hand, the young master whom they had seen so fresh, and ruddy, and vigorous six months before.

But the thoughts of all were concentrated on the little form borne, as though lifeless, in dame Redwood's arms. He had fainted from sudden exposure to the air; but the good woman had been so horror-struck at the scene of misery which met her eyes when Sister Ursula opened the dungeon-door, that she would not now suffer them to wait to restore him, but for once speechless with indignation, hurried the whole party out of the gates. It was not until she had heard them clash behind her, and saw the grim old towers disappearing behind the hill, that she felt at all secure, but kept all the while looking back, as if in fear of pursuit.

The little figure in the litter lay so still that more than once Bertrand bent down to catch the sound of the faint breathing which alone gave token of life. Geoffrey, mounted on the pony, was so bewildered that he could neither ask questions nor answer them. He seemed troubled if the narrowness of the way caused the dame to lead the horse either in front of or behind the litter; the only sign he gave of being conscious of his change of position being a dread of being separated from his brother. All felt relieved when they reached the cottage. Not that the bearers were weary; that little emaciated form would scarcely have been felt in Bertrand's strong arms; but his heart was bearing a load of grief such as it had never borne before. Until then, hope had buoyed him up, and supported him through all the toil and danger which he had undergone for his master and his sons: even hope seemed dead now.

But it was worse still with poor Dick. The demons of remorse which he

hoped had been driven out forever returned with renewed power. "We have thee again, Judas!" they seemed to say to the wretched man. "Didst thou think to escape us, poor fool? *He* too threw down the money, and tried to save, but it was *too late*, TOO LATE! The blood was on his head, and on yours too. Come, why not do as that famous namesake of thine did? His work and thine can never be undone, and there is no repentance or forgiveness for either!"

It was only because he held one end of the litter that he did not obey his tormentors' suggestions, and more than once he looked shudderingly, but almost wistfully, as they passed some gloomy-looking dells, where the newly-loosened brooks were rushing like mountain torrents or lying in deep, dark pools under the shadow of the oaks.

Poor man! He sadly needed a comforter then, some one to tell him that now was the time to prove his belief in the creed that had been nominally his from childhood, to show him that the words, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," were just as necessary to believe as the preceding, "I believe in God the Father." But, alas! for poor Dick. His creed was locked up, as well as his Bible, in an unknown tongue, and the God whom he had been taught to worship was one to be feared and dreaded, not reverenced and loved; a God whose vengeance must be turned aside by costly offerings and pilgrimages, whose highest favor could only be obtained by renouncing all pleasures and enduring all pains. "Cursed is every one that keepeth not all the words of the law to do them," taught the purest of the priesthood; they never declared: "God is merciful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

They could indeed gloss over the foulest crimes, and calling vices by the names of virtues, think they had changed their nature; but when an awakened spirit was aroused to a sense of its lost condition, and cried to the successors of the apostles for help, they could give the agonized soul no aid, no comfort, no hope. If penance and mortification and priestly absolution failed to satisfy the guilty spirit, it must perish, for Christ's atonement was utterly rejected.

CHAPTER XIX.

From Darkness to Light.

When Geoffrey was roused from the bewilderment caused by this sudden change in his fortunes, his first thought was for Lady Katharine Hyde, who, when she

visited them in her ghostly attire that night as she had promised, would wonder what had become of them. Bertrand reassured him, however, by telling him that Dick had almost completed the work of digging out the old underground passage to the convent vaults, and that by an hour's work that night he could enter their late prison, meet Kate, and bring her forth to freedom. Even had the abbess not been so unexpectedly merciful their captivity need not have lasted over that night.

"God has been very good to us, Bertrand," said the young Lollard, his pale cheek flushing with emotion, and his eyes by the light of the blazing fire showing full of tears; "for if we had come out that way, we should have had to escape immediately; but now we have a whole week for Hubert—-" He stopped; he had meant to say, "for Hubert to get strong in;" but even his love could not thus deceive itself. His lips would not utter the words, but they both finished it for themselves: "That Hubert may die in peace."

For the end was evidently approaching. Cold, and damp, and hunger had done their work as effectually on the Lollard heretic as if the archbishop had immediately sentenced him to the stake. The warmth, and food, and motherly care which had been longed for during those weary months were bestowed in abundance now: but it was too late; all dame Redwood's tender nursing could not keep alive the glimmering spark which was all that persecution and tyranny had left of the flame of that young life. He still lay in the same dull stupor which had been on him when he left his dungeon. He had only replied to their caresses and services by a few wandering words about the shepherd coming back for his sheep in the mountains, and being warm at home.

Poor Dick had stood the whole evening, never moving his eyes from his young guests, but, in his misery, so unconscious of what was going on around him, that he was in every one's way, and of no use at all. It was therefore no small relief to himself, as well as the others, when Bertrand bade him shoulder his tools and go off to his work. For a while the two men marched along in silence, till they came to one of the deep, dark pools into which the soldier had looked so wistfully that afternoon. Here he stopped, flung down his burden, and turned toward his companion with the reckless look of a wild beast brought to bay on the brink of a precipice, preferring to leap from the dizzy height to certain destruction rather than fall into the hands of its enemies. Bertrand was startled at the change in the man's face.

"I tell you, 'tis of no use; they are after me again, and there is no driving them off, He saved me, and I have killed them both. There is no changing it–the devils may as well have me first as last. The other Judas hanged himself, but I think it was because there was no pool near. Ha! how they would dance around me if I were dangling to yon branch! No; this is better. Fare thee well, comrade!"

He turned, and was pushing aside the branches to take the fatal leap, when he felt himself seized from behind in a powerful grasp.

"Hold, Dick Redwood! What meanest thou, man? Art thou mad?"

"Let me alone!" said the soldier, struggling with his captor. "It is the only place for peace; I shall be one of them there, and there they cannot torment so. Take off thy hand, man, or it will be the worse for thee!"

"Not so fast," replied Bertrand coolly. "Dost think I will see murder committed before my eyes–ay, and the worst of murder, the murder of a soul? We will try a bout for that first, my man."

Then began a fierce struggle, in which the soldier's strength and military knowledge were well matched by the supple limbs and clear, cool eye of the forester. It was truly a conflict for life or death on which the calm moonbeams looked down that lovely spring night. Hither and thither went the combatants over the fallen trees and stones, and through the brushwood, the object of Bertrand being to get as far as possible from the brink of the fatal precipice. Sometimes one party gained a slight advantage, sometimes the other; but both were evidently becoming exhausted. It seemed an even chance whether the Lollard would succeed in his benevolent object of saving his comrade's life from his own violent hands, or would be obliged to yield, in order to preserve his own. The struggle was carried on, however, in the utmost silence, neither caring to waste strength in outcries, so that the only sounds to be heard during the combat were the crackling of the branches, the trampling of feet, and the panting breath of the wrestlers.

Just at the moment when Bertrand had the other in a position to give him a heavy fling on the grass, his foot slipped, and they rolled together to the ground; the forester's head struck heavily, and he lay for a moment stunned.

In that moment the soldier disengaged himself from Bertrand's relaxed grasp, and, with a yell of triumph, sprang toward the pool. A few strides, and he was at the brink, parting the bushes with a trembling hand.

The moon cast a shimmer of light on some inky-black water–a rush of a heavy body, a shriek, a plunge–and the smooth surface, broken into a thousand points of light, was settling itself once more into tranquillity.

Just then there appeared another figure on the scene: a man was flinging himself from point to point down the steep descent Bertrand, who arrived at the spot only to find himself too late, watched him; but his head was so confused by his fall, that he could not have told whether it took hours or minutes for this unexpected actor in the scene to throw off his outer garment, plunge in the pool, and drag the drowning man to land. By that time he became roused enough to go to his aid, and the two bore the soldier up the bank, and seated him with his back against the trunk of a tree, the water dripping from his garments, and the scared,

bewildered expression changing to the old look of dogged, sullen defiance, as his senses returned.

When the forester found that the soldier was not injured by his cold bath, he turned to look at the man who had stepped in so opportunely to the rescue, and the sight did not at all delight him, for the tonsured head, the cowl, and the knotted-rope girdle all proclaimed him an individual whom a Lollard disliked especially to meet, namely, a Benedictine monk.

Dick recognized him further, and springing up, flung himself at the stranger's feet, his teeth chattering with cold and terror as he tried to speak.

"Father Paul! Father Paul! drive them out, drive them away, for heaven's sake, for the blessed saints' sake drive them away! You are holy, and they will fear you. Bring the book and candle, and say a prayer! Oh! they dragged me down"–and the man shuddered through all his frame–"they clutched me so under the water! Good Father! holy Father! save me from the devils!"

"My son," replied the monk kindly, "I wish to help thee in thy distress, but I am neither holy nor good–only a weak sinner like thyself. If thou hast committed sin, there is One that can pardon and absolve. What is it that lies so heavy on thy conscience?"

"Absolve a *Judas*!" shrieked the wretched man. "Ay, Father, I will tell you all, that you may know what a devil you have saved to curse the world."

He began and told the whole story, still crouching down at the Benedictine's feet, while Bertrand gave all up for lost, for he could not stop him, and could only look for one result from the disclosure of the tale to one whom he had every reason to suppose their deadliest foe. But, to his utter astonishment, when the confession was finished and he expected to hear the monk comfort his penitent by pronouncing the deed to be commendable rather than sinful, he began in a way directly opposite to the teachings of the order to which he seemed to belong.

"My son, thou hast indeed greatly sinned; but since thou hast so well remembered the story of the betrayer, hast thou pondered as well on the history of the Betrayed? Hast thou heard of him who forgave his murderers even while they were nailing him on his cross? I make no doubt but that he had a pardon ready even for Judas, had he asked it. Remember this, my son, the betrayal was not the crime which destroyed Judas utterly, but his despair of Christ's mercy. He was never forgiven, because he never asked for forgiveness. When that blessed Saviour said, 'Whoso cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out,' he did not add, 'except Dick Redwood.' When the apostle says, 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin,' he did not finish, 'except the sin of ingratitude.' Dick, there *is* pardon there–free, full, absolute pardon for thee and for me; all that is required is that we ask for it, that we believe in it, that we trust in nothing else,

and that we have a steadfast purpose to live hereafter a better and holier life. Art thou willing so to do? Is it thy purpose henceforth to give up thy wicked desires and do that heavenly Master's will, loving thy brother man and forgiving him, even as he hath loved and forgiven thee?"

The penitent was sobbing like a child as he crouched at the monk's feet and clung to his robe. "O Father! if I could but show you! I would do any penance."

"There is none required," said Father Paul, "none at all. Christ hath borne our penance in his sufferings on the tree; nothing that we can do would be of any avail; it is free grace that saves, remember that–never, never forget it; that is the good tidings, the glorious Easter gospel!"

The monk paused, as if overcome by emotion; then laying his hand on the head of the kneeling man, he added very solemnly:

"Not as though *I* had any power, not in my own name, but in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose servant I am, I pronounce that thou, being penitent, art released from thy sins and made a partaker of his kingdom. Go in peace, and sin no more."

Dick sprang to his feet when the gentle touch was removed. The dull, sullen look had vanished from his face, the frightened, staring eyes were calm; but his voice, when he tried to speak, was husky and choked, and he turned aside a moment into the bushes. They had no need to follow him now, for with his tormentors had departed all thoughts of self-murder.

The Benedictine advanced toward Bertrand and held out his hand.

"I think I can recognize you from our friend's story," he said kindly; "but do not be afraid; it is not often, I know, that a garb like mine covers a heart friendly to your faith; but I too have a story to tell."

He then explained in a few words to the still astounded Bertrand the marvelous effect of the few words uttered by Hubert.

"Thus you see," he concluded, "that where I expected to teach, I was taught; and where I went to convert, I was myself converted. But what are you doing here at this hour with these tools?"

Bertrand's fear was quite gone by this time, and he related how nearly they had liberated the captives, and were now on their way to meet the remaining one, and bring her also away.

But Father Paul strongly urged upon them the danger of withdrawing Lady Katharine from the convent until they had made preparations for her escape from the neighborhood, as a search would be made for her as soon as she was missed which would endanger the safety of all parties; but he said there might be no danger in her coming by night to visit the dying boy, and offered himself to assist in arranging a plan for her removal to her home. This he could the more easily

do, as it was not yet known that he had changed his faith.

CHAPTER XX.

One more Lamb safe in the Fold.

The sun had risen and set again upon the cottage in the wood and its quiet household. It had been a lovely spring day, such a day as makes the violets and anemones lift their graceful heads in many a sunny spot in the forest; but the evening had closed in much colder. Heavy clouds were gliding across the moon, throwing weird shadows upon sea and land, and the wind was rising almost to a tempest.

Within, the scene was different. The fire in the great chimney was blazing merrily, for Moll and Meg seemed to think it was their duty to keep it as large as though it were Christmas-time; and little Dick was continually running in with his apron full of dried sticks and leaves to add to the flame.

Hubert lay on an oaken settle, which the dame had converted into a bed, and drawn up close to the hearth. There had been a change that day, that mysterious, indescribable change which all know so well, but which no one can define–the shadow of the dark mountains falling on the pilgrim's face as he enters the valley of death. Not a painful change. The lines of suffering were passing away, the dark blue eyes were beaming with a holy light, the high white forehead looked more like chiseled marble, and about the lips was playing a smile, not gay or mirthful, but full of contentment and peace. The stupor had passed away, and his mind seemed perfectly clear. He recognized those about him, and was very grateful for every little service rendered him; but he spoke little, and seemed worried by any noise or bustle in the room. Perhaps it was because he had been so long accustomed to the stillness of his prison; it may have been that sounds were breaking on his ear with which earth's noises formed jarring discord.

Geoffrey never left him, but sat on a little bench, handing him anything he wanted, and holding the little thin hand tight in his grasp. Another who rarely took his eyes from the dying boy was the soldier. He had received from them both freely the pardon which was alone needed to make his heart lighter, notwithstanding the present grief, than it had ever been before in his life. An atmosphere of love filled the little dwelling; pardon and peace enlightening each heart, as the glowing coals on the hearth lightened the rough walls of the cottage.

There was a little stir at the door–a whispered question and answer; then Geoffrey bent his face to his brother's:

"Hubert, Kate is come, and Father Paul!"

He raised himself a little, and as Kate approached, put both his arms around her neck and drew her down close to him.

"I am so glad you have come," he said; "now Geoffrey will not be alone. You will never leave each other any more, will you? You will take her to father, and tell him I loved you both so much! You will all have happy days together in some far-off land, and then when you are so happy, you will sometimes think and talk about to-night."

Here the elder boy's stout heart broke down. To look forward to a future which was not to be shared by Hubert, his second self–the only one with whom he had taken sweet counsel through all his childhood–dearer still for the sufferings they had borne side by side!

"O Hubert! you will not be there!"

"I would rather not be, I am so tired, so very, very weary; I am not strong to battle for the truth, as you are, Geoffrey. It is so nice to lie here and think that all the work and toil is over, and I am only waiting for him to come. He is coming fast now; when it is quiet, I can hear his footsteps and his voice. He will take me right up in his arms, and I will put my head on his breast while he is carrying me home. Isn't he come yet? Don't you hear him calling? Don't you see him coming? He is very, very near now."

They *did* perceive his coming; they saw his approaches in the fast glazing eye, in the death-damp on the forehead; they heard him in the gasping breath.

Father Paul stepped forward and bent over him.

"Yes, my child, he *is* coming; he is almost here. Hast thou no fear?"

A look of surprise passed over the child's face.

"Why, it is Jesus! I cannot fear Jesus! I love him so, and I have waited for him so long! I am so glad that you love him too! Now we will all meet in the Beautiful Land–kind Dick and all, all, every one!" And his eye glanced at each in turn, resting lovingly, but searchingly, on every face, as if he would read there the secret of the heart, and know if that soul were at peace with its Maker.

Coming, coming, faster and faster, nearer and nearer, the footsteps were at the door; they had entered; the unbidden guest was in their midst. He would not depart alone. All felt his presence, and there was silence, only broken by the gasping breath, each moment growing shorter. The very wind had lulled, and listened with them.

Then they came–those last words which echo so long in desolate hearts, which we remember so much longer than any other utterances of our beloved. Low, but clear and distinct, they sounded in the stillness. There was awe, joy,

and great wonder in the tone:

"*Hush! hark! see!*"

They were hushed; no sound was heard, save the gentle crackle and hiss of the logs on the hearth; they saw–the little white form lying on its pillows, with the red firelight beaming on opened, sightless eyes, parted breathless lips.

He hearkened, and heard 'the angels' song of welcome–*he* looked, and beheld the face of his Saviour!

CHAPTER XXI.

Father Paul.

There was no noisy grief, no boisterous lamentation when, one lovely spring morning, the small funeral-train left the soldier's cottage, and passed through the forest-paths toward the last resting-place of the little Lollard martyr. Dick and Bertrand had dug the grave in just such a spot as a child might choose to rest in after a long day of happiness–a glade with a southern slope, purpled with violets, and enlivened by a little brook, which leaped out of a thicket of wild roses, and, after dancing awhile in the sunshine, and hugging the worn rocks as though it loved them, plunged again into obscurity, under the arms of a great overspreading willow, and went dancing on to the sea.

There were no chanting monks with flaming tapers, but the returning sun spoke to them of nature–awake again after its long sleep–and of little brown seeds, hidden away in the ground all winter, now bursting forth into beauty and fragrance, every seed having its own body. "I am the resurrection and the life"–how glorious those words sounded as echoed by a thousand voices in that grand cathedral of God's own handiwork! Every budding branch, every flower, every tiny blade of grass the mourners crushed beneath their feet was to them a witness of that fact.

We, who have all our lives been used to the consolation which the pure gospel gives to all thoughts connected with death, can hardly imagine what were the Benedictine's feelings when he stood by that little grave, and read that glorious funeral anthem, the fifteenth chapter of Corinthians, for the first time in his mother tongue. It was all new and striking to him. He had now no need to let his mind dwell on a fearful purgatory, from which the departed soul could only be released by the prayers and penances of living friends. He now knew

that all connection had ceased between the disembodied spirit and those it had left behind. In due time they might go to it, but it was at that very moment safe in its Saviour's bosom, whence none could pluck it away.

The soothing effect of the scene and the simple service was felt in every heart; and when at last they saw Bertrand arrange the last sod that covered the dear one from their eyes, there were no outbursts of grief; for the peace which is not of this world, and therefore over which the prince of this world has no power, was upon them, and rested in each soul.

No tombstone marked the spot; they did not even dare to raise a mound, lest the precious remains should be desecrated; but each, as he passed by, laid on it a handful of the sweet spring flowers. Those who loved him knew where he lay, and God would guard the ashes of his saint.

Their preparations must now be made speedily, for only two days remained of the time granted them by the abbess. While they were looking for a fishing-boat, the master of which might be induced, by the promise of a large reward, to convey them to London, they were also busy contriving how they might best take Lady Katharine Hyde without endangering the safety of any who had aided them in their flight. Fortunately, the abbess had never seen her young charge hold any communication with her other prisoners; she was also entirely unaware that the young lady possessed means of access to the garden, and indeed to the outer world, whenever she was pleased to avail herself of them. The ghost also had never been laid, but remained as great a mystery as ghosts generally do. All this greatly favored their plans. It was at last arranged that she should come down to the garden at as early an hour as possible in the evening, locking the door behind her; that she should then enter the little room under the tower, where Bertrand would meet her with her disguise, which was to be that of a monk of Father Paul's order. They were then to fasten up the entrance to the secret passage, and meet the others at the designated spot on the coast. The others were to pretend to start at sunset, that afterward, when Lady Katharine should be missed, the abbess would not imagine that she had joined them. It would be very easy for them, when it was dark, to turn back and take up the rest of their load.

Geoffrey had been gaining strength rapidly the last few days, and his spirits rose also. Not that Hubert was forgotten: there was not a moment in which he did not miss that dear brother, rendered doubly dear by the trials they had undergone together for their mutual faith, and who had been for so long the object of his care; but though he was not gay, he could not be sad. Hope was awake again, and that calm, peaceful death-scene had left no bitterness behind. The little grave in the forest glade, with the golden light flickering through the elm-branches on its violets and snow-drops, was not brighter than the sunny memories the child had left behind him. Life was not so very precious a thing to a Lollard in that

age of oppression and tyranny, that he should grieve deeply over one who had laid aside its burden, and received the reward. During the weary hours of his imprisonment, Geoffrey had learned many a lesson of unselfishness and self-sacrifice, and besides, heaven had grown nearer and more real to him–more real in fact, than the world from which he had been so long separated. From his tomb in the convent-dungeon he had arisen to a new spiritual life, he who had entered his prison a haughty, passionate boy, fired, it is true, by many noble impulses, but with an untamed spirit and unsanctified will, came forth a calm, collected young man, disciplined in soul and mind, older by many years than he had been six months before. He had learned to read in a different way the history of his past life, as well as that which opened before him day by day. He had also learned in his loneliness to comprehend and to trust more fully that pure gospel truth which he had until then received more as a political than a religious creed, as intended to lead to freedom from worldly tyranny, rather than from the dominion of sin and death.

He held several conversations with Father Paul about his future plans. The ecclesiastic had the best means of judging concerning the spiritual state of the kingdom, and its readiness for the reception of the reformed doctrines, and he pronounced the movement premature. The people were not, as a general thing, ready for any change in religion. Papistry had too firm a hold on the lives and property of every class to be dislodged, except by a combined movement of the masses, and that could not be hoped for until the superstition and bigotry which now enshrouded the whole land had been driven away by the diffusion of education and a pure gospel. But how could the gospel be diffused when not one in a hundred could read or write their mother tongue? And how could education be brought to bear on the common people when it would cost the laborer all he received for months of toil to purchase a single book?

"I tell you," said the priest emphatically, "that as long as the Bible is locked up from men, and men are shut out from the Bible, we can have no general reformation in the church. When the Word of God shall be so multiplied that every man may have it if he will, and every man's mind is so enlightened that he may read it if he will, then let Rome tremble, for her power over the nations will be gone."

"Has all this blood been expended, then, in vain?" asked Geoffrey.

"No," replied the monk; "that cannot be. God in his providence wastes nothing; certainly not human suffering. Those who shall live after us in future ages, and look back on the history of these times, will understand how God is working with this land and its inhabitants; we cannot; we can only trust. A thousand years are but a day in his sight, and one day as a thousand years. We must only labor on, seeking to lead, here and there a soul out of darkness into light. Do you

know that I intend to be your fellow-traveller to-morrow?"

"No," said Geoffrey, joyfully; "but whither and for how long?"

"I cannot answer the last question," replied Father Paul, "and the first only in part. I am now, like yourself, an exile, for my life will not be worth an hour's purchase when the archbishop hears of my heresy. My plan is first to go with you to London, see my sister, Lady Katharine's mother, and convey her and her children to a place of safety; then to join Lord Cobham in Wales, and there, under him and other godly men, learn more of these glorious truths, for I am but a child in the true knowledge, and have much to unlearn, as well as to learn. After that, if God will grant to me, so unworthy, the privilege of preaching his good tidings, I will go about the country and seek to lead home some of his lost sheep by telling them how I was restored."

"That was Hubert's great desire," said Geoffrey rather sadly; "but God thought otherwise."

"Nay, there you mistake," replied the Father with emotion. "I have stood in many pulpits and pronounced many discourses, for men say I have the gift of an eloquent tongue; but as I look back on them all, I cannot remember that one has been the means of saving a single soul. I have bidden men subdue the flesh by penance–never the spirit by penitence; I have taught sinners to seek a release from the consequences of their crimes in the cloister, in pilgrimages, in costly offerings, but I have never directed them to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. I have taught my people to fear the wrath of the church, but never warned them to prepare for the judgment of God. Oh! my burden is heavy, heavy! Be thankful, my son, that you are spared from knowing that thousands have gone down to the grave depending on your false teaching. A blind leader of the blind I had been for nearly half a century, until a few words from the lips of a child taught me myself. What I now am, whatever hereafter God will permit me to do for my fellow-sinners, will all be owing to your brother.

"And not to me alone has he unfolded the truth as it is in Jesus. His holy life and death have left lessons behind whose effects only God can know. Even Mother Beatrice seems softened, and I have left with her a few simple truths and searching questions which may, through God's blessing, work to her eternal profit. And poor Dick, how changed he seems! How wonderful is this doctrine of Christ's righteousness atoning for sin without any effort on our part but that of accepting it! That is the only thing which can heal the festering, cankering wounds of remorse. How glorious is the liberty wherewith Christ has made us

free!"

CHAPTER XXII.

Meeting and Parting.

The sun was shining brightly on the garden of a pretty Gothic mansion near the Thames, one glorious spring morning, about a week after the Lollard exiles had sailed from the Yorkshire coast. The house seemed to have fallen somewhat out of repair, and the garden looked as if a dozen gardeners might find employment in putting it in order for the summer. But still, nothing had an untidy aspect; there was rather a bright look about it, as if it were trying to put the very best face possible on the matter, and conceal the ravages of time by a veil of ivy and spring flowers.

In one of the grassy paths, just where it divided to embrace a fallen sundial, stood a group matching well with the surrounding scene. The venerableness of the old mansion, the nobleness of the clinging ivy, and the bright freshness of the flowers had each its counterpart in the animate objects. The most prominent figure, perhaps, was that of an old white war-horse in faded trappings, but still retaining a trace of his former glories in the way he arched his neck and lifted his stiffened limbs. Leading him by the bridle was a fine-looking, weather-beaten old man, with somewhat of the old war-horse's disposition, if one might judge from the piercing eyes which looked out from under shaggy gray brows, and the grim though kindly smile lighting up a face that would have been handsome if it had not been for the deep scar of a sword-cut which disfigured his brow and cheek. His smile was occasioned by the merry sallies of a little child of some four or five summers who was mounted on the horse's back, but giving little heed to the management of his steed, and rather intent on ornamenting him with the flowers with which his lap was filled. He had thrown down his plumed cap on the grass, that he might have more space to bestow his treasures, and the sunbeams and the violets nestled together in the golden curls which the wind was sweeping back from his broad white brow, and rolling in shaded masses on his crimson velvet-dress. Two laughing blue eyes followed the motions of a pair of fat baby hands, as they tried to twine some primroses in the old charger's stiff mane, where they were determined not to stay, but kept dropping out as fast as he put them in, strewing the ground beneath them.

Sometimes, when he found a prettier one than usual, he would hold it out to a tall, noble-looking lady who walked at his side. "For you, mamma!" he would say, and the lady would receive the child's gifts in her hand, but would not suffer him to put them in her hair. Her dress was that of a widow; and her pale, sad face and abstracted look, as if she were dwelling on a dreary past rather than a cheerful present, told that her grief was still fresh in her mind. All the little one's merry shouts and loving speeches could only draw from her a faint, sad smile, that vanished again almost as soon as it appeared.

"Dress old Rollo's head with flowers if you will, little Guy, but not mine; they would only wither there."

"Well, then, mamma," said the little one, "Rollo has enough; see how he shakes them out of his ears! I will now make a wreath for sister Kate to wear when she comes home. Has she gone to find papa, and will she bring him back with her? How long will it be before we are together and happy again? Tell me mamma."

The tears rose in the lady's eyes; she threw one arm around her child, and drawing him toward her, pressed kisses fast and thick on lip and cheek and brow.

"Papa cannot come again, my child; he has gone to another world, and would not wish to come back to one so full of care and trouble; and sister Kate is far away; perhaps she has gone to papa, and some day we will go to meet them, but they cannot come to us again. You and I must love each other dearly now, Guy, for I have no one left but you."

"Dear mamma, don't cry," said the boy stoutly, though his own lip was curling as he spoke, and dropping all his treasures, he flung both arms around her neck.

The old servant, as though he wished the privacy of the mother and child to be undisturbed, had gone forward a few paces; but now he returned with a face expressive of both surprise and anxiety; and interrupted them:

"My lady, the boat! It has stopped at the water-gate, and several persons are landing from it."

"What boat?" said the lady hurriedly, grasping her child tighter as she spoke, and leading the horse forward in the direction indicated.

"The one we noticed awhile ago from the hill coming up from London. Shall I go forward and ask their errand?"

"Yes, Thomas, go quickly, but be calm, and do not irritate them; we will follow. There is no need of escaping if they are friends," she added to herself when the old servant was gone, "and if they are foes, there is no time."

Her look grew even more alarmed when she turned a corner and came in full sight of the advancing party, for her eyes fell first on the dress of a monk whose features were only too well known to her. But she had hardly time to

consider what the danger was, before a figure detached itself from the group and came bounding toward her. "Mamma and Guy!" shouted a glad girlish voice, and in another moment the pale lady's arms were loosened from her son to clasp them around her daughter, and draw her tightly to her breast. Neither spoke for a moment–their joy and thankfulness were too great for words. Kate first broke the silence:

"O mamma! is it all true?" she cried, half laughing, half sobbing. "Am I really at home again? Oh! I am so glad! so glad! I thought the time would never come. And little Guy–what a big boy he has grown! And Rollo, and Thomas! O mamma! I do believe I am at home!"

"Sister Kate! sister Kate!" shouted the child, whose blue eyes had been opened wide with wonder at the scene, and who now just began to understand what was going on. "You *have* come back, though mamma said you would not; and there is papa, too!"

The lady started; after this wonderful meeting it seemed as though even the dead might return.

"O mamma! it is our kinsman, Sir John De Forest, and Geoffrey, and Father Paul. I should have told you at first, but I am so happy I forgot." And away bounded the happy girl to meet the others now close to them in the path.

Lady Eleanor greeted Sir John with affection and respect, for his wife had been her distant cousin and very dear friend, and she had, besides, met him in Lollard assemblies several times. But the sight of her brother both perplexed and troubled her. What had *he* to do at such a meeting? A proscribed Lollard and a Benedictine monk walking peaceably side by side was a sight as strange as would be a wolf asleep in a sheep-fold.

Father Paul's fine features were working with emotion as he took both his sister's hands in his, and looked down into her face.

"Peace be unto your house, Eleanor, and to all that are within it. I come not to break your peace, but rather to add to it. God has taught me many things since you and I parted. One is, that it is not serving him to leave the station in life in which he himself has placed us, or to break the ties of family affection, which every law of his only binds more firmly. I come to you no proud, self-righteous, persecuting Benedictine, but a sinner saved and cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Your God is my God, your people are my people from henceforth. Are you still afraid to receive me into your home?"

Lady Eleanor was almost overwhelmed by her happiness, and could only murmur:

"God answers prayer, O Paul! Why is my faith so weak? He has bestowed all that I ever wished; my cup is full of joy!"

Geoffrey had lingered behind, under pretense of helping Bertrand to fasten

the boat and attend to their luggage, but in reality because he was feeling a little sad and lonely. We all know how, when one with whom we have been holding constant companionship, who has been all in all to us, and to whom we have seemed to be very important, is suddenly surrounded by other near and dear friends who are entire strangers to us, what a desolate feeling comes over us as we feel that we are no more necessary to their happiness. We immediately imagine ourselves forgotten because, having been so long prominent, we are now thrown into the background. This is all very selfish, no doubt, but it is human nature. Geoffrey was feeling more desolate, perhaps, than he had felt since his entrance into the convent-dungeon, when he was aroused by Kate's merry laugh.

"Come, come, sir captive knight, you are demeaning your noble birth by doing servants' work. My mother is just asking which is Bertrand, and which is master Geoffrey. And here is little Guy, who wants to see who it was that sister Kate used to go and see wrapped up like a ghost, and who at last brought her home to him and mamma. There now, Guy, make your reverence, like a nice little page as you are, to this famous hero; and I shouldn't wonder if he could tell you better stories than even old Thomas."

Geoffrey was by this time heartily ashamed of his foolish fancies, and stooping down, he lifted the child in his arms to hide his confusion.

"Geoffrey," said Kate, her voice suddenly changing from its light, bantering tone, "one reason why I noticed Hubert that day in the convent-chapel was because he made me think of little Guy–he had just such a brow, and eyes, and hair. Oh! if he were only here to be happy with us at home!"

"He is even happier than we," said Geoffrey, touched by her thoughtfulness for him. "He, too, has met his long-lost mother, and he only is really at home; we are still wanderers."

"Yes, I know it," she replied, sighing. "I think I can imagine better what heaven must be than I could before this morning. Just such happy meetings as this, but with no drawbacks. See how bright mamma looks, leaning on Father Paul's arm! She is talking very earnestly to Sir John, and they are pointing to us. Come, you must make haste if you do not want all your story told for you."

How swiftly flew the hours at Estly Court that long, bright spring day! There were so many questions to be asked, so many stories to tell, so many plans to discuss, that it was a wonder they had any powers of speech left for future conversations. Kate kept close at her mother's side, and Lady Eleanor could not help following with her eyes every motion of that long lost, strangely found brother. Sir John had much to hear from his son of his other child's life and death; and even old Thomas and Bertrand, seated at a respectful distance, but still not too far away to hear every word of the conversation and join in it occasionally, were discussing the adventures of their superiors with affectionate interest. Little Guy

kept running from one to the other, now resting his curly head against Geoffrey's shoulder–for they had taken a great fancy to each other–and now climbing into Kate's lap, that he might hear better the marvellous adventures of the convent-ghost, and how the two prisoners frightened each other at their first interview.

This whole day was devoted to recalling the past; but on the next, when they had rested and were refreshed, they settled themselves resolutely to think of the future. There was one thing certain–Estly Court was no safe residence for any of them. As soon as Lady Katharine's flight was discovered, the abbess would conjecture where she would be most likely to take refuge, and send Lord Harcourt to take her away. Fortunately Lady Eleanor possessed a small estate in Wales, which would afford her a livelihood, and, under her brother's care, she determined to set off for it immediately with her children.

Sir John, with his son and Bertrand, saw nothing better for them than to go to Germany, and take honorable service under some of the petty princes, who were always at war with each other; for, from the confiscation of their property, there was nothing left to them in England.

As the first day had been given up to rejoicing, and the second to planning, so the third saw their departure, for there was no saying but that at any moment their enemies might discover their retreat. Their parting was very sorrowful, for in those troublous times there seemed little hope that they would ever meet again on earth. How precious, then, to them was their faith that sooner or later, come grief, come joy, they would all meet in a place that has never and will never witness a parting, though it has been the scene of more blessed reunions than we can conceive.

Geoffrey and Kate were walking together by the river-side on the last evening. Neither spoke for a long time–they only gazed at the dark water flowing so rapidly toward the sea, and thought how soon it would separate them for years, perhaps forever. Kate broke the silence:

"I wonder if we will ever see each other again, Geoffrey."

For some moments her companion did not answer; then he said in a low voice, very earnestly:

"Kate, do you remember the night when Hubert gave us these?" and he drew from his bosom the little bag of plaited straw which those dear fingers had made in the lonely prison.

Her only answer was to draw out hers, and lay it beside his on his open palm.

Geoffrey continued:

"You remember what he said then, and afterward when he was dying, and

what I promised. If God spares me a few years longer, I will come back, and ask you to help me do what he wished so much. I am a boy yet in years, I know, but I am a man in many things, and in token that you will think of me sometimes, shall we exchange gifts, dear Kate? Then, when that day comes, I will ask mine back again."

Her only answer was to take up Geoffrey's bag and put it where her own had been: then Geoffrey did the same with hers, and both were content.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Waiting for the Dawn.

Twenty years have passed since a boy and girl walked sadly side by side on the banks of the Thames one sweet spring evening. It is autumn now, and the slanting rays of a setting sun are gilding the vine-clad hills of the Rhine. The castles which in these days delight the traveller by their picturesque ruins, were, at the time of which we are speaking, in their glory, and frowned down on the peaceful water from many a lofty summit.

The peasants are gathering in the vintage, and yonder, slowly climbing the hill toward a great building, whose turrets, catching the latest beams, seem burnished with gold, is a heavy cart laden with the rich purple clusters, and surrounded by a group of women and children, who are urging on the patient oxen with shouts and songs.

This has been a wonderfully abundant year. The great granaries of the owner of the valley are bursting with corn, and the vines are bending with their luscious load. Nor is there one who does not rejoice in their master's prosperity; for far and near, high and low, all love and honor the baron of Arnstein–Geoffrey the Good.

It is true that some say he is only an adventurer, who had landed a penniless exile on their shores, and who owed all his present fortune to his sword and his sovereign's favor; but none dare say that his wealth and power have not been fairly and nobly won, and generously and justly used. He had not gone far in the path of military glory and ambition; but soon quitting the court and the field, he he had settled down on his estate, and contented himself with governing his people, and attending to their welfare.

The vintage-cart has mounted higher and higher, and now it has turned into

a court, and is depositing its load. Farther on, in an inner court, where a porch opens into the great castle-hall, stands the lord and master; and the peasants pay him their respects with many an awkward but sincere reverence.

He is a fine, hale, sunburnt man. A few silver hairs are to be seen in his dark curls and heavy beard; but his martial air and stalwart form proclaim him in the prime of life. He is leaning with one shoulder against the doorway, and the other arm is thrown round a rosy little lady, very matronly in her cap and plaited kerchief, but showing, in her twinkling eyes and dimpled mouth, much of the roguish spirit which characterized the Lady Katharine Hyde of yore. She looks rather too stout and portly to flit about by night as a convent ghost; but it will be very wonderful if that small image of her, now engaged in teasing an old wolf-hound, should arrive at the age of discretion without some mischievous adventure.

A little farther on, in an arm-chair, so placed that the sunbeams light up his bent figure, and glisten in his snow-white hair, making it seem like a halo of glory about his head, sits a very old man. He is tracing with his stick letters in the sand; while a boy, some six or seven years old, is pronouncing their names, giving a scream of joy every time he finds, by the old man's smile, that he is right.

"Hubert," says his father's cheerful voice, "Father Paul will let you leave your lesson now. Run and meet uncle Guy; he is coming up the hill."

Away runs the boy right joyously, his sister not so far behind; and when they return, little Eleanor is seated on a tall horse, in front of a young man in student's dress, and Hubert is leading the horse by the bridle.

Young Guy had joined his brother and sister after his mother's death, and was now making rapid progress toward distinction in a German college. His frank manners and bright, merry face make him a welcome everywhere, and the children receive him with joyful shouts.

"My new pony is to come home to-morrow, uncle Guy!" says little Eleanor, jumping up and down with glee, for he has dismounted himself and her, and is greeting her parents. "Gerhard is to train him for me, and I mean to call him Rollo, after the horse you were riding when papa and mamma came out of prison."

"Uncle Guy!" says Hubert, in a lower but no less eager tone, his face crimsoned with delight, "Father Paul says I know all my letters now, and to-morrow I am to begin in Papa's big book!"

"I am glad to hear that, my boy," Sir Guy says kindly; "we will have you at Wittemberg soon, I think. But now I want a moment with Father Paul. White Star is not very tired, and if you can get Bertrand or Gerhard to hold you on, you might ride him round the outer court."

Away go the happy children, and Sir Guy turns to the old monk, now chaplain of the castle–for after the death of his sister, and the cruel murder of his

friend, Lord Cobham, he had joined the exiles in Germany.

"Is there any news, my son?" says the good old man.

"Not much, father, save that there is some stir about this new invention which some men say comes straight from the Devil, while others are equally certain that it has descended from heaven."

"Ah! you mean the wonderful art of printing," said Father Paul; "both parties have somewhat of truth in their assertions. Old men can see deeper into the depths of the future than young men; and those who, like me, are drawing very near the golden gates, are permitted to see, though but dimly, far down the slope of time into days that are to come; and I see, in this way of multiplying books, a great curse and a great blessing for the world. Have you seen any of the work?"

"That have I, Father–several works; and I have brought you here one sheet, that you may see it for yourself."

The old man takes the sheet with trembling hands; it is the first chapter of Matthew's gospel.

"One of the men from whom I purchased this is very sanguine; he thinks that when they have all their *metal* type, they may be able to print a Bible in a day. Surely that would be a wondrous thing!"

"A wondrous thing, and a glorious thing!" said Father Paul, rising to his feet, and steadying himself with his staff, while his eye brightened, and his whole face beamed with what seemed almost the spirit of inspiration. "Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for the day of the Reformation is breaking! The day promised so long is coming, O Lord! I have waited for thy salvation! The chains which have kept thy precious Word from the people are breaking, one by one. In the Lord's good time will he accomplish it. Glorious is the perfect liberty of the sons of God–the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and which he is about to proclaim to the whole world! When each peasant can have his Bible in his hand, then shall arise men mighty to preach it. Then shall Rome tremble on her seven hills, and the song of the redeemed captives go up to the Lord from all the ends of the earth!

"Lord, how long? Lord, how long? Hasten the day, for thine elect's sake. O Lord Jesus! come quickly!"

The old man sank back again on his seat, the tears dropping slowly on his white beard, his head bowed on the hands which rested on the top of his staff.

Geoffrey and his wife have drawn near, and heard the old man's last words.

"Forgive me, my children," he says at last. "From the top of this Pisgah I see a glorious land. There are visions opening to my mind such as words cannot paint. Let me be a little while in silence."

They are all still. Higher and higher up the mountains are creeping the evening shadows; already there are twinkling lights in the cottages below. Far in

the distant west the purple and golden glories are melting, shade by shade into the intense azure of the zenith. In the east, almost touching yonder blue hill, is the evening star. The last sunbeam is linking the earth and sky, and over that golden bridge is passing a ransomed soul.

"Father Paul," says Geoffrey, "the twilight is gathering fast; will you not come within?"

There is no twilight for him, for he is looking into the face of his God!

* * * * * * * *

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