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Title: Masters of the Guild

Author: L. Lamprey

Release Date: May, 2004 [EBook #5702]
[Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule]
[This file was first posted on August 12, 2002]

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

***** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MASTERS OF THE GUILD *****

Produced by Juliet Sutherland, Charles Franks
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MASTERS OF THE GUILD

By

L. LAMPREY

Author of "In the Days of the Guild"

Illustrated by

Florence Choate and Elizabeth Curtis

New York

1920

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"There was shouting and laughter in the courtyard"

DEDICATION

TO DOROTHY

O little girl who used to be,

Come down the Old World road with me,
And watch the galleons leaping home
Deep-laden, through the rainbow foam,
And the far-glimmering lances reel
Where clashes battle-axe on steel,
When the long shouts of triumph ring
Around the banner of the King!

To elfin harps those minstrels rime
Who live in Once-upon-a-Time!

In that far land of Used-to-Be,
Strange folk were known to you and me,--
Mowgh and Puck, and all their kin,
Launcelot, and Huckleberry Finn,
Wise Talleyrand, brave Ivanhoe,
Juliet, and Lear, and Prospero,
Alleyne and his White Company,
And trooping folk of Faerie!

People of every race and clime
Are found in Once-upon-a-Time!

And in those days that used to be
The gypsy wind that raced the sea
Came singing of enchanted lands,
Of sapphire waves on golden sands,
Of wind-borne fleets that race the swallow,
Of Squirrel-fairy in her hollow,
Of brooklets full of scattered stars,
And odorous herbs by pasture-bars

Where to the cow-bells' tinkling chime
Come dreams of Once-upon-a-Time!

O little girl who used to be,
The days are long in Faerie,--
Their garnered sunshine's wealth of gold
No royal treasure-vault may hold.
And now, as if our earth possessed
Alchemy's fabled Alkahest,
Our harbors blaze with jewelled light,
Our air-ships wing their circling flight,

And we ourselves are in the rime
That sings of Once-upon-a-Time!

It was a great day in Count Thibaut's castle. Every one knew that, down to the newest smallest scullery-maid. The Count had come home from England with Lady Philippa, his daughter, and there would be feasting and song and laughter for days and days and days.

Ranulph the troubadour, who had arrived in their company, was glad of a quiet hour in the garden before supper was served. He knew that he would have to sing that evening, and he wished to go over the melodies he had in mind, for he might on the spur of the moment compose new words to them. In fact a song in honor of his hostess was already in his thoughts. The very birds of the air seemed to welcome her. The warm southern winds were full of their warbling--beccafico, loriote, merle, citronelle, woodlark, nightingale,--every tree, copse and tuft of grass held a tiny minstrel. When the great gate opened to a fanfare of trumpets, from the castle walls there came the murmur of innumerable doves. A castle had its dove-cote as it had its poultry-yard or rabbit-warren, but the birds were not always so fearless or so many.

The song was nearly finished when the singer became aware that some one else was in the garden. A small boy, with serious dark eyes and a white pigeon in his arms, stood close by. Ranulph smiled a persuasive smile which few children could resist.

"And who are you, my lad?"

"Peirol, the gooseherd's boy," the youngster replied composedly. "You're none of the family, are you?"

"Only a jongleur. You have a great many pigeons here."

"That's why I came in when I heard you playing. Does she--Lady Philippa--like pigeons?"

"I think she does. In fact I know she does. Why?"

"Grandfather said she would not care how many pigeons were killed to make pies. Nobody really loves them much, but me. They're fond of me too."

The boy gave a low call and a soft rush of wings was heard in every direction. Pigeons flew from tree-top, tower, parapet and gable, alighting on his head and arms until he looked like a little pigeon-tree in full bloom.

"Some of them are voyageurs," he said, strewing salted pease for the strutting, cooing, softly crowding birds. "I'm training them every day. Some day I shall know more about pigeons than any one else in the world."

Ranulph had some ado not to smile; the speaker was so small and the tone so assured. "Perhaps you will," he said. "Are they as tame with others as they are with you?" "Some others," answered Peirol gravely. "People who are patient and know how to keep still. They like you."

A slaty-blue pigeon was already pecking at Ranulph's pointed scarlet shoe for a grain lodged there. The troubadour bent down, held out his hand, and the bird walked into it. He had played with birds often enough in his vagabond early years to know their feelings. But now a wave of merry voices broke upon the garden paths.

"Peirol," he said, "I will see you again. I have a little plan for you and the pigeons which will, I think, give pleasure to Lady Philippa."

One of the entertainments arranged to take place was a feast out of doors, in a woodland glade especially suited to it. Ranulph's inspiration had to do with this.

Among the guests the only stranger was Sir Gualtier (or Walter) Giffard, younger son of a Norman family. One of his ancestors had gone to England with Duke William a hundred years before, but the family had not been on good terms with later kings and its fortunes had somewhat fallen. Every one, however, spoke with respect of this knight and his elder brother, Sir Stephen, and they had been of service to Count Thibaut during his stay in England. This Giffard had never been so far south before, and he seemed to feel that he had got into some sort of enchanted realm. He was more soldier than courtier, but his eyes said a great deal. The luxurious abundance of a Provençal castle, the smooth ease of the serving, the wit and gaiety of the people, all were new to him. He had attended state banquets, but they were as unlike the entertainment here provided as was the stern simplicity of his boyhood home in Normandy, or the rough-and-tumble camp life of recent years.

The out-of-door dinner was not a hap-hazard picnic, but neither was it in the least stiff or formal. The servants went by a short cut across the meadow to prepare the tables, while knights and ladies followed the more leisurely path along the river bank. It was a walk through fairyland. The very waters were in a holiday mood. The current strayed from one side to the other, leaving clear still pools and enticing little backwaters, and singing past the elfin islets and huge overshadowing trees, like a gleeful spirit.

Lady Philippa had never looked more lovely. As the party was not to be seen on a public road, veils and wimples were discarded, and her bright brown hair, braided in two long braids, was crowned only by a circlet of gold set with pearls and emeralds. The trailing robes worn at formal dinners would also be out of place, and she wore a bliaut or outer robe of her favorite rose-colored silk, a wide border of gold embroidery giving it weight enough to make it hang in graceful lines. The sleeves were loose and long, the ends almost touching the hem of the gown. Under this was a violet silk robe of heavier material with bands of ermine at the neck and on the small close sleeves. Under this again the embroidered edges of a fine white linen robe could be seen at throat and wrists. The girdle was of braided violet silk, the ends weighted with amethyst and emerald ornaments. A white mantle of silk and wool, trimmed with fur of the black squirrel, and fastened under the chin with a gold button, and an embroidered alms-purse, completed the costume. The other ladies of the

party were attired as carefully, and the dress of the men was as rich and brilliant as that of the women. They passed through the wavering light and shadow of the woodlands like a covey of bright-plumaged birds.

In the level open space where the feast was spread the servants had placed trestles, over which long boards were fitted. Benches covered with silken cushions served as seats. The cloth was of linen dyed scarlet in the rare Montpellier dye, and over it was spread another of white linen, embroidered in open-work squares. At each end of the table was a large silver dish, one containing a meat-pie, the other a pie made of the meat of various fowls with savory seasoning. On silver plates were slices of cold chicken and meat. Glass trays contained salad, lettuces, radishes and olives. The salt, pepper and spices were in silver and gold dishes of fanciful shapes. Here and there were crystal vases of freshly gathered roses and violets. On the corners of the table were trenchers of white bread--wastel, cocket, manchet, of fine wheaten flour,--and brown bread of barley, millet and rye. For dessert there were the spicy apples of Auvergne, Spanish oranges, raisins, figs, little sweet cakes, wine white and red, and nuts in a great carved brass dish of the finest Saracen work, with carved wood nut-crackers. Ewers and basins of decorated brass, for washing the hands after the meal, were ready. Eastern carpets and cushions, placed upon a bank under the trees, would afford a place where the company, after dining, might linger for hours, enjoying the gay give-and-take of conversation, the songs of artists who knew their art, and the constant musical undertone of winds, birds and waters. The surprise which Ranulph had planned was designed for the moment when the guests began to dally with nuts and wine, reluctant to leave the table. Some one called upon the troubadour to sing. He had counted upon this. Rising, he bowed to the Count and his daughter, and began:

"In the month of Arcady
Green the summer meadows be,--
When the dawn with fingers light
Lifts the curtains of the night,
And from tented crimson skies
Glorious doth the sun arise,--
Who are these who give him greeting,
On swift wings approaching, fleeting,--
Who but birds whose carols bring
Homage to their gracious King!
"Lo! the Queen of Arcady
From the land of Faery
Gladdens our adoring eyes,
Fair and gentle, sweet and wise,
Her companions here on earth
Love and Loyalty and Mirth!
Who, the joyous tidings hearing,
Fly to greet her, now appearing?
Aphrodite's pigeons fleet,--
See, they gather at her feet."

No one had heard a low clear call from the boughs of the tree overhead, or seen the figure of a small boy in a fantastic tunic of goatskins, slipping

down the tree-trunk near Ranulph. As the company rose from the table the troubadour moved away a little, still thrumming his refrain, and in that moment there was a whirl of sudden wings and the air was dark with pigeons. As the birds alighted Lady Philippa was surrounded by the pretty creatures, and in a graceful little speech Ranulph presented to her Peirol as a Faun, the Master of the Pigeons, who had brought them to do homage to their sovereign lady.

It was just the sort of informal pageant to delight the heart of Provence. No more dainty and captivating interlude had been seen at a festival.

There was a great deal of wonderment about the way in which the scene had been arranged, but it was really quite simple. According to the usual fashion the guests were seated on only one side of the table, the other side being left free for the servants to present the various dishes. The company faced the river, and the trees that canopied the table were behind them. Nothing, therefore, hindered Peirol from luring his pigeons to a point within hearing of his voice, and concealing himself in the thick leafage until Ranulph gave the signal for them to be brought upon the stage. Most of the afternoon was spent in watching and discussing Peirol and the pigeons.

"A pigeon has certain advantages," observed Gualtier Giffard, as he and the troubadour, sitting a little way from the others, watched the carriers rise and circle in the air. "He need only rise high enough to see his goal,--and fly there." "Pity but a man might do the same," said Ranulph lightly. The eyes of the two young men met for an instant in unspoken understanding. Under some conditions they might have felt themselves rivals. But neither the penniless younger son of a Norman house, nor a landless troubadour of Avignon, had much hope of meeting Count Thibaut's views for his only daughter.

"It would be rather absurd," Ranulph went on, stroking the feathers of the little dun pigeon Rien-du-Tout, "for a bird to outdo a man. Perhaps some day we shall even sail the air as now we sail the seas. Picture to yourself a winged galleon with yourself at the helm--about to discover a world beyond the sunset. It is all in having faith, I tell you. Unbelief is the dragon of the ancient fables."

The Norman smiled rather sadly. "Meanwhile," he said, "having no flying ships and no new crusades to prove our mettle, we spend ourselves on such errands as we have, or beat the air vainly--like the pigeons. Were it not that a man owes loyalty to his house and to his King I would enlist under the piebald banner of the Templars. But my brother and I have set ourselves to win back the place that our fathers lost, and until that is done I have no errand with dragons."

Ranulph nodded, thoughtfully. "The King would be glad of more such service," he said. "Good fortune be with you!"

Hail, Poet--and farewell! Our day is past,
Yet may we hear new songs before we die,
The chanteys of the mightiest and the last,--
The squadrons of the sky.

We knew the rhythm of myriad marching feet,
Gray tossing seas that rocked the wind-whipped sail,
The drumming hoofs of horses, and the beat
Of stern hearts clad in mail.

But you--earth-fettered we shall watch your wings
Topping the mountains, battling winds,--to dare
Challenge the lammergeyer where she swings
Down the long lanes of air.

And when you take the skylark for your guide,
And soar straight up to sun-drenched shores of Time,
Immortal singers there shall, eager-eyed,
Await your new-born rhyme.

Their songs are charm-songs, a divine caress,
Or torrents that no power of man could tame,
Or time-hushed gardens of grave loveliness,
But yours,--a leaping flame!

Hail, Poet! Yours the Dream Interpreted,
Earth's haunting fairy-tale since life began,--
The Dragon of Unfaith, his magic dead,
Slain by the Flying Man!

II

A TOURNAMENT IN THE CLOUDS

Alazais de Montfaucon was to be married, and had chosen her dearest friend Philippa to be maid of honor. None of her friends except Philippa had seen the bridegroom; he was an English knight, Hugh l'Estrange. He had lands on the Welsh marches, and the charming Alazais was to be carried off by him, to live among savages. This, at least, was the impression of Beatriz d'Acunha and Catalina d'Anduze, who were also to be bridesmaids. Philippa, having lived in England, looked at the matter less dolefully. Still, when all was said, it was an immense change for Alazais, and she herself declared that if any one but Hugh had proposed it she would not think of such a thing.

"We must provide you with a flock of these voyageur pigeons," said Savaric de Marsan. "Then, when you are shut up in your stronghold with the Welsh on one side and Saxon outlaws on the other, you can appeal to your friends

for help."

Alazais laughed her pretty rippling laugh.

"The fortress is not yet built," she said with a toss of her golden head.

"We are not going to live among the heathen."

"You men!" pouted Beatriz. "You are always thinking of battles and sieges, wars and jousting. Perhaps you would like a tournament of pigeons!"

"Why not?" queried Savaric undisturbed. "It would be highly amusing."

"I lay my wager on Blanchette here," said Peire d'Acunha. "She is as graceful as a lady. She shows her breeding."

"Endurance, my friend, is what counts in a carrier," said Bertrand d'Aiguerra. "Pere Azuli yonder will forget the miles behind him--as you forget your debts."

"You are both wrong," said Savaric. "It is spirit that wins. Little Sieur Rien-du-Tout, the pigeon without a pedigree, will make fools of all of you."

The pigeon-tournament was actually planned, with much laughter and light-hearted nonsense. It was to take place at Montfaucon during the week of the wedding. Each knight should adorn his bird with his lady's colors, and the little feathered messengers were to carry love-letters written in verse. Afterward, the pigeons were all to be presented to Lady Alazais for her dovecote in the barbarous land to which she was exiled.

Pigeons were very much the fashion for a time. Dainty demoiselles preened and paced on the short sweet turf, petting and feeding the birds, and looking rather like pigeons themselves. But no one became really intimate with the carriers except Ranulph the troubadour, Lady Philippa, and Sir Gualtier Giffard, who loved them for her sake.

The guests at the castle were all going to the wedding except Ranulph and the Norman knight. Ranulph expected to accompany King Henry to England, and Gualtier Giffard had to take a report from Count Thibaut to friends in Normandy, touching certain matters of state.

Then the Count was invited to a hastily arranged banquet in a town some leagues away, where various important persons were to be guests, among them Henry Plantagenet himself. The way to Montfaucon lying in the same direction, it was decided that Alazais and her bridesmaids should return to her home under escort of the Count and his friends. When the banquet was over and the conference between Henry and his vassals in Guienne was concluded, the wedding guests would assemble at Montfaucon.

Gossip about the banquet and the conference flew like tennis-balls among the guests. It was said that one of the matters discussed would be the claim of the deposed King of Leinster, Dermot MacMurragh, who was even now at the heels of the English King, trying to interest him in a possible

Norman invasion of Ireland.

"I have seen this Dermot," said de Marsan, "and a choice group of cut-throats he had collected about him. Garin de Biterres was one of them, by the way."

"He was always over-fond of laying wagers," yawned d'Acunha. "He is probably betting his head on this Irish wild-goose chase."

"I will burn a candle," said Bertrand d'Aiguerra, "to any god of luck who will send that caitiff where he gets himself killed. If he were not one of us he would not be such a nuisance. His mercenaries will be the ruin of us. The people were touchy enough before, but now they begin to think we are all birds of the same black feather."

"He is only half Auvergnais," objected Savaric. "The other half is Sicilian, I believe. A man cannot be half a gentleman, can he? I will admit that Biterres desires to live like a gentleman,--according to his own ideas of one. He has not been the same man since he was taken by the Moors. He was never honest, but that seemed to warp his nature as well as his body. He learned things that it does no man any good to know."

"Let us hope that Saint Patrick will dispose of him for the good of his Irish," remarked Enrique de Montfaucon. "They say that the Plantagenet will do no more than give letters patent to any Norman adventurer who takes up Dermot's cause. I think he has his hands full with his own sons."

Ranulph listened to this conversation with interest. The ill-famed leader of mercenaries had aspired to the hand of Lady Philippa while she was yet a child--and had been brusquely dismissed by her father. He lived now by hiring himself and his troops to any ruler who had a war on hand and would pay his price. In peaceful intervals they lived as they could.

The Count was talking to Gualtier Giffard about the Irish venture.

"If the Normans rule Ireland," he observed, "your fortunes may improve. A grant of land there might be worth your while."

The young knight met the Count's searching glance fearlessly. "I would not take it," he answered. "Dermot lost his realm by his own fault. There is no honor in serving him."

"Ah," said the Count with a quizzical lift of the eyebrow, "in that case you are very right."

Ranulph often acted as an unofficial unrecognized envoy in state matters, and it did not surprise him when he received a message from King Henry to the effect that he was to meet the monarch at Montfaucon after the conference. Peirol, who knew every mile of the country, was to take the pigeons thither for the tournament and be Ranulph's guide. It was altogether a very pleasant prospect for perfect summer weather.

By brisk riding the troubadour and his little companion reached Montfaucon

late in the afternoon of the day following the departure of the Count's guests. The porter, a surly looking fellow, hesitated about admitting them, and before opening the wicket gate consulted some one within. The castle seemed to be in a somewhat disorderly state. Soldiers were playing dice by the gateway, and horses were stamping and feeding in the outer bailey. Peirol was evidently taken for the troubadour's servant, and an unkempt lad ushered them into a small room with a barred window, in one of the older towers. Ranulph was not wont to think of his own dignity, but this lack of courtesy did a little surprise him. Almost at once the youth poked his head in, without knocking, to say that the lord of the castle would see him in the great hall.

More mystified than before, Ranulph obeyed the summons, for it amounted to that. In the master's chair sat a man of about thirty, dark-skinned, with dense black hair and eyes, one leg somewhat malformed, the knee being bowed and the foot turned slightly inward. He looked the troubadour over with a sarcastic smile. Ranulph was still in riding-dress, and might have been mistaken for a joglar or wandering minstrel, calling himself by the more dignified title of troubadour or trouveure.

"I think," began the knight in a harsh drawl, "that one can often do no better than to tell the truth, is it not so? I am the lord of this castle--for the present. Of course I could not refuse you admittance, or you might go off and spread inconvenient rumors. I must ask you therefore to accept our hospitality unquestioning, like a courteous guest. We cannot allow you to depart until we ourselves are gone. You have your choice--to remain here quietly, alive, or to remain permanently, dead.

"Naturally you will not communicate with any ladies whom you may see, but if you can afford them some entertainment you shall be paid. They have had but a dull time thus far, I fear, and I would not have them think us barbarians, soldiers of fortune though we are. When I am through with this castle I shall leave it as I found it, except for the temporary detention of the inmates in various rooms, where I suppose they will stay until some one finds them. If anybody is found dead it will be his own fault. Now, which horn of the dilemma is your choice--troubadour?"

During this extraordinary speech Ranulph had done some rapid thinking. From the man's appearance he believed him to be Garin de Biterres. The castle had evidently been taken by surprise after the Count's party had escorted the maidens thither and ridden away. Perhaps the marauders had been lurking somewhere about awaiting the opportunity. They must know that they could not hold it after the friends of the rightful lord knew what had been done, and their leader was too cool-headed a man to have attempted so bold a raid without some important reason. The abduction of four young girls, two of whom at least were heiresses, might seem such a reason to such a man. Evidently he did not suspect Ranulph's character as a man of some reputation and the confidential messenger of the King of England. This was a piece of luck. The chance of his being useful to the captives was all the better.

With the elaborate meekness proper to his supposed low station he answered, "You leave me no choice, my lord. To resist your will would be

suicide, and that is a mortal sin."

The knight grinned like a sour-tempered dog. "Take care," he said, "that you change not your very praise-worthy views. Have you any little diversion which may enliven a tedious hour at supper-time?"

Ranulph's quick mind had been turning over plans. He thanked a hard Fate that his early experience in camps, markets, inn-yards and fairs had been so thorough and so varied. In those days he had been what Biterres now supposed him--one of those vagabond singers who sang popular songs and often did tricks of jugglery, or danced, or gave acrobatic exhibitions, wherever they found an audience. The panier in which the pigeons drowsed was probably taken for a collection of costumes and properties.

The pigeons could not get through the barred window of his room. If they were let loose in the courtyard and recognized as carriers, a bowman could easily bring them down. But now he saw a way to elude suspicion.

"I have a trick," he ventured humbly, "which is most amusing, but it requires a large shell or cofyn of pastry. When this pie is cut, live birds fly out. But perhaps it would not be convenient to have your lordship's cook troubled with this?"

Biterres made an impatient gesture. "Child's play--but it will serve. The cook shall come for your orders. Have it ready before the drinking begins or the men will not know whether you have larks or peacocks in the pie."

Ranulph bowed very low and left the hall.

"Peirol," he said when he re-entered the cell-like room, "we are prisoners to a caitiff knight who has taken this castle and undoubtedly holds your mistress and her friends also captive. I think he intends to carry off the ladies, and I am not sure what will happen to the rest of us. If we can get word to Count Thibaut's castle we may spoil the fellow's game. No one must suspect, of course, that we have carriers with us. He takes us for strolling mountebanks and desires us to amuse the company at supper. Now, I have a plan."

He was already writing the letters to be sent by the winged couriers, putting all his hard-won skill with words into the task of getting all the information possible into a little space. If the rescuing party did not come before Biterres took his prisoners away--and it was hardly to be hoped that they could--at least they should have a fair start in pursuit of him and evidence enough to punish him, if they received even one of these missives.

Peirol heard the scheme with wide-eyed gravity. At the end he nodded.

"That fellow asked what we had here," he said pointing to the panier, "and I told him when the pie was cut he would see."

"Good!" laughed the troubadour. "That was a lucky answer, Peirol. And here comes the cook to make the pie."

The cook, a stout beady-eyed little man, eyed the two somewhat sulkily, but went away grinning over Ranulph's jokes and fingering Ranulph's generous fee. Furthermore he vouchsafed the information that the leader of the mercenaries intended to leave the castle next day for the nearest seaport, where he and his men would take a ship for Ireland. Lady Philippa was destined to be the bride of Biterres himself; Alazais was to marry the second in command, Griffon de Malemort. The other two demoiselles were to be taken to Ireland, where the King would doubtless find them husbands. If they would not agree to this they were to be sold to a Moslem slave-dealer whose galley was somewhere about. The servants and defenders of the castle had been herded into various rooms and locked up. The cook himself did not mind a little recklessness on the part of military adventurers such as these routiers, but he felt that this sort of thing was perilous. He intended to give them the slip at the first opportunity, and they could cook their own soup if they liked.

The plot, infamous as it was, had unfortunately nothing impossible about it. Four unprotected girls could be taken in guarded litters to the sea-coast and shipped to Ireland or to Cadiz, Valencia, Alexandria or Morocco with no difficulty whatever unless some one got wind of the fact. As for the Irish King, a man who had the sort of record he had, was not likely to quibble over the means used by Biterres in getting himself a bride. And before the captives within the castle could reach even the nearest of their friends and bring help, the whole troop would have left the country.

Through the huge carved open-work screen at the end of the hall, after supper was served, Ranulph had a view of the scene within. Biterres, with the fantastic formality it pleased him to use, had insisted on the attendance of his prisoners at supper, and the meal was served with all due ceremony. Biterres and Malemort appeared to be acting with studied politeness. The maidens were behaving with the dignity and self-possession which became daughters of soldiers, although they were pale and woe-begone. The troopers at the lower table were noisy and rude enough, and Ranulph suspected that his entertainment had been ordered partly to keep them from getting out of hand with drinking and rioting. He had contrived a clown's costume from some of his belongings, aided by a little flour and paint, and a bauble made of a toasting fork stuck through an apple. When he pranced into the hall the soldiers yelled with surprise and delight. Behind him at a discreet distance came a small boy, also attired in antic fashion, carrying carefully in both hands a huge pie. The cook was peeping through the screen to see what was going to happen.

Neither Ranulph nor Peirol gave so much as a glance at the captives, who were too much amazed to say anything at first, and quickly saw the danger of any betraying comment. The troubadour marched up to Biterres, asked permission to sing, and began a doggerel ballad about one Sir Orpheus and his magic harp. The harp, as the song explained, had the power of luring pigeons, rabbits, wild geese, lambs, sucking-pigs and even fish from the stewponds, into its owner's dinner-pot, so that Orpheus never lacked for good living and became very fat. The bouillabaisse of Marseilles, the Norman ragout of eels, the roast goose of Arles, the pigs' feet of Spain, the partridge pasty of Perigues,--all the luscious dishes of a land of

good eating were described in a way that made these old campaigners howl with reminiscent joy. The rollicking, impudent tune, the allusions to camp customs more notorious than honest, went straight to the heart of the blackguard audience, and half the voices in the room promptly joined the chorus. Eurydice, the singer went on, was an excellent cook, so renowned that the prince of the lower regions abducted her, and Orpheus was allowed to regain possession of her only on the solemn condition that she should make a pie for that sovereign every twelvemonth. This pie, according to the final verse of the song, would now be cut, so that the company could see exactly what a Plutonian banquet was like.

The troubadour borrowed a dagger from a man-at-arms, made one or two slashes at the ornate crust of the pie--and out flew four live pigeons.

Then Peirol gave his birdlike call, and eluding the hands raised to catch them the pigeons swooped down to him. Ranulph began to dance, playing his lute at the same time, and the boy followed, with the doves flying above him just out of reach. In saucy improvised couplets the troubadour called upon one and another to join the dancing, until before any one quite knew what was happening, the company in the lower hall was drawn into a winding lengthening line following the leaders in a sort of farandole. The hall was not large enough for this to go on indefinitely, and Ranulph suddenly bolted into the outer air, where the shouting, laughing crowd paused for breath--and the pigeons went soaring into the sky.

The party from the table on the dais came out to look on, and Garin de Biterres, as he saw the mounting birds, grew suspicious. "Here, Jean! Michaud!" he said sharply. "Loose the hunting hawks!"

Ranulph's heart missed a beat, but he dared not betray himself by a tremor. Hawks could be trained to pursue carriers, but the doves had a fair start and might be able to get away. The two birds of prey which the men brought were moreover not the type of hawk used especially to hunt pigeons, but young falcons or tercel. The men bungled in handling them; they evidently belonged to the castle, not to the troop. When they finally rose into the air, Pere Azuli, the veteran blue pigeon, and Rien-du-Tout, the little dun-colored stray Peirol had trained, were almost out of sight. The luckless Blanchette was lagging, and despite her frantic attempts to escape her enemy she was soon struggling in the falcon's grip. Clair de la Lune, the other white pigeon, seemed about to meet the same fate when something unexpected happened.

Two wild hawks, beating up from the south, spied the pigeons, and pounced one upon the tercel with the dove in his talons, the other upon Clair de la Lune. In the scrimmage which followed Blanchette's little body fell into the river, and the strange hawk gave chase to Pere Azuli, while her mate began to devour Clair de la Lune at his leisure. The ruffled and bewildered tercel was whistled back, and neither Garin de Biterres nor his prisoners could be certain in the gathering twilight whether any of the pigeons had escaped their pursuers.

The pigeon-chase had taken the attention of de Biterres and his men so completely for a few minutes that Ranulph, without seeming to do so, came

near to Lady Philippa. A tiny roll of paper encased in a withered leaf dropped from his fingers on the furred edge of her mantle. She bent to shake off the leaf and her hand closed quietly over the letter. When Ranulph had gone to sing ballads of the camp among the troopers, and the young girls had been ceremoniously escorted to their guarded room, she unrolled and read the missive. It was not long. "Dear and Honored Lady--I pray you pardon the fooleries of the night, since in this way only could I hope to escape the surveillance of these miscreants and do you service. The pigeons we are loosing bear messages telling of your doleful plight, and I doubt not that when it becomes known, help will come to you. Sir Gualtier Giffard is, as you know, at your father's castle awaiting messages from him, and we have thus every reason to hope that there will be no mishap. For the rest, sweet lady, I rejoice that I am within these walls, because you are here, and yet would I gladly go to the ends of the earth if so I might hasten your deliverance.

"Ever your servant,
"RANULPH D'AVIGNON."

The loyal and generous words were like balm upon wounds. The last speech that Garin de Biterres had made to her that night conveyed a terrifying possibility.

"Lady Philippa," his cold harsh voice had fallen upon her ears like the grating of a key in a prison door, "your father once refused me your hand. I hope to find you more gracious, or at least more compliant. My captain, Malemort, stands ready to wed the Lady Alazais as I would wed you, at high noon to-morrow. The fate of the others depends upon you. As good Christian maidens ye should all prefer Christian marriage to slavery among the Moslems,--but gold in the purse is better than an unwilling bride."

It was not long after sunset when old Grimaud, Count Thibaut's gooseherd, was aroused from a light sleep by a fluttering at his window. He found huddled on the sill a small dun pigeon under whose wing nestled a roll of writing. According to instructions, he took it at once to Sir Gualtier Giffard, who found therein Ranulph's statement of the tragedy impending at Montfaucon. It was like the crater of a volcano suddenly opened in what had seemed a bright and fertile valley. On the very borders of this paradise of luxury and delight lay a world where a thing like this was possible. He strode hastily into the hall, told the news to the old knight, a cousin of Count Thibaut's, who had charge of the castle for the time, and left him to order out the garrison. Five minutes later he was riding at a breakneck pace on his own fleet horse, to rouse the men who had so short a time since been guests of the Count, to the rescue of his daughter and her companions.

Thus it came to pass that early next morning a sentinel at Montfaucon hurried from his watch-tower to make report to Malemort, and Malemort lost no time in reporting to his chief. Peering from an upper window they could see a strong force under the banner of Count Thibaut, flanked by the devices of half Auvergne, coming at a sharp trot toward the castle. There was neither delay nor discussion. Garin de Biterres had not found life altogether pleasant, but he had no wish to end it with a rope around his

neck. If some peasant had carried a report of his doings to Count Thibaut there was nothing to do but flee the vengeance now on the way, and that instantly. Without waiting even to close the gates the whole troop of mercenaries went galloping away. When the rescuers clattered into the courtyard they found no one stirring save a little stout man in a cook's apron, who was concocting something in a huge saucepan.

"I am Martin," he said to Savaric de Marsan. "I cook. But I do not cook for cannibals, and my faith! I think that robber captain will end by devouring his fellow-men. I have no mind to poison the food of his enemies, either, so when they went away I hid in the great tun. I am at your service, master."

Savaric was so much amused at the explanation that he then and there decided to rescue Martin from further evil company and place him in his own kitchen.

"There is some consolation for not catching Biterres," he observed to Ranulph later, "in getting a cook like that little man. He deserves something, truly, for giving you the information he did. And then, we are rid of Garin for good now. He will never come back to Auvergne."

"You should have seen that Norman madman when your message came. He had us under arms and riding for dear life before we fairly understood what had happened. Yet from what Martin says, but for your daring and ready wit no message could have come. You will not allow me to say what I think of that, and therefore I suppose we must give all the credit to the victor in our tournament of the pigeons,--little Sieur Rien-du-Tout!"

THE JESTERS

Where through the dapple of wood-shadows dreaming
Faun-footsteps pattering run,
Where the swift mountain-brooks silvery-gleaming
Carol through rain and through sun,
Thee do we follow, O Spirit of Gladness,--
Thee to whom Laughter gave suck.
We are thy people by night or by noontide,--
We are thy loves, O Puck!

Lips thou hast kissed have no pleasure in sadness,
Bitterness, cant nor disdain.
Hearts to thy piping beat bravely in gladness
Through poverty, exile or pain.
Gold is denied us--thine image we fashion
Out of the slag or the muck.
We are thy people in court or by campfire,--
We are thy slaves, O Puck!

We are the dancers whose morris-bells ringing
Sound the death-knell of our years.

We are the harpers who turn into singing
Our hopes and our foves and our fears.
Thine is the tribute wrung hard from our anguish
After the death blows are struck.
We are thy bondmen who jest while we languish,--
We are thy souls, O Puck!

III

THE PUPPET PLAYERS

In a blinding snow-storm that blotted out the roads and obscured the outlines of the densely forested mountains, two youths and a small donkey struggled over a mountain trail. Twice the donkey had to be pulled bodily out of a drift, and once for an hour or more the wayfarers were racked by the fear that they had lost their direction altogether. But at last, in the edge of the evening, they saw the lights of the city twinkling like a miniature Milky Way, and urged on their tired beast in the certainty of food and shelter at the end of the day.

They were very unlike, these two strangers. He who seemed the leader was a slender lad, dark and keen of face, who might from his looks have been either French or Italian. In reality he was a Milanese, Giovanni Bergamotto, the only survivor of one of the families driven out of Milan when Barbarossa took the city. He had lived nearly half his life in France and in England, and spoke several languages nearly or quite as well as his own.

The other was a big-shouldered, sullen-looking fellow with black eyes and hair and a skin originally brown and now still darker from his out-of-door life--a Pyrenean mountaineer known as Cimarron. It was doubtful if he himself knew what his name originally had been; to all who knew him now he was Cimarron, the mountain sheep,--strong, sure-footed, and silent, and not half as stupid as people often thought.

The two had been in Brittany, in Paris, in Sicily and in Castile during the past months, and in each country they had made their way directly to the place in which the ruler happened to be holding court. At court they had exhibited the marionette show now packed away in the donkey's saddle-bags, once, twice or thrice as the case might be, until Giovanni had succeeded in gaining audience with the wife of the ruler. He carried pedlar's goods of very choice varieties, which might well appeal to ladies of the court in those days of slow transportation and few shops.

Now the King of England had three daughters, each of them being married to some prince of importance on the Continent of Europe, and he had adopted this means of sending certain letters to be given into their hands. The letter was carried inside a marionette, the head of the little carved wooden figure being so made as to unscrew and reveal a deep narrow hole in

the body. The last of the three was Matilda, wife of Henry the Lion Duke of Saxony, the most powerful vassal of Frederick Barbarossa; and Barbarossa and his court now occupied Goslar, the walled city of Prussia which the two comrades were approaching. Giovanni wished to have the Emperor's permission to go on to Saxony. It might save his being detained as a spy or interfered with in some other way.

He wished also to discover how far the preparations for the invasion of Italy had gone. From what he had heard he thought that Barbarossa was about to gather his forces. He himself intended to join the army of the Lombard League as soon as he had delivered his letter.

There was not much difficulty in finding an inn where they could have supper, and sleep, rolled up in their cloaks, on the floor in a corner of the common room. The donkey was unloaded and fed, and the saddle-bags were brought in to serve as pillows. Having eaten, they lay down to the dreamless sleep of healthy youth. Cimarron's mountain-bred ears caught the sound, two hours after, of clanking swords and trampling horses, and he signaled silently to Giovanni. Troopers clattered in, laughing, cursing, calling for this and that, and not seeing the two motionless figures in the dark corner at all. When all was still again Cimarron whispered,

"Who are they?"

"They are Swabian cavalry," answered the other. "We were none too soon. The army is mustering already."

Next morning Giovanni cast about for means to get inside the walls of the great castle, where the Imperial banner floated in the cold blue air. But there seemed to be no disposition to encourage foreigners. Cimarron, who could sometimes gain admittance as a horse-boy, was kicked out. There was tumult and excitement in the streets. Giovanni, retreating to a narrow alley to brush mud off his doublet, was aware that a man with keen observant eyes was regarding him from the doorway of a wine-shop. The man wore the cap and bells of a jester, and his fantastic costume was gorgeously colored and ornamented. He was drinking a cup of wine, and when that was finished he poured another for himself and began to sip it slowly. Catching Giovanni's eye, he asked,

"What's in those great saddle-bags, my friend?"

Giovanni nearly jumped, for the question was in his own native dialect--not only Lombard but the variety peculiar to Milan itself. But remembering that he must not betray his blood he answered meekly, in French,

"I crave your pardon, master. I do not understand your question."

"I asked you," said the jester, "what you had in your luggage. It was an idle question, but you might be a showman of Milan."

Giovanni laughed with mingled amusement and horror. "Milan, do you say? Is it safe to say that name in Goslar? No, master, I am a poor showman from Paris, asking only the opportunity to display my puppets before the great

folk. 'Tis a goodly show, I assure you, master--the play of the Ten Virgins. Having but six lady-figures I am forced to make them serve for the wise and the foolish virgins and the bride, but there are also a King, who in this play is the bridegroom, the Merchant, the Monk, the Jester-- who is most amusing and can dance upon his head or his heels as you will. The figures were carved by the most skilful wood-carvers of Paris, and the play was written by a pious monk of the Benedictines." (Padraig the scribe would have hooted at this.) "It is a most wise and diverting entertainment, master, I do assure you." The jester seemed not to be listening very attentively. He twirled the stem of the wine-cup in his hand, crooning,

"Fantoccini, fantoccino,--
Chi s'arrischia baldacchino,
Ognuno per se,
Diavolo per tutti."

Only long practice in self-control could have kept Giovanni from starting. The rhyme was a common street-song which every lad in Milan, the city of puppet-shows, would recognize, and not only did it refer to the puppets as "fantoccini" instead of marionettes, but the significance of the last two lines, "Each for himself and the fiend for all," was rather too pointed to be pleasant. But he only bowed uncomprehendingly and awaited the further comment of the singer with more interest than comfort.

"I have a mind to speak a word for your puppet-show," said the jester, cradling his bauble in his arms. "The Emperor gives little thought to such toys; nevertheless he may be graciously pleased to spend a few minutes in that way to-night after supper. Follow me."

He strutted away, a small pompous figure in scarlet and orange, and Giovanni noted the mingled deference and contempt with which he was regarded by the crowd. No more trouble was experienced in getting the donkey along the crowded streets. The fool's discordantly-clashing bells opened a way everywhere. The porter at the castle gate grinned and flung a jest at him, but admitted him and those who followed in his train, without question.

A few steps farther on they were halted by a tall, thin, sour-looking man in the elaborate headgear and robes of a dignitary of the household.

"How now, Master Stephen!" he said sternly. "What foolery is this?"

"Only a showman, Conrad," grinned the jester. "He has a puppet-show in those fat bags of his. Did you think I was trying to smuggle meat-puddings out of the kitchens for my own solitary meals?"

The steward was not satisfied. "Show me the puppets," he ordered. Giovanni obeyed.

The steward scrutinized the bride and her maidens, pulled the strings which moved the humpbacked jester, fingered the costumes, and then with a curt nod bade them go on. "But mind you, Master Stephen," he said, shaking

a long finger at the fool, "you are to be responsible for these fellows and keep them in sight from now until the time of the feast. If aught goes amiss you shall be whipt."

The jester giggled, shook his bells, and began to climb a long flight of stairs in a tower opening on the courtyard, beckoning the two youths to follow him. Up and up they climbed, until at last the fool turned and motioned them to halt.

"Come within," he said to Giovanni. "Let your servant await you with your baggage on the landing here. He will tell us if any one approaches."

The room in which Giovanni found himself was a small wainscoted apartment in the top of the tower, furnished in a grotesque fashion well suited to the humped and twisted figure of its master. The jester flung off his tall curved cap and seated himself on the corner of a table. From a flask he poured out a cup of wine and offered it to his guest. "It is not drugged," he said with a laugh, "you need not fear. No? Ah, well, perhaps you are right. I will drink it myself, though I should keep it for the night--the nights are very long sometimes."

He set down the cup and leaned forward, peering intently into Giovanni's face. "You gave me a start just now," he said. "I took you for a ghost--the ghost of a man I once knew--Giovanni Bergamoto."

This was more than exciting; Giovanni's father had been one of the murdered hostages of Crema, and if his name came to the ears of the Emperor he would never leave the castle.

Searching his impassive face the jester nodded approvingly. "I knew it," he said. "No one else would have behaved as you did--and it is for Milan. Milan!" He slipped from the table and stood up, the bells jangling a weird undertone to his every movement. "It is better you should know--I am--I was when I was alive--Stefano Baldi."

Giovanni's eyes blazed, "And you dare ask a Milanese to drink with you?"

"Hear me," begged the jester. "I sinned a great sin--yes; but I have lived twelve years in torment of body and soul for that sin. I sinned for love of a woman, and when I had betrayed my people she denied me, and her brothers delivered me over to the executioners. They spared my life because they thought it not worth the taking, and left me the wrecked and crooked thing you see. Yet I have served Milan since her fall--I, the traitor,--served her by a thousand petty treacheries and inventions. It was I who sent Henry Plantagenet the news of Barbarossa's plans. I have the favor of the Emperor, and hidden things are freely discussed before me. They know I am Milanese and despise me, but they believe me bought with gold and with the wine which is my besetting sin."

Giovanni was silent for very amazement. The fool mistook his attitude.

"See," he pleaded, tearing open his tunic, "here on my heart are the arms of Milan. I kept the badge hidden here under the floor for years, for fear

that when I was whipt they would find it. But since I have the Emperor's favor none dare touch me.

"Do you need money? Are you a spy? But nay--tell me not your errand. I might--I might babble in the wine-shop, and then they would torture me to find out the truth, and I might betray you as I betrayed your father. But if you need money--look!"

He knelt above a corner of the hearth and raised a stone, thrusting his hand into the deep hollow under it. He threw out handful after handful of rich gold pieces that winked and gleamed in the pale sunlight. "They are yours--all yours--for Milan."

Giovanni found his tongue. "When I was but a child," he said slowly, weighing his words, "my mother taught me to hate and fear Stefano Baldi. Yet in truth I neither hate nor fear you, Stefano, and I will trust you in this matter. I have an errand at the court of Henry the Lion in Saxony, and it was my hope that the Emperor, should he be pleased with our marionettes, might give me safe-conduct that my journey be the sooner ended. Then I shall go southward to fight for Milan."

Stefano pushed the gold back into the hole and replaced the stone. "I see," he said. "The Emperor is as easily diverted by shows as the Brocken by its clouds. Yet I think I can find a way to make him serve you. Be ready to-night with your puppets and put your own soul into the jesting and the mummery. That is the only thing for you to do. If that fails we will try the gold."

Giovanni spent the hours before the banquet in setting his mimic theater in order, trying every cord, pulley and weight to make sure that it worked perfectly, brushing and reshaping the costumes, going over the songs and speeches of the play in his head. Cimarron also was busy tuning his rebeck and trying over the melodies of the songs which Ranulph the troubadour had written for this little drama. It was based on the story of the ten virgins, and contained much by-play and shrewd comment on the follies and fashions of the day. Besides the written text Giovanni was wont to add some patter of his own, improvised according to the mood of his audience and the scene of the performance, but he ventured on very little of this impromptu comedy on such an occasion as this. Too much was at stake.

After what seemed endless waiting the time came. The huge hall was filled with gayly dressed knights, ladies, serving people, soldiers, and half the petty princes of the Empire. The feasting had given place to wine-drinking, songs and jesting. The Emperor, cold and impassive, sat in his chair of state, his mind apparently a thousand miles away. Then there was a great roar of laughter from the doorway, and a lane opened among the audience to let Stefano come prancing through in all his grotesque bravery, his bells chiming a goblin march. After him came Giovanni, and Cimarron bearing the puppet theater. Giovanni made his obeisance and his opening speech, and the play began.

There seemed to Giovanni to be two of him that night. One self was utterly absorbed in the performance, intent on making every speech tell, every

song win its meed of applause and laughter, every little figure act with the spirit and gayety of life. The other self hovered somewhere in the air among the rafters of the hall, critically watching the whole scene. He remembered a sensation something like it when he and Cimarron had crossed a mountain torrent in Spain on a log a hundred and fifty feet above the jagged rocks and tearing waters. And as on that occasion, Cimarron did his part as calmly and indifferently as if he were mending a strap in the donkey's harness.

Certainly the play was a success. Giovanni had never met with greater applause or received more substantial rewards. The ladies gathered to inspect his wooden figures after the play, like children at a fair. He was just leaving the hall when a page came to him and directed him to wait in an ante-room until the Emperor should be at leisure.

It was cold and bleak, and Giovanni's tense nerves shivered as he waited. The noise of departing guests and the tramp of hoofs died away. It grew colder and stiller in the small grim room. At last the Emperor came in, and seated himself in a great chair. A servant brought in a brazier full of coals and went away. The ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, a small man with red hair and beard, and cold eyes, looked Giovanni over from head to foot.

"You go," he said, "to the court of Henry Duke of Saxony?"

"Aye, Sire," said the youth.

"It is not a very safe journey. There are robbers in the forest."

"Surely," said Giovanni humbly, "a poor showman might hope to escape them?"

"I fear not," said the Emperor with the ghost of a smile. "In their disappointment they might break up your puppets and leave you fastened to a tree for the wolves to devour. Such things have been done. I will give you safe conduct and send you on with a company of merchants and soldiers, if you will carry a message for me. Henry the Lion is delaying too long with his answer. Tell him that the time has passed for trifling."

"Who," said Giovanni, wonderingly, "could dream of trifling with your expressed wish?"

"Henry dreams, but he will awake," said the Emperor curtly. "Hark you--you seem to be a clever mountebank, and I know what power fellows of your sort have over the mob--add to your play lines to be spoken by your puppet King. They should convey this meaning--that although he is a King he is but a puppet incapable of independent action. Puppets that go wrong are broken up and burned in the fire. My will is the law for my realm. Saxony shall be taught that law as Milan was taught, if Henry dares disobey."

Writing a brief sentence or two on his tablets, the Emperor affixed his signet and gave the missive to Giovanni. "That shall be your proof that you come from me. Stefano tells me that you go on into Lombardy. Forget

not the meaning of your puppet-show when you reach those rebellious states. They have been chastised once or twice before."

Giovanni was left alone. On the morrow he took his departure for Saxony and did his errand. The Duke of Saxony remained at home, and Barbarossa went on without his aid to meet defeat at Legnano. Giovanni met Stefano by chance in Venice when the Emperor went there to sign the peace treaty.

"His armies were doomed from the first," the jester said in his hoarse guttural sing-song. "They were weighted with the souls of the martyred hostages of Crema. I have lived to see that siege avenged,--and now I must go on livin--and never see Milan again."

Marveling much at the heights and depths in the soul of a traitor Giovanni went on his way to England. There he discussed with Tomaso the Paduan physician, Ranulph the troubadour and Brother Basil of the Irish Benedictines the astonishing destruction of the Emperor's army. But he said no word of Stefano.

"It is all in the formula on which his power was based," said the alchemist thoughtfully. "No man--be he duke, prince or kaiser--can pose as the master of humanity. Men are not puppets; they are free souls in a free world. You cannot make even a puppet-player move contrary to its nature."

"That is true," said Giovanni. "And I have never had two that behaved exactly alike. Fantoccini have their own ways of acting--and when you pull the strings yourself, you know."

THE ABBOT'S LESSON

There were twelve good monks and an Abbot who came
To found the Abbey and give the name
In the early days when the stones were laid,
And each of them knew a craft or a trade.
Sebastian the shepherd and Peter the smith,

James who made leather, and sandals therewith,
Hilarius the cook, of great skill in his art,
Anselm whose herbal lay close to his heart,
Gildas the fisherman, Paul of the plough,
Arnold who looked to the bins and the mow,
Matthew the vintner and Mark the librarian,
Clement the joiner and John apiarian,
Each wise in his calling as craftsmen are made,--
And each deep in love with his own special trade.
But the Abbot was canny, and never would raise
One above other by blame or by praise.

Now the angel who guarded the Eden gate
Had pity in thinking on Adam's fate,
And sent him three servants, for earth, air and sea,

The sheep, and the fish, and the wise little bee.
And thus it has happened that some people know
More than the rest of us here below.

There was jealousy, bitterness, wrath and fear
Among these reverend brethren here,
With their leather and parchment and metal and stone,
And the seeds of dissension were freely sown--
Only Sebastian, Gildas and John
In their work appointed went placidly on.

The Abbot considered his turbulent flock,
And he saw the wicked beginning to mock,
And he gathered the craftsmen about him, to see
Why there was peace with the other three.

They found Brother John by his bee-skeps brown
Watching his bees in their elfin town.
"Little folk, little folk all a-wing,
More honey is yours when ye do not sting,
And that is a very sensible thing,"
Said Brother John to the bees.

They found Brother Gildas a-fishing for trout,
Oblivious that any one was about.
"Finny folk, finny folk, deep in the fen,
There's a bait for each fish if we only know when,--
And that is the way to fish for men,"
Said Brother Gildas to the fishes.

They found on the moorland bleak and cold
Brother Sebastian, far from the fold.
"Sheep of my sheepfold, by night and by day
I seek ye untiring wherever ye stray,--
For thus ye have taught me the Master's own way,"
Said Brother Sebastian the shepherd.

And the brethren were silent. Each prayed in his heart
That in all of his doings in craft or in art
He might give God the glory. Since Adam's fall
The workman is nothing, the work is all.
There was peace in the cloisters. The Abbot that night
Gave thanks that his children had found the light.

IV

PADRAIG OF THE SCRIPTORIUM

Padraig sat on the side of the hill where the Good People were said to

dance rings in the turf, his chin on his folded arms, his arms resting on his drawnup knees--thinking. He might have been taken for a sheogue himself had any one been there to see. His hair was like a red flame, and his eyes were blue as the sky; his arms and legs were as brown as his young, sharp face, and he wore but one garment, a goatskin tunic. He could run like a hare and climb like a squirrel and swim like a salmon, for he had lived like a savage all his life, among the Irish hills.

Before he could remember, he had lost his father, a clever tinker who could make silver brooches and mend brass kettles and had married an Irish colleen in a seashore village. Then pirates raided the coast, and the Irish girl with her baby escaped only by hiding in a cellar under a ruined house. When the boy was seven years old his mother died, and since then he had gone from one village to another as the fancy took him. For a week or more he might be herding goats or sheep, fishing, or cutting peat for fires; he stayed nowhere longer than he chose and owned nothing in the world except what he wore. Under the tunic there hung a small leather bag with the few relics his mother had left him. He could make a fish-hook of a bit of bone, a boat of reeds, or a snare of almost any material he could find where he happened to be.

From this place where he sat he could see a valley of wet meadow-land, in the midst of which gray stone buildings were massed inside a wall which enclosed also the garden and the cloisters. He knew that this was an abbey.

Years before a company of twelve monks and a Prior had come there to found a religious house. They brought from England an arklike chest containing some manuscript books, and relics, chalices, candlesticks and other treasures, and little else except their long black robes, girdles and sandals. These monks, working in orderly and diligent fashion under their superior's direction, had built a chapel, a dormitory, a dining-hall, store-houses, barns,--and the community grew. The building was done first of rough stone and wattle-work after the manner of the country, but later of good cut stone. Half the countryside had been employed there when the chapel was building. They had drained the marsh for their meadow-land, their young trees were growing finely, their vineyard was thriving in a sunny selected nook, their sheep flecked the hills all about them. A deep fish-pond had been made where now two monks sat fishing. Padraig wondered if they had caught anything as good as the lithe trout he had taken from a mountain stream.

He was hungry, for he had been afoot since daylight, and he was wondering whether to make a fire and cook his trout or offer them to the monks in exchange for a supper. The wind that blew from the eight-side cone-roofed kitchen brought to his nostrils a smell so delicious that he was drawn like a fish on a line to the gates of the abbey.

He had met wandering monks and friars, but this was the first abbey he had entered. When he knocked at the gate and the porter asked him what he wanted, he was a little excited and rather scared.

But the porter, although rheumatic and grumpy, knew good fish when he saw

them, and considered them just the thing for the Abbot's supper. He let Pdraig in by the wicket gate, the door with a grating in it set in the big door and only about a third as large. Soon the boy was sitting by the kitchen fire eating a bowl of the most delicious broth he had ever tasted. Round-faced Brother Hilarius, who had charge of the kitchens, was in so good a humor over the trout that he suggested to Pdraig that he might herd sheep for the Abbey. The monks did a great deal of the work about their farms and in their workshops themselves, but there was still much to do, and they were usually willing to give work to anybody who did not ask for more than food and lodging.

Pdraig liked the Abbey, but he would probably have gone on before very long had he not found something which interested him more than anything else ever had. Brother Sebastian, the head shepherd, sent him one day to a part of the buildings he had not before seen. The long stone-walled, stone-floored room had little stalls down one side, each with its wooden bench and reading-desk. On one of these desks lay open the first book Pdraig had ever seen.

It was not printed, but written, each letter carefully drawn with a quill pen. The initials of the chapters, and the border around each page, had been painted in an ornamental design like a tangle of leaves and vines, in bright red, green, yellow, brown, black, blue. Twisted vines bore fruits, flowers, tiny animals and birds, here and there a saint, angel or cherub. The monk who was doing this illuminating was too much absorbed in his work to know that any one had come in, at first. When he looked up and saw Pdraig standing there he smiled very kindly.

He was a gaunt man with eyes as blue as Pdraig's own, black eyebrows and lashes, and a queer dreamy look except when he smiled. His name was Brother Basil. When he saw the bundle of especially fine sheepskins that Pdraig had brought his face lit up so that it seemed as if the sun had come into the cloister. "Good!" he said. "I will give you a note to carry back."

He took a bit of parchment which had once been written upon and had been scraped clean enough to use again, and made some queer marks upon it with his pen dipped in black fluid. That was the first time Pdraig had ever seen any one write.

It did not take long for Brother Basil to find out how fascinated the herd-boy was with the work of the scriptorium. Before any one knew it Pdraig was learning to read and write. He learned so quickly that the Abbot and Brother Mark, the librarian, thought he might make a scribe. But when he was asked if he would like to be a monk, he shook his head like a colt eager to be off. Writing was great fun; he practiced with a stick in the sand or charcoal on a stone. But it did not suit his idea of life to sit all day long filling books with page after page of writing.

He liked the making of colors even better than writing. In the twelfth century painters could not buy paints wherever they might chance to be. They had to make them. Brother Basil had studied in Constantinople, or Byzantium as he called it, the treasure-house of books and of learning,

with its great libraries and its marvelous old parchments illuminated in colors too precious to be used except for the Gospels or some rare volume of the Church. As time went on Padraig learned all that Brother Basil could teach him.

When a man is working on an important and difficult task, it means much to have a helper tending the fires or grinding the paints, who regards the work as the most important thing in the world and gives his whole mind to his occupation. Such a helper may ask as many questions as he likes, and his master will be glad to give him all the instruction he can possibly want.

Most of the people of the Abbey, in fact, liked Padraig. He knew so little that the monks and lay brothers and even the novices knew, and learned so quickly, and was so ready to put his own knowledge at their disposal, that it gave them the very comfortable feeling of being superior persons, whenever he was about. But there was one person who did not like him. This was Simon, a clerk attached to the house of the Irish prince who had given the land for the Abbey. Simon was of the opinion that vagabond urchins from no one knew where were not proper pupils for monastic schools even in Ireland, which was on the extreme western edge of Christendom. But Brother Basil paid no attention to Simon's opinion. In fact, it is doubtful whether he ever knew that Simon had one.

The most serious trouble Brother Basil had in his work was that many of the materials he needed could not be had in Ireland, nor could the Abbey afford to send for them except in very small quantities. The monks were rich compared with most other folk about them. They had food and drink and warm clothing and well-built houses, and productive land. But as yet they could not sell much of their produce at a profit which would make them rich in money. Brother Basil therefore manufactured all the colors he could, from the resources at hand. To make blue, he pounded up a piece of an old stone he had brought from Canterbury. Gilding was done by making gold-leaf out of real gold. The Tyrian purple was made from a gastropod of the seas near Byzantium, and a little snail-like mollusk of Ireland would serve to make a crimson like it. Thinning it, the painter could make pink. There was no vermilion to be had, and red lead must be used for that color and made by roasting white lead. The white lead was prepared by putting sheets of lead in vats of grape skins when the wine had been crushed out of them. Copper soaked in fermenting grape skins would make green, saffron made it a yellower green,--and saffron was grown on the Abbey land--cedar balsam would make it more transparent. Brother Basil was always trying experiments. He was always glad to see a new plant or mineral which might possibly give him a new color.

In all this Padraig was extremely useful. He made friends with a smith who had a forge and furnace miles away, and wheedled him into lending them the furnace for the roasting of metals. He ranged the woods and cliffs all around the Abbey in search of plants, shrubs, trees and minerals. His knowledge of the country saved Brother Basil many a weary tramp, and he always took Padraig with him when he went looking for any especial thing that was needed.

It was some time, however, before Padraig learned what Brother Basil needed most of all. Now that the work of the scriptorium was coming to be known, orders were received for splendidly illuminated missals and other volumes, for which gilding was necessary. The brilliant colors would lose half their beauty without the decorative touches of gilding to set them off. And gold was costly.

"Where do men get gold?" Padraig asked one day.

"Out of the earth," answered Brother Basil absently.

"I mean," said Padraig hesitating, "what is it like when it is in the earth? Is it a different color--like copper?" Copper, he knew, was often green when it was found.

"Gold is always gold," said Brother Basil, coming out of his fit of dreamy abstraction. "I have seen it washed out of rivers. Gold is heavier than gravel, and when the river carries the gold with the earth down from the mountains, the gold sinks to the bottom."

Padraig said no more, but a day or two later he was missing. The Abbot was not pleased, for now he would have to take a man from other work to do what the boy had been doing. Brother Basil was surprised and hurt. He had never had such a pupil, and had begun to hope that they might always work together for the love of the work and the glory of their Church.

"I suppose he was tired of us," Brother Basil said with a sigh. "He is only a boy."

But Padraig was only a few miles away, high up among the hills where a stream flowed through a ravine,--digging. He remembered seeing something there long ago, before ever he came to the Abbey. He worked for two or three days without finding anything at all. Then, just at sunset, he saw a gleam of something like sunshine in a shadow where no sun shone. He grubbed like a mole for a few minutes, and half a dozen tiny grains of gold lay in his palm.

There was not much gold in the stream, but there was some. He dug and pried and washed the scanty soil until he was sure that no more was there, and then toward evening of the next day started home to the Abbey. When he reached the gate it was dark, and the porter was astonished to see him.

By the light of a rush candle Brother Basil and the Abbot looked at the precious grains of river-washed gold, twinkling like fairy stars. Brother Basil's heart was content, not only because of the gold, but because his most promising pupil, the wild herd-boy from the mountains, had not really been weary of the work, but had proved his love for it and for his master.

The most excited person who heard of the discovery Padraig had made was Simon the clerk. He had never lived in any country where gold could be picked up in the streams, and he did not know, as Brother Basil did, that these little dots of gold-dust had probably been washed down from some rocky height miles away. He badgered Padraig in the hope of making him

tell where he had found them, but Pádraig would not. It was one of his best fishing-places, and he had no mind to have it ruined by a gold-hungry clerk, seeking what had been put there for Brother Basil.

At last he grew tired of Simon's questioning, and took him aside and told him a secret.

"I wonder," said Brother Basil, as he and his pupil went along a hillside one day at the long, swinging trot they kept for long excursions, "what Simon the clerk is doing there by the marsh. He seems to be looking for something."

"He is," said Pádraig with an impish grin. "He thinks the Cluricaune comes there mornings to catch frogs, and if he can catch the Cluricaune he can make him tell where all his gold is."

Brother Basil bit his lips to keep back a smile. "Now I wonder," he said gravely, "who could have told him such a tale?"

"I did," said Pádraig. "That is, I said old Granny Dooley told it to me when I was small. I've hid in the bushes to watch for the Cluricaune myself."

CAP O'RUSHES

Where the downward-swaying branches
Shiver, quiver in the sun,
And with low persistent murmur
The hidden waters run,
Far from bell and book and candle
With their grisly ban,
In the tangle of the rushes
Sits the great god Pan.

Oh, the unworn joy of living
Is not far to find,--
Leave the bell and book and candle
Of the world behind,
In your coracle slow drifting,
Without haste or plan,
You shall catch the wordless music
Of the great god Pan.

You shall wear the cap of rushes,
And shall hear that day
All the wild duck and the heron
And the curlew say.
You shall taste the wild bees' honey
That since life began
They have hidden for their master--
For the great god Pan.

You who follow in the pathway
Of the waters fleet,
You shall tread the gold of springtime
'Neath your careless feet,
Gold the hasting rivers gathered
Without thought of man,--
Flung aside as hushed they listened
To the pipes of Pan!

V

THE TAPESTRY CHAMBER

Lady Philippa sat with her little daughter Eleanor in the tapestry chamber. This was the only corner of the gray old Norman castle which seemed really their own. All the rest of it was under the rule of Sir Stephen Giffard, the eldest son of the house, and still more under the rule of his mother, Lady Ebba, who seemed more like a man than a woman and managed everything, in-doors and out, including her sons. Eleanor, watching her grandmother with shy observant eyes, was not quite sure whether her father came under that rule or not. He never disputed anything his mother said or opposed her will, but somehow, when he saw that his sweet Provençal wife wanted anything, he contrived that she should have it.

Eleanor could not help seeing, however, that her mother was careful not to appear discontented or melancholy, and to do all that a daughter could do for her husband's stern old mother. Both Sir Stephen Giffard and Sir Walter, Eleanor's father, were away most of the time, and if Lady Philippa had been disposed to make herself unhappy she might have been exceedingly miserable. The old chatelaine did not approve of luxury, even such small luxuries as were almost necessities in that vast pile of stone which was the inheritance of the Norman Giffards. The castle hall was as grim and bare as a guard-room except on state occasions, and the food was hardly better on the master's table than below the salt, where the common folk ate. To be sure, there was plenty to eat, such as it was. The old lord, who had been dead for many years now, had married the daughter of a Saxon earl when he was a young knight in England, and Lady Ebba had been used to plentiful provision in the house of her father. In the autumn, when the other castles in the neighborhood sent forth gay hunting parties, and the deep forest, whose trees had never known the ax since Caesar built his bridges in Gaul, rang to the hunting horns, there was no such merrymaking on the Giffard lands. Instead, the folk were salting down beef and fish and pork--particularly pork, from the herds of swine that roamed the woods feeding on the acorns and beech mast. Toward the end of the winter there seemed to be more pork than anything else on the table.

Lady Philippa had ruled her father's house when she was a girl of fourteen, and she could have taught the people a different way of living.

She knew how to raise and care for the great variety of poultry, water-fowl, pigeons, hares, fish, and delicate small birds of many kinds, such as some of their neighbors had and the southern provinces of France enjoyed in even greater abundance. But Lady Ebba would have none of it. Fowls had to be carefully tended, protected from foxes, hawks and other enemies; the fierce half-wild hogs could take care of themselves. All that they needed was a peasant herdsman with a dog to keep them together and see that thieving neighbors did not help themselves. There was more food in one hog than in a whole covey of game birds, to say nothing of the trouble of catching and cooking the birds.

Neither did the old dame approve of tapestried walls, cups and bowls of silver, gold and enamel, flower-gardens or delicately-made dishes. Fortunately her daughter-in-law's herb-garden was not wholly under the ban. It contained herbs useful in medicine, and God has ordained that many useful plants are also beautiful in their season. Sage, balm, caraway, monk's hood, thyme, thrift, mint, and other plants therefore dwelt contentedly in a sunny nook of the castle. The Provence roses, lilies and violets needed little care, and having once taken root were not ousted. One reason may have been that on special occasions perfumed water was offered to some guest of importance, for the washing of the hands after eating. By her manner though not in words Lady Ebba conveyed the idea that it was as well to have some one in the house who had time and taste for such things. The embroidering of tapestries and rich robes, and the repairing of such vestments as had come to mending, might also be done by the person who had time for it.

The pleasantest hours in Eleanor's day were those that she spent with her mother in the tapestry chamber. Whenever the weather would allow it they sat there during the sunny hours of the day, and if Sir Walter was at home, or it was very cold and some important piece of work must be done, they could have a brazier of charcoal to keep them warm. There was no fireplace in the room.

It was not a very large room, and it was stone-floored and stone-walled. It was Lady Philippa's bedchamber. The bed was oak, built into the wall like a cupboard, and almost black with age. There were carved doors of oak that could be shut, making it look like an armoire, but these were usually open, displaying pillow-slips of fine linen and a linen coverlet, spun, woven, and embroidered with black silk, by the lady herself. On the floor were strewn rushes and fragrant herbs. There were two straight carved chairs of old oak, an ivory footstool and a small table which held a few books and an ebony work-box inlaid with ivory, and writing materials. Two carved chests set one on the other served as wardrobe. As for washing conveniences, these were brought in as they were needed, by the knight's body-servant or the lady's own maid. The real luxury in the room was the window, which was more than twice the size of the narrow slits that lighted the great hall, and opened to the south. On pleasant days the sun looked in early and lingered late, as if he loved the room and its gentle mistress.

The room had been much the same for more than a hundred years, the castle having been built during the tenth century. The thing that made it Lady

Philippa's own particular room, which could have belonged to no one else, was the set of soft yet brilliant tapestries which covered the walls. They had been worked by her in her girlhood, and she sometimes felt that more than half her life was wrought into the quaint figures and innumerable flowers and leaves and emblems of those narrow panels of embroidery. They had adorned the room which had been hers in her father's castle, and single panels had curtained or covered wall-spaces in many other castles during her life as Queen Eleanor's maid of honor. Little Eleanor had heard the story of the pictures as soon as she was old enough to hear stories at all, and there was some story connected with the making of each part of the set. It presented in a series of scenes the history of Sainte Genevieve of Paris. In the first picture she was shown as a little girl tending her sheep; then there were pictures of her at the various exciting times in her life--her saving the people from the Huns, her staying of the plague, her audience with King Clovis and finally her peaceful old age among the people who loved her.

Eleanor was kneeling on the window-seat where she sometimes slept, her bright braids falling over her white linen underdress and gown of soft blue wool. "Mother," she said earnestly, "I wish I could make some tapestry."

Lady Philippa was deftly drawing together the edges of a rent in an old and magnificent gold-embroidered bed-curtain. "Have you finished your spinning, daughter?" she asked.

"N-o, but it is almost done. Mother, I will spin twice as much every day if you will teach me to do tapestry. Were you older than I am when you learned?"

"Not very much older. Perhaps you might begin now. Finish your task while I make this curtain whole, and we will see."

When her mother said she would "see," Eleanor knew that a favor was as good as granted. She spun away to a happy little song that Collet, her mother's maid, had taught her, and very soon the good linen thread was all wound smoothly and the little spinster sat demurely watching the preparations for her new undertaking.

First her mother opened the wardrobe chest and took out a strip of linen about twenty inches wide and of a brownish cream-color. Next she selected some skeins of dyed linen thread from a heap of all the colors of the rainbow, mementoes of the work her busy fingers had done during many years. In a little enameled box, very carefully wrapped in soft wool to keep them from rusting, were a few needles. Out of a wrapping of cotton paper came a thin stick of charcoal rather like a crayon--charred hard wood that could be used for drawing.

"Now," said the lady smiling at the eager little face, "what shall we choose for the subject of your tapestry, and what is to be its use? Will you have it for a cushion, or a panel of a screen, or something else?"

"I think--a set of panels," said Eleanor slowly. "It will take a long

time, but I should like to do exactly like you."

Lady Philippa gave a little, amused, affectionate laugh that ended in a sigh. "But, my dear child, you don't think of copying these?"

"N-o. But when I grow up I want my room to look like yours. I want the tapestry to have a story. Mother, do you think I could work the story of Saint George and the dragon? I like that best of all."

Eleanor drank in all the tales told her so delightedly that her mother had never known she liked one much more than another. "But," she said smiling, "Saint George was an English saint. He was born in Coventry."

"That's why he is my favorite," Eleanor explained. "You know father is English. And Saint George had so many adventures. I think he would be very interesting to do."

"It is your tapestry, dear child," her mother said, laughing her sweet, joyous laugh. "I am sure I think Saint George and the dragon would make a very handsome set. And we need not draw all the designs now. Perhaps by-and-by we shall know some one who will draw a dragon for us. Meanwhile you may begin on the first panel."

Eleanor flung her arms around her mother. "Oh, mother dearest, it's so good of you. I'm so excited to begin. Please commence at the very first part of the story, for that will be easy."

"Not so easy as you think, perhaps, sweetheart. However, we can but try. You mean the setting forth of the knight?"

"No, the time when he was a little boy, and the weird woman of the woods took him away and taught him everything. I like that part almost best of all."

"Very well. That will be a wise beginning, for in embroidering the trees and flowers of the forest you will learn all the different stitches. You will have to embroider quite well before beginning on the figures."

Eleanor leaned breathless over the table while her mother drew the outlines of the picture upon the linen--the witch-woman in her forest home, the straight, sturdy figure of small George standing before her. On two sides and the bottom of the panel were drawn gnarled and twisted tree-trunks and roots, ferns and flowers. Across the top a narrow conventional border was outlined, the cross of Saint George alternating with a five-petaled rose, the wild rose of England.

"You may begin the border now," said Lady Philippa, threading a needle with brown thread. "This is outline stitch, and the design must all be outlined with this, using different colors according to the part of it you are working. Then each space is to be filled in with another stitch--you see it here in the tapestry. For the background we will use still another stitch, and when you are covering large spaces the work is to be done in tent-stitch. Every inch of this linen will be covered with embroidery when

it is finished, you know."

Eleanor looked very grave and responsible. She saw long years of work before her, occupied with the triumphant career of the soldier-saint. But the new work proved so fascinating that an hour had gone by before she knew it. It was hard to tear herself away and go down to the chilly stone hall. She was not expected to come very near the fire of blazing logs, and felt her grandmother's eye constantly upon her lest she should not sit erect or behave as a well-born maiden should. She felt also that if Lady Ebba knew how much time would be consumed by the adventures of Saint George, she would begin a calculation of the number of skeins of linen thread that might be spun in that time, to the enrichment of the family. Eleanor privately thought that there was bed-linen in the castle to last for at least twenty years--which was true.

Letters had been received at the castle that day. Sir Walter was on his way home, and with him an English knight who had been his friend for many years--ever since they were squires together in Normandy. Lady Philippa looked rather sad and wistful when she spoke of Sir Hugh l'Estrange. He had married her dearest childhood friend, Alazais de Montfaucon, and Alazais was dead. She had gone a bride into that foreign land, lived seven happy years, and died. Eleanor could not help wondering whether she should ever have any friends who were dear to her as these early friends were to her father and mother. She had never played with any other children at all.

The news of her father's coming had traveled more slowly than he himself did. The next day, while Eleanor and her mother were busy transplanting some asphodel, the horn blew at the gate, and in a few minutes the knight came striding across the turf and caught his wife in one arm and his daughter in the other. Behind him was a great tall man with laughing eyes and a rather sad mouth, and standing very straight and soldierly beside the stranger was a boy some two years older than Eleanor, whom Sir Hugh introduced as "my son, Roger."

The following days were so full of excitement that little time was left for the tapestry chamber. The two knights were on their way southward to meet King Henry and aid him to pacify some of his turbulent subjects. Roger was to be left at the castle. It was usual for a knight to send his sons to some friend for training during the years when a boy must learn the duties of page and esquire. In this case there was more than usual reason for it, for Sir Hugh's castle was in a remote part of England and it would not be safe to leave his only son there during his absence.

Roger himself, while he frankly admitted that he did not much like leaving England, was keenly interested in all that he saw and heard. Soon it seemed as if he had always been at home in the old Norman castle. He called Lady Ebba "grandame," as Eleanor had never dared to do, and though she was as strict with him as she was with every one else, she never seemed exactly displeased with him. Roger himself saw it.

"Why do you like boys better than girls?" he asked her point blank, one day.

"Men can fight," Lady Ebba answered, curtly.

"Of course," Roger reflected. "But women can make men fight. Father told me that once when the Danes tried to take your father's castle you held them off until he came back."

Lady Ebba did not say anything. She rose and stalked away, but although her back was to Roger, Eleanor could see that she was actually smiling.

Eleanor knew that story. It gave her a feeling of enormous admiration and awe when she thought of it, but love--for a grandmother who had commanded a garrison, on scanty rations, besieged by fierce and bloodthirsty pirates--seemed a little out of place.

It was certainly far pleasanter, having Roger for a playmate. Eleanor thought it was better than having a sister. He taught her to run, to fish, to play bowls, nine-men-morris, and draughts. The dismal stone hall was not half so grim with Roger in her corner.

These diversions did not, however, interrupt the daily lessons, the task in spinning, or the newly-begun tapestry. To her great satisfaction Eleanor found that Roger liked the tapestry chamber nearly or quite as well as she did. When he saw Eleanor's tapestry he persuaded Sir Hugh l'Estrange to spend a rainy morning in making sketches for it.

"Father has been to Egypt and the other places," he explained, "and knows just how they look. You never saw a dragon, though, father?" he added doubtfully.

"Not exactly, but I have seen a beast rather like one," laughed the knight, and he drew a very fair picture of a crocodile, adding wings and a fiery breath and fearsome talons by way of establishing its dragonship. "I have seen the place where they say the monster was killed. And did you know that Saint George is said to have helped the Allies under Godfrey in the First Crusade, at the battle for Jerusalem?" While the children looked on in fascinated wonder, he sketched in a battle-scene--rather cramped for space because of the narrow linen web--showing Godfrey de Bouillon cheering on his knights, the saint on his great white horse leading the charge, and the banner of the Cross rising above the host. From the tapestried walls Sainte Genevieve and her people looked on with kindly interest at the little group.

When the two fathers had gone away life settled into a quiet but pleasant order. Roger shared some of Eleanor's lessons, and when she was at her spinning or needlework he was often by, with a bow to shape, a spear to polish or some other in-door work to do, while they listened to Lady Philippa's stories. To him nearly all of them were new.

As the spring advanced the three spent much time in the garden. A drain was needed in one place, and Roger retrieved a spade from the gardener's quarters and went at it. He had heard Lady Philippa say that she should like to have a "mount" there--an artificial hill made of packed earth and

stones--and as he dug he threw the dirt inward and tramped it down. He explained that this was the way a castle mount was made if the hill selected was not high enough. The one at Lewes that William de Warenne had made was a hundred and fifty feet high.

Eleanor caught the enthusiasm, brought stones and helped tread them down with her stout little leather shoes, and old Jehan's grandson with his sabots helped also.

"Wouldn't it be beautiful if we could build a castle on the top?" Eleanor suggested as they stood looking at it.

"Perhaps we can--if your mother is willing. Ask her if we may have all the stones we pick out of the garden--if we don't harm the plants--will you, Eleanor?"

Eleanor climbed the winding stairs to the tapestry chamber, and came flying back with the glad permission. Then the small building force went to work in deep earnest.

"I know exactly how to build it, for I saw the building of our castle from the very first," Roger explained.

"We lived in a tent all summer until it was done--part of it--so that we could have a room. First they dig a ditch, just like this one, around the mount, and they make a palisade of forest trees--whole trunks set close together--to keep off enemies. When they have time to build a stone wall, of course the wooden wall is taken down.

"Now here, on the most solid side of the mount, is the place for the keep. We use the biggest stones for that. The bottom storey of father's keep is partly cut right out of the rock, and the walls are twenty-five or thirty feet thick. Nobody can knock down that wall with a battering-ram! Here we'll make a great arched door, so that the knights can ride right in without dismounting when they're hard pressed by the enemy. Here's the drawbridge--" Roger hastily whittled off a piece of bark--"and this line I've scratched inside the outer wall is for the wall round the inner bailey. We'll have a watch-tower here--and here--and here. Father says that a good builder places his towers so that each one protects one or two others, and in the end every one is protected.

"In the storey above will be the great hall. These walls don't need to be so thick--not more than eighteen feet. Here on this side we'll cut a little room out of the thickness of the wall, for the private chamber of my lord and lady--"

"The tapestry chamber!" cried Eleanor.

"Yes," Roger went on, "and here on the other side we have the well-chamber. There's a stone bason with a shaft that goes away down to the well in the lowest part of the castle, and the defenders can always get water by lowering a bucket when they're besieged. Up above is another storey for a guard-room, and a flat roof with battlements around it, where

the sentinels can see for miles and miles across the country."

The two children gazed at their castle mount and almost believed the walls, eighteen, twenty, thirty feet thick--rising before their eyes.

"But that isn't all of the castle," said Eleanor at last.

"No; we'll build more towers after awhile, and have a banquet hall to entertain the King. And the soldiers and people will live in tents and wattled huts until the stonework is done. But the keep is the first thing to build, because, you see, you have to defend yourself from enemies no matter when they come."

Lady Philippa's garden was cleared of stones in a much shorter time than she had expected. But to build a stone wall simply by laying one stone upon another is less easy than it seems. Roger had done something of the sort before, but he had had fragments of stone from the masons' work instead of water-washed pebbles. And when the keep was actually built as high as the first floor above the foundation, a heavy rain came, streams tore out one side of the mount, and the stone-work tumbled into a hopeless ruin.

In the crystal brilliance of the morning after the storm Roger surveyed it ruefully. "Father says," he recalled, "that everything depends on the foundations. We'll do it over again and make the mount more solid."

"And when it is done," said Eleanor, never losing faith, "I'll beg some linen of mother and make tapestry for the walls of the little room and the great hall."

But the stones would not stay in place. Roger tried plastering them with mud, then with clay. Neither would hold when dry. Then he saw a workman repairing part of the garden wall, and in an evil moment borrowed some of the mortar while the man was gone to his dinner. He had just set it down near the mount when Collet came to call the children to their own dinner. The bucket remained there, and Lady Ebba's old gray cat, chasing a hound she had discovered near the hole where her kittens were secreted, bounced off a wall and fell into the mortar--fortunately hind feet foremost. The indignant Jehan came searching for his bucket and kicked the pile of stones in all directions, Lady Ebba made stern inquiry into the misfortune which had come to her cat, and wall-building was abandoned.

For a week or more, Roger gardened, fished and practiced archery in a somewhat subdued fashion. Lady Philippa, watching Eleanor's brown head and the boy's tousled tow-colored mop, as they consulted over a boat Roger was making, smiled and sighed. She wished that Alazais were there to see them play together.

Not long after the disastrous building incident Sir Walter appeared one day with surprising news indeed. Sir Stephen Giffard, the elder brother, was about to marry and come to live in the old Norman chateau. The new chatelaine was a rich widow of Louvain. Sir Stephen and Lady Adelia would be the lord and lady of the castle, and would have the tapestry

chamber.

"Oh, moth-er!" cried Eleanor piteously. No other room in the castle would ever be so pleasant. She could not understand her mother's untroubled acceptance of the change.

"But my dear child," Lady Philippa went on, "we shall not be here; we are going away. King Henry has given your father a great estate in a wild country in the west of England, and he is building a castle for our home. You will be an English maiden, sweetheart, and have your tapestry of Saint George for your very own room."

Eleanor's eyes were starlike. Then her mouth began to droop a little. "Is Roger to stay here?"

"Roger will be with us. His father's castle is only a few leagues from ours, and he is going to leave Roger at our home for a year or more while he is away."

This made it quite perfect. Roger rejoiced openly at the prospect of going back to England. In stray moments Eleanor wondered a little how Lady Ebba liked it. She rather doubted whether Lady Adelicia would be as content there as her mother.

When they rode away from the old Norman gateway for the last time Eleanor laughed gleefully: "I don't care where we go, mother," she whispered, "we've the roots and seeds from your garden, and we shall have a tapestry chamber!"

THE CASTLE

O the Castle of Heart's Delight!
The winds of the sunrise know it,
And the music adrift in its airy halls,
To the end of the world they blow it--
Music of glad hearts keeping time
To bells that ring in a crystal chime
With the cadence light of an ancient rime--
Such music lives on the winds of night
That blow from the Castle of Heart's Delight!

O the Castle of Heart's Delight
Where you and I go faring--
Heritage dear of love and toil,
Guerdon of faith and daring.
For all may win to the ancient gate,
Though some are early and some are late,
And each hath borne with his hidden Fate,--
For never a man but hath his right
To enter his Castle of Heart's Delight!

THE FAIRIES' WELL

What a beautiful place this is," Lady Philippa said softly. She was standing with her husband near the great stone keep, looking out across a half-built wall at the hills and valleys of his wilderness domain. It was one of those mornings of early summer when the air is cool yet bright with sunshine, and the unfolding beauty of the world has something of heaven in it. Birds were singing everywhere, and the green of new leaves clothed the land in elvish loveliness. "Your England is very fair, Gualtier."

"It is good that you find it so, love," answered the knight. He had had misgivings a-plenty in bringing his gently-bred Provençal wife to this rough country. Often he had to be absent from dawn to moonrise, riding on some perilous expedition. He and his little force of men-at-arms and yeomen were doing police work on the Welsh border, and no one ever knew just when the turbulent chiefs of those mountains would attempt a raid.

Lady Philippa never complained. She ruled her household as he ruled his lands, wisely and well. She called her husband Gualtier instead of Walter, because he liked it, and sang to her lute the cançons and retransas of her country, but she seemed to love his England as he did. She talked to the woodcutters' wives and the village women and farm people as if she had played in childhood about their doors. In fact the knight had a shrewd notion that if he had been a bachelor the taming of his half-British, half-Saxon peasantry would have been far less easy.

He had not wished to dominate and overawe the people, but to win them to true loyalty. He had known exactly what he wanted when he selected the place for his castle, and a man who knows his own mind can usually find men to do his work.

A castle in that place and time was a little town in itself, and it must be able to exist by itself when necessary, without markets or factories or outside help of any kind. Like most Normans the knight was a born builder, and had taken care to make his castle as proof against attack, and as scientifically built, as castle could be. Each landowner had to be his own architect. Certain general rules were followed, of course. The keep, the fosse, the inner and outer bailey, the general construction, were much the same in all fortresses of Normandy or Norman Britain. But no two sites were alike, and the work had to be planned not only according to the shape of the hill but with reference to the material to be had, the amount and quality of labor at hand, and the climate. This castle was on a hill not high originally, but made some fifty feet higher by heaping up earth and stone to bring the whole top somewhere near the level of the huge rock on which the keep was built. On that side the river flowed almost under the precipitous western face of the mount, so that a stone could be dropped from the battlements into the water. The young page, Roger, thought he could fish from his window if he could get a line long enough. The keep

was still the living-place of the family, but the double line of stone wall encircling the mount was finished, and at exposed points small watch-towers were placed, known as the mill-tower, the armorer's tower, the smith's tower or the salt-tower, according to their use. If the castle should be attacked each one of these outworks would be the post of a small garrison and stubbornly defended, while the keep could be held almost indefinitely. The deep cellars would hold grain and salt meat enough for months, and there was a spring within the walls. Even the narrow windows were so shaped that an arrow aimed at one of them would almost certainly strike the cunningly-sloped side and rebound, instead of entering the building. The gate was of massive timbers held together by heavy iron hinges and studded with nails, and above it was a projecting stone gallery connecting the two gateway towers. This gallery was machicolated, or built with a series of openings in the floor, through which the defenders could shoot arrows upon the besiegers, or pour boiling pitch down upon them. This was a Saracen contrivance, and had been suggested and supervised by Sir Hugh l'Estrange, who had seen the like in Spain.

There was one place where all plans had gone wrong, and that was a part of the wall near the keep, almost under the windows of the well-chamber. It had been built three times, and always, before it was done, the stones would begin to slip and sink. Yesterday a section of wall had gone clean over into the river and carried a mason with it. Fortunately he could swim, and though nobody thought he would come out alive, he had scrambled up the bank very cold, somewhat bruised, and sputtering like a wet cat.

That brought the matter to a crisis. There were uneasy whispers of a curse on the mount, a tradition that no castle built there would ever be finished, an old custom of sacrificing some human being to be buried under the foundation of a castle for the pacifying of the ancient gods. And all of this uncanny terror was somehow connected with a hill some distance away toward the forest-clad mountains, where a low brown-tiled cottage crouched like a toad, under a poplar whose leaves were ever twinkling in the sun.

"Gualtier," queried Lady Philippa, her eye following his, "what is it about old Mother Izan? The maids have been telling all sorts of foolish tales about her enchantments. What has she been doing?"

The knight laughed, but not very mirthfully. "Nothing whatever, in my opinion. But I may as well tell you--they say that she has overlooked the mount so that we shall never be able to finish this corner of the wall. It is vexatious, because I meant that nook for your garden. It is the only place that is sheltered from the wind and at the same time has sunshine and a good outlook. But the wall has thrice been all but finished, and each time the stones have begun to sink and topple. This time Howel the mason was nearly killed. Of course, a feeble bent old woman who can hardly hobble ten rods cannot have undermined a wall at this distance. That is absurd. But the panic the men have got into is not. That wall will have to be finished--somehow."

Lady Philippa looked at the tumbled masses of stone. "It would be a charming place for roses," she mused, and looked again at the cottage,

where beside the door a gleam of water caught the light. "That is the spring they call the Fairies' Well."

"Yes; it is one of the oldest wells in this part of England. The water is pure as the sunlight, and never fails. Hugh thinks it may be one of the places the heathen priests held sacred. It is not so very long since the people worshiped pagan gods."

The lady traced a pattern in the dust with the point of her slender shoe. "I think," she said, "that I will take the children and ride over to see Mother Izan."

The knight made no objection, for the country was quiet, and he could see the party from the castle mount as they set forth, Lady Philippa on her black Arabian jennet, Eleanor and Roger on their forest ponies.

The children had had their own discussion about that wall the day before, and returned to it as they rode along the trail that led to Mother Izan's cottage. It was a longer way than it seemed from the height, for a marsh full of tall reeds almost encircled the hill on which the Fairies' Well was, and the trail kept to the high moorland above.

"I do wonder what is the matter with the wall," mused Eleanor. "Do you suppose it can be bewitched, Roger?"

"Maybe," Roger admitted. "But if Mother Izan can't keep her cow out of the bog I don't see how she could pull down a stone wall. It's like the story of Dinas Emrys father told me," he added with relish. "King Vortigern was building a castle on Snowdon, and every night whatever they had built in the daytime fell down. After awhile they sent for old Merlin to see what the matter was. And it was two great serpents in a pool away down under the foundation. One was white and one was red, and they fought all the time. First the white one had the best of it, but the red one beat him at last, and chased him out of the pool. Merlin told them that the red serpent meant the British and the white serpent the Saxons, and the British would drive the Saxons out. But they haven't done it yet."

This was deliciously horrible. "You don't suppose there are snakes under our castle, do you, Roger?"

"Of course not," said Roger, pulling in his lively pony. "That was nothing but a tale. I wish I could bore a hole into the cliff, and see."

"Collet says Mother Izan is a witch," said Eleanor, abandoning the subject of snakes. "She hated it, when mother used some of her herb drinks last year."

"I like Mother Izan," said Roger sturdily. "She cured my leg once, when a stone fell on it--long before you came, when I was a little fellow." Roger was not quite ten. "She knows more about plants and animals than anybody. Ruric let her doctor his dog, the big one he calls Cuchullin."

"Collet doesn't like Ruric either," said Eleanor.

"She doesn't like anybody here really, except mother and me. I never mind very much about what she says. There's Mother Izan in the doorway,--and oh, what has she got hanging up in the big tree?"

The old woman was a queer bent creature with greenish eyes like a cat's, and white unruly hair that would not stay under her coif. In fact she looked not unlike a gaunt, grim old puss who had all her life fought what crossed her path, from snakes to staghounds. She was so old that the village people could not remember when she had been young, and her grandsons were elderly men.

A wicker basket hung from the lowest branch of the poplar tree. In it, cradled in close fine-woven osiers with a lining of rabbitskin, lay a solemn black-eyed baby, looking almost as old as the old woman herself.

"It's like a changeling," thought Eleanor, looking with fascinated eyes at the weird little being. Lady Philippa smiled, and laid her hand softly on the furry black head. "This is an unusual sight in your cottage," she said. "Whence came it, Goody?"

"Tis none of mine," old Izan grumbled, "'tis the brat of a scatter-brained woman--Kate, wife to Howel the mason. She came screeching at me saying the babe was a changeling I had left in place of her child of two years, and I should care for it. I have no mind for the tending of babes at my time of life, but I could not let the creature starve. Natheless 'tis but ill fed, for my cow was lost in the marsh, and none will let me have milk for it. Kate she's dead of a fever, and Howel will have naught of the young one, so I have made shift as I could, with bread soaked in herb drink."

Lady Philippa was twisting a vine-garland into a leafy canopy to keep the sun from the baby's eyes. "'Tis a pretty baby," she said, "though so small. The cow that was lost in the marsh--how did that happen?"

The old woman's eyes blazed with hatred. "My lady, the lads of the village drove her there, and the poor hunted beast floundered into a quagmire. I cursed them well for it, but that does not bring back the good cow. And Howel will do nothing for me because the child is so weazened and so small."

The lady frowned. "It is all wrong," she said, "the lads' cruelty and the cursing of them and the blame of the woman who thought you had witched her child. Sir Walter shall send you a goat that you can tether within sight of the cottage. In my country the folk often feed their babes on goat's milk, and I would like well to taste goat's milk cheese again. Is Howel at work now?"

"He was, my lady, but since he fell into the water he swears that he will work no more on the wall."

Lady Philippa spoke but with winsome frankness,--"The men say, good mother, that the wall is witch-ridden because it has fallen thrice. They are afraid, that is why they do not reason. Surely in God's world we

should be safe from such evil, if we serve Him. Perhaps if the baby grows fat and merry, Howel will be kinder. Has it been christened yet?"

"Nay--what have we to do with such gear? But my lady--heard ye never the old rhyme--

"Overlook the Fairies' Well--
None did that since Adam fell;
Overlook the Fairies' Hill--
Then Old Nick shall have his fill."

"That has naught to do with our castle," said the lady wonderingly. "Look--the keep is no higher than your roof-tree. My lord chose not the site for its loftiness but for the sure foundation."

"Aye," chuckled the old woman, "you say well, 'tis a good foundation. All but that corner. Tell your lord to raise no towers on that corner."

"I am sorry the wall has given so much trouble," Lady Philippa said regretfully, "for that is the only place for my garden--my roses and violets and herbs. My lord will try once more to finish it. If I might have but that piece of garden it would be like a bit of my old home, and that is a dear treasure, Mother Izan, in a foreign land."

Her voice trembled as she spoke, and Eleanor pressed close to her mother's side and held her hand. She had never heard a word before about her mother's longing for Provence.

As the three rode away old Izan stood for a long time, shading her eyes and gazing after them. Next morning a village boy in charge of Roger came up the path to her door, leading two bleating bewildered goats, which were securely fastened to a stake to graze at will.

"I came myself," said Roger loftily, "because I meant to make sure that it was all right. I haven't forgotten the time you cured my leg, Mother Izan, and neither has father. Have those blue-tit eggs hatched yet?"

The old woman's brown withered face crinkled in a smile. "Trust you, Master Roger!" she muttered. "Come still."

She hobbled around to the rear of the cottage and paused to draw aside a branch. Roger cautiously peered through the leaves, and a hiss like that of an angry snake sounded within.

"If I didn't know it was a bird I should think there was a snake or a cross cat in there," said Roger, after he had had a look at the small but spirited bird-mother. "What ever makes her do that, Mother Izan?"

Old Izan put out a gnarled hand to feed the titmouse a few live insects. "Same as an old woman don't mind folk saying she's a witch so they let her alone, mayhap," she said. "You'd not reach your hand in there if 'twas an adder's nest, I reckon."

"I'm teaching Eleanor all the birds' names," went on Roger, quite at his ease, munching a bit of flag-root. "They don't have the same names here that they do in Normandy, you know. Old Jehan--the gardener that used to know Eleanor's grandfather--taught me all their names when I was there. The nuthatch is Pic Macon, and the mum-ruffin is Pendolin, and the robin is Marie-Godrie. I'm going to show Eleanor the nest next time we come, if you don't mind."

To the surprise of everybody old Izan rode up the castle mount one day on a borrowed donkey. "Howel he loaned it to me," she explained dryly. "Seems like he has less fear of witches since little Gwilym began to fat up. I have secret things to speak of to my lord, Master Roger. Will 'ee take him word?"

In private, with only Sir Walter and Lady Philippa to hear, the old woman told her secret.

"'Tis the Fairies' Well that drags down your wall," said she. "My grandfather told me the tale, and he had it from his father. The outlet is a hidden stream that runs underground to the river, and not the stream in the marsh as folk think. The underground channel goes under a corner of your mount. When the snows melt and the waters are strong in mountain and in valley, then rises the water in this channel, deep under the mount, and heaves at the rocks above it and throws down your wall. That is all the witchcraft of it. So long as 'twas your stones and battlements that fell I cared no whit, but when my lady told me that she would have her garden there I could not bear to think of the peril for her and the younkets. I am no witch, my lord, unless it be Satan that gives us to know more than others. But I have hated the Normans who came here to steal our land, and have helped my people to harass them in years gone by. All but you and Sir Hugh l'Estrange, they have despoiled and plagued the folk. But build no wall above the stream, for 'twill fall--'twill fall--'twill fall. The waters will pull it down."

The knight sat thinking, his hands on the arms of his tall carved chair.

"I am not so sure," he said. "Maybe we can lift the curse on the mount and make the wall secure. You shall dwell in peace by your well so long as you may live, and your children after you, if you will show me where this channel goes and keep the secret. Tis in my mind that it is best to keep it secret still."

The old woman looked up with bright inquiring eyes.

"See you," the knight went on, "if we dig a channel to let the waters run to the river by a shorter swifter way there will be no more trouble. I think that we will make an excuse of draining the marsh. Then if we can, when the underground way is no more the channel of the stream, we will wall it in to make a secret passage from the castle in time of need. You have kept the secret so long that I may trust it with you--and there will be no more talk of the powers of evil taking toll of my people."

Sir Walter rose and went his way, and in due time consulted with his head mason about the canal to the river. But Lady Philippa came and took both

old Izan's work-hard hands in hers, and thanked her, with tears in her eyes. Thereafter no more masonry fell above the hidden waters, and the cottage by the Fairies' Well was left in peace.

LULLABY OF THE PICT MOTHER

Hush thee, my baby O! never thee cry,
Cradled in wicker, safe nested so high.
Never gray wolf nor green dragon come near,--
Tree-folk in summer have nothing to fear.

Hee-o, wee-o, hear the wild bees hummin',
See the blackcock by the burnie drummin',--
Wattle-weaving sit we snug and couthie,--
Hee-o, wee-o, birdling in our boothie!

Hush thee, my baby O! dark is the night--
Cuddle by kiln-ring where fire burns bright.
Trampling our turf-roof wild cattle we hear--
Cave-folk in winter have nothing to fear.

Kling-clang, ding-dong, hear the hammers clinking--
Stone pots, iron kettles, copper cups for drinkin'!
Elf-shots for bowmen plough a mighty furrow--
Hee-o, wee-o, foxling in our burrow!

Hush thee, my baby! The Beltane's aglow,
Making the deasil the wiseacres go.
Brewing our heather-wine, dancing in round--
Earth-folk are we, by her spells are we bound.

Hee-o, wee-o, hear the pipes a-croonin',
Like the dragon's beetle-wings a-droonin',
Dyeea guard us from the Sword-man's quellin',--
Hee-o, wee-o, bairnie in our dwellin'!

Hush thee, my baby O! hear the dogs bark,
Herdin' the lammies home out o' the dark.
Cradled and christened frae goblin's despite,
House-folk we hear the kirk bells through the night.

Hee-o, wee-o! hear the cricket chirrin',
Hear auld Bawthrens by the ingle purrin',--
Christ us keep while daddie's gone a-huntin'!
Hee-o, wee-o, bonnie Babie Buntin'!

The winds and the waters our Father shall praise,
The birds, beasts and fishes shall tell o' His ways.
By seashore and mountain, by forest and ling,
O come all ye people, and praise ye our King!

THE WOLVES OF OSSORY

Philosophers generally incline to the opinion that the werewolf has no tail. Therefore, this being the sign--"

"Nennius positively states that in certain Irish families, the power to change at will into a wolf--"

"And who knows how numerous may be these abominable wizards?"

Padraig, the scribe, sat listening intently while the company around the guest-house fire discoursed in monk-Latin of werewolves in Ireland. "In saecula saeculorum"--"ab incunabilis horrendum"--"quocunque nomine notandum"--"coram diabolo"--the sonorous many-syllabled phrases clattered like the noise of rooks in treetops. It was January, the "wolf-month" of old English shepherds. Meadows ran floods of icy half-melted snow; mountain winds were screaming about the cloisters, and for two days travelers had been weather-bound at the Abbey.

Some time before, there had been rumors of wolves infesting the hills and displaying in their forays an all but human boldness and cunning. Then other tales began to be whispered. The peasantry huddled early about their turf-fires, and the shepherds of the Abbey sought counsel from their superior. They got small comfort from the Abbot, who curtly ordered them to attend to their duty and avoid vain babblings.

All the same, among the manuscript volumes in the nest-egg of a library the monks possessed, there were chronicles that mentioned the werewolf. Marie de France in her "Lays" included the Breton romance of Bisclaveret, the loup-garou. The nerves of the weaker ones began to play them tricks. It was less and less easy to keep unbroken the orderly round of monastic life.

This little religious community, toiling earnestly and faithfully under wise direction, might in time bring some comfort and prosperity into a desolate land. Ireland had once been known as the Isle of Saints. Now, despoiled by warring kings, pagan Danes and finally the Norman adventurers under Strongbow, the people were in some districts hardly more than heathen. This Abbey, set by Henry Plantagenet in a remote valley, was like a fort on the frontier of Christendom. The people were sullen, suspicious, ignorant, and piteously poor. To deal with them demanded all that a man had of courage, faith and wisdom. And now came these rumors of men-wolves.

When the floods had gone down and the guests departed, Brother Basil in the scriptorium found Padraig diligently at work on a new design for the border of the manuscript he was illuminating. The central figure was that of a wolf crouching under a thorn-bush to slip out of the shaggy skin

which disguised his human form. Under his feet lay a child unconscious. At a distance could be seen the distracted mother, and other wolves pursued terrified people flying to shelter. Once, before he came to the Abbey, Padraig had been chased by wolves, and had spent the night in a tree. He drew his wolf with a lifelike accuracy, inspired by the memory of those long, cold hours under a winter moon.

Instead of pausing with a word of criticism or suggestion, as usual, Brother Basil took up the drawing and put it in his scrip. All that he said was, "Find another design, Padraig, my son."

To others Padraig might seem an unruly spirit, neither to command nor to coax, but the word of Brother Basil was his law and his gospel. He began to draw new figures on fresh parchment, but he could not quite put out of his mind the unlooked-for fate of his wolf. Current gossip often gave hints for the work of the illuminators, and he knew the work had been good.

It was plain enough that Brother Basil was in one of his absent-minded fits. There was no beguiling him into talk at such times. If any of those under his direction presumed upon his mood to do careless or ill-judged work, they found his eye as keen and his word as ready as usual. But his mind--his real self--was not there. Padraig wondered whether this could have any connection with the unlucky picture.

Next day there was deeper concern in the scriptorium. Brother Basil was not present at all. The work went on under Brother Mark, the librarian, but the heart of it was not the same. The untiring patience, brilliant imagination and high ideals of the man who was not only their master but their friend, had made him the soul of the little group of artists. He could not be away for a morning without every one feeling the difference. At times he had gone afield for a day or even longer, searching for balsams, pigments, minerals and other things needed for the work, but he had nearly always taken Padraig with him. This time he had gone alone.

Padraig was as curious as a squirrel and as determined as a mink, and he wished very much to know what this meant. He did not exactly believe the werewolf story, although it had so impressed him that he could not help making the picture; but he did not like to think of it in connection with the mysterious absence of Brother Basil. A priest of the Church might be able to defy a loup-garou, but if the wolves were real ones they might not know him from any ordinary man.

There is no land so full of fairy-lore and half-forgotten legends as Ireland. Princes in their painted halls and slaves in their mud cabins listened to the shanachies or wandering story-tellers, with wonder, terror and delight. Cluricaunes, banshees, giants, witches, monsters, pookas and the little red-capped people of the fairy rings, were known to the dwellers in many a wattled hut where Padraig had slept. Old people who spoke no language but their own luminous Irish winged his young imagination with tales far more marvelous than those of Nennius, the monk of Bangor.

Still, Padraig had never himself seen any of these extraordinary beings. He also suspected that Brother Basil would not vouch for the truth of everything in the Latin books he taught his pupils how to read.

Days passed, and Brother Basil had not returned. The uneasiness among the monks was growing. It was said that the Abbot himself was as much in the dark as they were. Padraig had just made up his mind that he could endure it no longer, when the Abbot sent for him.

It had been decided, Padraig learned, that he, as Brother Basil's wonted companion on such excursions, would have the best chance of finding him now. All that any one knew was that he had gone out of the great gate one morning early, and no one had seen him since.

"Nobody would," said Padraig, "if he went straight north into the hills. No one lives near the old road through the forest."

It was in that direction that all the wolf-tracks had led from the sheep-fold, and the country was a wilderness of marsh and mountain. The Abbot looked at the boy keenly, kindly.

"Are you willing to go alone?" he asked.

"It is the best way," Padraig replied quickly. "One can get on faster,-- and there are not many here who can climb like him. I think he must have met with an accident far from any dwelling."

"He is well beloved by the people. If any one had found him we should have heard. And you have no fear?"

Padraig hesitated. "There are many frightful things in the world," he said slowly. "Long ago I knew that if I let myself fear, fear would be my master all the days of my life. But I am not like the others. I am his dog. I will find him if I live."

"Go, my son, and God be with you," said the Abbot solemnly. And Padraig went.

He took three days' provision in a leathern bag, and a pike such as the countrymen used, and headed straight toward the hills. He knew that copper was to be found in some parts of the range, but why Brother Basil should go there alone, particularly just at this time, Padraig could not see.

He trotted over the slopes of tilled land near the Abbey, forded the river, circled a pond, and crossed a bog by froglike leaps from hassock to hassock. In time he came to the base of a steep rocky height, almost a precipice. On the left was a black mud-hole; to the right were craggy masses of rock. A long slanting break in the cliff led upward to the left. He thrust his staff in this and began to climb.

Thus far there was no choice, for this was the only direction Brother Basil could have taken without some one having seen him on the way. From the height it might be possible to make observations.

Only a gossoon of the hills could have gone up the face of the rock as Padraig did, and he presently found himself on a ledge about twenty feet up, above the quagmire. It was less than a foot wide at first, but widened toward the left, and seedling trees had formed a growth which appeared to merge into the densely wooded hill beyond. He pushed his way along this insecure foothold until the trees began to thin as if there were an open space beyond. Then directly in front of him sounded the unmistakable snarl of a wolf.

There was no time to think. He braced himself against the cliff, and grasping his pike, awaited the assault of the beast. Either he or the wolf, or both together, would be tumbled into the slough. But there followed only a guttural word of command in Irish. Then a voice that he knew called, "Padraig, my son, is that you?"

Nothing in heaven or earth could have stopped Padraig then. He broke through the thicket into the clearing, and halted, breathless and amazed.

Brother Basil, unharmed and serene, sat upon a rude wooden bench at the entrance of a cave, and around him were gathered wolves and wolf-like human beings clad in wolf-pelts. One, who seemed the leader, stood erect, broad-shouldered and muscular, in a mantle made of the hide of a giant wolf, the head shaped into a helmet to be drawn mask-like down over the face. A fire smoldered in the cave's black throat, and meat--mutton-bones--roasted on a sharpened stake thrust into a crevice of the rock. An old woman, wasted and wrinkled, wrapped in a yellow-gray wolfskin lined with lamb's wool, lay on a pile of leaves near the fire, and savage heads emerging from the undergrowth might have been those of wolves, or of men in the guise of wolves.

In the craziest legends of the chronicles there was no such scene as this. For one whirling moment Padraig believed everything he had heard or read of werewolf or of loup-garou. In the name of Saint Kevin, what could this be but the very lair of the beast? Yet Brother Basil showed neither fear nor aversion. Padraig knelt to kiss the outheld hand.

"Father," he faltered, "they sent me to find you."

"It is well that you have come," the monk answered with his untroubled smile, "you and no one else. I stumbled upon this place,--really stumbled, for a stone rolled under my foot,--and here I had to stay until this troublesome lame knee would permit me to walk."

"That is not the whole of it," growled the leader of the wolf-people. "Our dogs wined him, and had he been like any other monk who ever told beads he would have been pulled down. But he spoke to them in our own tongue, and my mother, hearing his voice, would have him come to her, for she had seen no priest for many years. When he heard our story he said that he would be our friend. And so he would, I believe, had we been what the foolish have thought us."

"Then," stammered Padraig, "it is not true that--that--"

"That the loup-garou is abroad in the land?" finished Brother Basil with delicate scorn. "No. Wolves are wolves, and men are men,--and some men are thieves."

"He means," snapped the wolf-man, "that one of your own stewards opened the gates to us, using our tracks to hide his own."

Padraig grinned knowingly. "Simon," he said. "Simon."

"Even so," said Brother Basil.

"He was very zealous about those wolves," said Padraig, reflectively, "especially about using spiritual weapons and not slings and spears against them. But how--"

"It was the thieving of young lambs of the choicest breed that set the shepherds to thinking there must be more than wolves abroad," the wolf-leader went on. "But for your Simon, with his long tongue, they might have driven us away, for Abbot Cuthbert is no coward, nor has he patience with cowards. But Simon came upon us one night, when we had broken into the sheep-fold and were making off, and he was not too frightened to choose for himself out of what was left. Then when we came again he gave us the meat we came for, taking certain fine fleeces and lambskins for himself. We stole as the wild creatures do, for food; we have no use for parchments or carded wool. We killed as they kill, to fend off our enemies. The Danish sea-wolves and the armored wild beasts of Strongbow and de Lacy hunted us as if we were wolves indeed. What could we do but hunt as the wolves hunt, snatch our meat where we could, hide like foxes in the holes of the mountain, make ourselves dreaded that we might live, and not die? The Normans brought to Dermot MacMurragh two hundred heads of the men of Ossory for his delight. All my mother's children were killed by them save only myself. Well for you that you are no Norman, young clerk with the red head, or not the word of a hundred priests had saved you."

"And sooner or later the Norman cross-bows would find you, even as they search out hart or heron," interposed Brother Basil sternly. "I have warned you, Ruric, that this harrying and plundering must cease. Turn from your wickedness and bear yourselves hereafter as Christian men, and your souls shall live. And because ye were sorely tried, with God's help a way may be opened for you to escape your enemies."

"Padraig, you see here a remnant of the men of Ossory, whom the Normans drove into the inhospitable haunts of the forest. The quarry of that evil hunting ran wild like the dogs who followed their masters. As the country grew more settled, these half-bred wolf-hounds found out the sheepfolds, and led their masters to the spoil."

"Even a Norman gives the road to the werewolf," said the Ossorian with a harsh laugh. "The mercy they deny to man or wolf, they granted us when they thought us neither man nor wolf. Aye, we chased them roaring to the very gates of their castles. Had our own people known the truth some of them might have betrayed us, being very poor. Therefore, we made it

easiest for them to keep within doors after nightfall, and in this the priests and monks were of great help. Until you, Father, came to seek us out, believing that God had thought even for a man who had lost his human birthright, none hunted or hindered us. We were the masters, being without hope and without fear of God or man."

"Peace, my son," said Brother Basil gently. "Padraig, you will go to the Abbot and tell him what you have seen, and ask him of his charity to reveal nothing until I return. I would send him a letter, had I not lost my scrip with my tablets in my encounter with the dogs. Things being as they were, it would not have been safe to send any of Ruric's folk with a message."

"No,--not with Simon watching the gate," agreed Padraig, cheerfully. "I wonder does he know how many lies he has told in this matter?"

"He will have enough to do in accounting to the Abbot for those that are known," said Brother Basil with a certain edge to his voice that Padraig knew well. "I think, however, that he really believes he has had dealings with the werewolf. There are men who would run, shaking with terror, to pledge their souls to the foul fiend if they saw their profit in it. If he knew the truth he could sell his knowledge easily, and I am not disposed to undeceive him now. Since Ruric gave me his promise to end this evil I have thought much of the matter, and I believe that the Abbot will approve my plan. Let him send men with a hurdle to the foot of the cliff tomorrow. No one need be told more than that I am lame through an accident."

"Some of them will look foolish when they hear that," Padraig observed with satisfaction. "I grieve for your lameness, Father, and yet I could leap and sing all the way home for joy that it is not as we feared."

"There would be naught to laugh at if any other man had found us out, I warrant you," Ruric said gruffly. "The Father won my promise from me by his gentle and comforting words to my old mother in her distress, for she feared to die, knowing how we had lived. I had not thought there could be such fearless faith and kindness in any man. Say to your Abbot moreover that if he, or you, or any of your folk play us false they will find that a werewolf can hunt down anything that runs."

"If I deceived ye," Padraig answered gravely, "I would throw myself straightway into the river to cheat your vengeance." As he tightened the straps of his sandals he looked once more at the strange and savage assembly. There were some thirty men and women and several half-grown youngsters, garbed in wolfskins so shaped as to leave them free to run or climb. Shoes were skilfully fashioned like a great wolf-paw; skins were joined so cunningly that when the wearer loped along a hillside in the chill pale gold of the winter sunset, or skulked among the shadows of summer woods, any one would swear that what he saw was a lurking wolf. The wolf-mask with its long muzzle and furry ears concealed the face, the unshorn beards and hair mingled with the shaggy shoulder-fur of the tunics. A shepherd looking for missing lambs would find only wolf-tracks to guide him. Traps had been sprung or smashed, storehouses rifled, watchdogs killed. Even the hard-headed and harder-hearted Norman huntsmen

turned back one day, when they discovered their hounds baying at the foot of a tree.

Padraig knew all about the slaughter done by Dermot MacMurragh and his Norman allies, up and down Ossory. Fierce in their despair, vengeful in their cunning, these refugees had run wild like their dogs. The huge untamed brutes were stronger than collies and wiser than wolves, and nothing could have kept them from raiding any sheepfold that they scented.

The Abbot heard Padraig's story through without comment, his eyes blazing under their shaggy brows. If any one but Brother Basil had asked him to stay his hand, he would not have given two thoughts to it, but it was Brother Basil, and the matter must be considered.

"These men," he said grimly, "are outlaws, red-handed robbers. They have broken the law of God and man. They deserve justice, not mercy."

"If they can be caught," ventured Padraig.

"You think they cannot be taken?"

Padraig shook his head. "I stood as near them as I am to you, and I did not see them until they wished to be seen. They run like foxes and climb like cats. They will be killed or kill themselves, every man and woman of them, rather than be taken. Were it not better they should live like christened souls than be hunted like beasts?"

The Abbot rose and began to pace the floor. "Go, my son," he said not unkindly, "and send Simon, the steward, to me."

But Simon was not to be found. Brother Mark, the librarian, being of a distrustful disposition, had been asking many questions of late regarding the parchments prepared for the scriptorium. Simon had perhaps taken fright. He had not returned, in any case, from the nearest market-town, whither he had gone that morning. When it was found that everything upon which he could lay his hands had gone with him, some of the brethren were inclined to think the whole werewolf panic an invention of the steward's to hide his thieving. Padraig went to the foot of the cliff, accompanied by two men with a hurdle, and found Brother Basil safe and in good spirits, but neither wolf, wolfling nor wolf-man was to be seen. Not so much as the sound of a wolf's howling was heard about the sheep-folds, and shepherds and sheep-dogs tended the lambs that spring undisturbed. There were those who said that the werewolves had been driven away by the prayers of Brother Basil when he visited the forest. After awhile a legend grew up and was told to the Welsh clerk Giraldus, about a werewolf who met a priest in the forest and begged him to give Christian aid and comfort to his dying mate. The story goes that the priest remained all night conversing with the unfortunate man, who behaved rather as a man than as a wolf.

When spring stirred the travel on the Irish roads a party of forest folk appeared one day at the Abbey and asked for baptism. Their children had, it appeared, grown up in the wilderness without knowledge of religion.

Such things were not unheard of in those days, and after baptism the party went down to the seaport and took ship for England, where they lived for some years in the service of a Norman knight, Hugh l'Estrange. When finally a sort of peace was patched up in Ireland between the Normans and the Irish chiefs, Ruric and his folk returned. But no more was heard of the wolves of Ossory.

ST. HUGH AND THE BIRDS

When good Saint Hugh of Lincoln
Was a boy in Avalon,
He knew the birds and their houses
And loved them every one,
Merle and mavis and grosbeak,
Gay goshawk, and even the wren,--
When he took Saint Benedict's service
It wasn't the least different then!
"They taught me to sing to my Lord," quo' he,
"And to dig for my food i' the mould
And whithersoever my wits might flee,
To come in out o' the cold."

When wise Saint Hugh of Lincoln
Was a bishop wi' crosier tall,
A wild swan flew from the marshes
Over the cloister wall,
Crooked its neck to be fondled--
Giles, that was vain of his wit,
Said, "Here is a half-made Bishop!"
--But the Saint never smiled a bit!
"My swan will fight for his lord," quo' he,
"And remember what he has heard.
He flies to my gatepost and waits for me--
My friends, make a friend of the bird!"

VIII

THE ROAD OF THE WILD SWAN

"Four larders God gave man, four shall there ever be--
The mountain, the valley, the marsh, and the sea."

Roger hummed the old rhyme absent-mindedly and then took to whistling the air, while his small strong fingers pulled and knotted at the hawk's lure he was making. Just now the training of young falcons was absorbing all of his leisure time. The falconer, Marcel, had showed him how to make the lure, which was shaped something like a pair of wings made of quilted leather and thickly fledged with the wing-feathers of game-birds. When the

falconer, who carried it fastened to his wrist by a long cord, gave it a peculiar toss in the air, it looked very like a flying bird. He did this, giving at the same time a certain call, when he wished to bring back the hawk or falcon after flight.

This particular lure was intended for the education of a young merlin of great beauty and promise, destined for Eleanor's use. The merlin was a type of falcon well adapted to a lady's purpose, and hawking parties were common among the Norman-English families of the neighborhood--often including dames and demoiselles who flew their own falcons. Roger was rather proud of the fact that Eleanor could ride as well almost as he could, and was quite as fearless. The bright-eyed sleek-plumaged Mabonde had been her pet for weeks, and would already answer her call and eat from her hand. The little round bells of silver, the jesses and hood of Spanish leather, for the falcon's hunting-gear (Sir Walter's gift) were laid away in Eleanor's own coffret. She looked forward happily to riding forth some day with the falcon perched on her small gloved fist, alert for flight.

"Roger," she said, frowning a little in her puzzle, "that song is true enough, about the mountains and the valleys and the sea--the river, that is,--but what do we get out of the marsh? You can't even go in there with a boat."

Roger sloped whistling and gave the matter thought. "We get something out of it when we go hawking," he decided. "Hérons and swans and ducks and wild geese,--widgeon,--all sorts of water-birds nest there. Maybe there used to be other game--when they made the song."

Most of Sir Walter's domain was fertile valley, dense forest or barren moorland, but there was an area of marsh whose usefulness was not yet clear. A swampy shallow strip was thick with osiers from the blown catkins of the pollard willows; reeds grew thick as wheat and higher than a man's head--if any man could have walked on the black oozy quagmire; and as Roger had said, the water-fowl, secure from dogs or bowmen, were nested in that wet paradise by scores. There was a heronry among the trees on the edge of it, but otherwise the marsh was not used save as a storehouse for the basket-makers. They made paniers, hampers, mews or wicker cages in which the hunting birds were kept when moulting, and even small boats from the osiers and reeds. But the greater part of the swamp was impassable to a boat and too insecure for foot-travel. In very rainy weather any one looking down upon it from a height could see that there was a sort of islet in the middle, but no one could have reached it with a boat unless in flood-time; and in very dry weather, when some of the ridges lay uncovered, the water-channels became thick black mud.

Nothing in all this, however, gave serious cause for uneasiness. A natural preserve for game-birds was a good thing to have. Forty or fifty varieties of water-fowl were found on Norman tables at one time or another. The objection to that marsh was that it was too convenient a refuge for runaways.

The serfs upon the land were not slaves, in the sense of being bought and sold like cattle. They belonged with the land. A nobleman who became owner

of an estate took over with it the right to the obedience and service of its people. When he had a proper sense of his own obligations there was very little trouble, as a rule. If the shock-haired peasants toiled and sweated over the building of a castle, their own thatched cottages were so much the safer from invading enemies. If they paid rent in grain, cattle and fowls they shared in the feasting and gayety on any great occasion. The castle, with its large household and numerous guests, was a market for the neighborhood. It gave the people a chance of winning a better living than the stubborn soil alone would yield. Children growing up knew that if a boy could ride or fight or do any sort of work especially well, his lord would have use for him; if a girl could spin, weave, sew or had a knack with poultry, her lady would have a place for her. The country folk hereabouts had grown proud of belonging to the Giffard lands.

There were exceptions. One was Tammuz at the Ford. He and his black-avised kinfolk had little to do with the villagers, and the village had even less to do with them. It was said that they occasionally helped themselves to a sucking-pig, a fowl, or other produce, and if punishment was attempted, were none too good to burn ricks and maim cattle. It was said also that they had a hiding place in the swamp.

If the marsh became a den of runaway serfs it would not be well for the peace of the neighborhood. Sir Walter Giffard's patience was growing short. He thought of draining the marsh if possible, when the reeds could be burned and the land reclaimed.

In this way many a fenny district of England had been made into fat meadow-land by patient and efficient monks. The knight was glad to encounter one day in a neighboring castle a Carthusian prior whom he had once known in Normandy,--Hugh of Avalon. He invited this churchman to visit him and discuss this and more important matters. It so happened that soon after his arrival Marcel the falconer, Eleanor and Roger, and the squires, Ralph Courtenay and John Lake, were going to try the young falcons on the border of the marsh. There was nothing strange in Sir Walter Giffard suggesting that he and Prior Hugh ride along with the party, for hawking was a sport considered very suitable for churchmen. But on the way to the marsh the knight and the Prior paid little attention to the diversion of falconry. They were deep in consideration of the best way to drain the swamp and deal with it generally.

Eleanor's heart beat fast as they neared the heronry. It was not a heron, however, which claimed the maiden flight of Mabonde. It was a woodcock flushed in the edge of a copse. Instantly Roger unhooded the cherished hunting-bird, Eleanor gave her a toss into the air, and both sat their horses, eagerly watching her flight. Aloft she soared, the little bells singing like fairy chimes--then dropped like a plummet. There was a ripple in the undergrowth where she pounced, she was recalled to her perch, and presently Marcel, smiling broadly, came up with the woodcock, its gray-brown feathers hardly even ruffled, though it was quite dead.

Then Eleanor remembered something. "Oh!" she said pitifully. "O-h!"

She was recalling a summer day when she and Roger had startled a mother

and her chicks from their nest of dead leaves among the grass, the cleverness with which the tiny balls of fluff had matched themselves with the foliage and the utter audacity of the mother bird as she carried them off one by one to safety, under the very eyes of her giant foes. And now she was setting Mabonde to kill those dainty chicks for her own pleasure!

Roger had gone off with the squires after a tercel of which great things were expected, but Sir Walter Giffard, coming up just then, caught sight of his daughter's woe-begone face. "What is the matter, my little maid?" he asked.

"Nothing," Eleanor answered, swallowing with some difficulty and winking very fast, "but--I--don't think I care to hunt any more to-day, father. Will you please take Mabonde?"

The knight's eyebrows lifted rather quizzically, but he did not question this sudden decision. "Ride with me instead, daughter," he said kindly, and Eleanor, very subdued and thoughtful, paced along by her father's side.

On the edge of the fen a cottager came out to beg audience of the knight, and the Prior began talking with Eleanor about the birds of that region. She found that he knew them both by their French and English names, and seemed to love them well. He told her that in the Carthusian monastery he lived, as did the other monks, in a little cell opening on a narrow garden-plot. In this garden he toiled during certain hours each day, tending the pulse, kale, and herbs which made a great part of his food. One evening a little bird came to share his simple supper, and returned each day. He fed her, and she earned her food by keeping his garden clear of grubs, worms and insects. Then for a long time she did not appear. He feared she had been killed, but at last she came proudly back with three nestlings just able to fly. This monk had always from his boyhood had bird-companions. The latest was a wild swan that came out of the marshes to follow him about. When he went away the swan would disappear in the marsh, but watched for his return and was always there to welcome him.

"Sometimes I think," he added, half to Eleanor and half to her father, "that there are people like that in this ancient stubbed land--men like the bittern and the eagle, who will not be tamed. They come to you sometimes, but they will not be driven."

"I see," said the knight thoughtfully. "But what of a man who will take a gift with one hand and thief with the other?"

"Some men," said Hugh of Avalon, "are your friends because you have done them service, but now and then one is bound to you by service he has done you--and that is the stronger tie. My swan would not love me as he does if he came only to be fed."

The cottager had been complaining that Tammuz and his tribe had been destroying his crops, and wished them punished. The knight had ridden over to see, and came back doubtful. He said to the cottager that it did not seem to him like the work of a spiteful neighbor. Was it not possible that

some four-footed creature had ravaged the crops? The cottager did not believe that it was. He was sure it was Tammuz. Neither knew that a lean black-haired peasant, lying along close to the limb of a great beech tree, had heard every word of the conversation and also witnessed the little scene with the falcon.

The marsh was very dry, and Sir Walter had a mind to ride into it a little way and see how far one could really go. If wild hogs were rooting about the place it would be well to know it. Bidding Eleanor wait for him in the tiny clearing, he and the Prior pushed their horses in among the reeds where a ridge offered a fair foothold. Marcel, the squires and Roger were not far off, having great sport.

Roger was rather disappointed in Eleanor. If she objected to killing things, why had she been so happy to come, and so fond of her falcon? The truth was that Eleanor had never thought of Mabonde as a cruel bird. It was the nature of a falcon to kill its own food. The spice of danger in the keen talons and fierce beak made her pet even a little more fascinating. But it seemed different, somehow, when she herself sent the merlin forth to kill. As she sat waiting for her father, she felt that never again would she wish to fly falcon at quarry.

There was a grunting and squealing, a rustle and crash in the tangled undergrowth of the bog, and an immense black boar stumbled out into the open and charged straight at Eleanor's horse. The startled animal reared and sprang, Marcel and the squires spurred in toward the clearing and checked the great brute on that side, and Eleanor had all she could do to avoid being thrown directly into the path of the furious beast. It seemed incredible that anything so heavy on such short legs and small hoofs could move so quickly. The wild boar's tusks, several inches long and sharp as razors through constant tearing and whetting, slashed viciously at the terrified horse, and in that cramped space his rage was as deadly as a lion's. Then a roughly-clad, wild-looking peasant dropped from a limb on the very back of the creature and sunk his knife to the hilt in its thick bristling neck. With a snort it bolted into the marsh, just as Sir Walter and the Prior came out a little distance away and the falconer and the squires came up on the other side. The peasant, who had swung himself up into another tree, slid to earth and stood staring sulkily, as if half minded to follow his late adversary to cover.

The knight and the Prior were pale as ghosts, Marcel was shaking from head to foot, and the lads gazed at Eleanor as if she had come back from the dead. She almost had. It was an exceedingly narrow escape. Any one but a very good rider must have been thrown. The wicked tusks of the wild boar will easily kill a strong hunting-dog, and the tough, hard hide was almost like armor. Rarely did a boar-hunt end without the killing of at least one dog and the wounding of a hunter. If there had been the slightest reason to think that such danger lurked in the swamp, the knight would never have left Eleanor where he did. But the herd of wild hogs had evidently been living on the high ground in the middle, and not come out until this drought gave them foothold.

Sir Walter beckoned to Tammuz, and the man came like a half-tamed dog,

eyeing his lord warily. "You have given me more than mine own life this day, Tammuz of the Ford," he said a trifle unsteadily. "Kneel." And then and there Tammuz received his freedom and a hide of land for his own and his children's after him.

In the following months many hidden things came to light. Tammuz and his people had enjoyed many a good meal of the flesh of the wild hog, which is better than that of common swine. They had not encouraged strangers to come about, partly from a natural dislike to company and partly because they did not wish to be held responsible for anything that might happen. A boar-hunt, even with the big powerful mastiffs and the best of steel spears, was dangerous enough to be called the sport of kings, and it was only through long practice and unusual strength and agility that the marshmen had been able to kill any of the herd at all.

The first time that Tammuz ever entered the castle was on the night of the grand boar-hunt after the marsh was drained, when Sir John Courtenay, Sir Guilhem de Grantmesnil, Sir Yves de Vescey, and King Henry himself with several of his courtiers, went forth to slay the monster of the marsh, and the head of the three-hundred-pound brute was borne in triumph into the hall. The second time was on a dark night a little later, when he slipped in at the gate, no one knew how, and asked to see Sir Walter Giffard.

It was a serious tale he had to tell. The Welsh were on their way to invade England, knowing that the King was between Shrewsbury and Chester and had no very great force with him. Tammuz was among the disaffected peasants who had been relied upon to aid the enemy. But for a long time now he had had growing doubts about lending his aid to such work. He was neither blind nor foolish, and he could not help seeing that the people of the farms and hamlets dwelt in greater security and comfort than they ever had before that he could remember. He was well aware also that if the Welsh crossed the border the lords of the frontier castles would suffer, whoever else did or did not. When Tammuz thought of the brave and spirited little maiden who had had pity on the woodcock her falcon killed, and her gracious mother who had nursed sick children and heard the troubles of the poor, ever since she came to that rude land, he did not like to think of the torch and the pike of the half-barbaric Welsh let loose upon the valley. Therefore he had finally made up his mind to come and warn his lord of the peril in good season.

The knight wasted no time. He sent swift messengers to rouse the neighboring castles, armed guards turned out to patrol the marches, another messenger rode eastward to call the King and his troops to the threatened border. Moreover, the Norman lords did not wait for invasion; they made the first move themselves. They had no mind to risk their people and their homes if the thing could be avoided. Thanks to Tammuz, they knew in what direction the enemy might be expected, and some of the Welsh chiefs, seeing what was afoot, refused to join in the war at all.

The actual trial of strength took place on bare moorland some ten miles from the castle of the Giffards. From the battlements it was possible to see in a very distant way what went on. Lady Philippa, Eleanor and Roger stood together at a high window, and saw morions glitter in the sun,

lances ranged like an orderly mass of reeds, and at last the King's banner dipping and lifting over the uneven ground as his reinforcements rode up. Then far through the fine cold air came trumpet-calls, and the enemy emerged from their cover in the woods. In comparison with the disciplined and controlled forces of the English, they seemed a motley rabble. Moreover, the Norman crossbowmen and the English archers with their long bows had the pike-bearing Welsh at a terrible disadvantage. This Roger explained, hopping with excitement, for he was full of information gathered from Ralph the bowyer, his firm friend.

The battle was a brief one. Before sunset Sir Walter Giffard and his men came riding home to tell of a speedy and easy victory.

"'Tis all the better," said the knight, as Lady Philippa helped him remove his armor. "There is no use in chasing these half-wild chiefs through their forests. Some day perhaps they will come to us of their own accord. They know now that it is hopeless to attempt to beat us back from our own frontier, and I think they will not readily try it again. There is wisdom in Hugh of Avalon. As he says,--the truest service ever comes by the road of the wild swan."

THE LANCES

Straight stood we with our brethren in the wood--
High-crested, strong, and proud,
Fearing no fury of the threatening storm--
Our chanting voices loud
Rose to the mighty bourdon of the gale,
The yelling tempest or the raging sea,
Chanting and prophesying of great days
In centuries yet to be.

The falcon flying down the windy sky,
The swallow poised and darting in the sun,
The guillemot beating seaward through the mist--
We knew them every one,
And heard from them of trumpets wakening war,
Of steadfast beams that roofed our people warm,
Of ships that blindfold through uncharted seas
Triumphant rode the storm.

Now come we to the battle of our dreams,--
The trumpets neigh, the ranks are closing fast
In that stern silence that men keep who know
This hour may be their last--
That they, like us, may riven and useless lie
Ere once again the bright steel greets the sun.
This only pray we--that we may not die
Until our work be done.

THE SWORD OF DAMASCUS

Dickon the smith stood under the great oak tree that sheltered the forge, weary and sick at heart. There was no better man of his inches in all Sussex, but the world is not always good to see, even at nineteen. Dickon's world had been empty ever since the departure of Audrey of the Borstall Farm, cousin to Edwitha, the wife of his friend Wilfrid the Potter.

Audrey had made one brief visit to her old home since she had gone to be a maid to Lady Adelicia Giffard, and in that time not only Dickon but other youths of the neighborhood had found her comely. Tall and straight and lissome, with the blue eyes and yellow hair of her people, white as milk and fair as a wild rose, she was a girl to be remembered--Audrey. But she cared for none of them and went back to Winchester with her lady. Since that time Sussex had been no home for Dickon.

He had learned all that any smith of those parts could teach him and all that he could teach himself, or he might have set his mind to his work. To Dickon work was more than bread and meat; it was the heart of life. Now his unquiet mind returned to an old ambition of his, to be a master armorer. This desire dated from a day in his early teens, when in his father's absence a Templar stopped to have his horse shod. Dickon could shoe horses as well as anybody. But when the knight wished a bit of repairing done on his helmet it was beyond the lad's knowledge, and the work had to wait until old Adam Smith came back from Lewes.

Meanwhile Dickon had eyed with a great fascination the Templar's sword, a magnificent piece of steel-work, blade and scabbard ornamented with curious inlay-work of gold. He dared not ask about it even if he could have made his question understood. The knight spoke only Norman and a little mixed French and English, and Dickon knew scarcely a word of any language but Saxon. When his father had come home and the knight had gone on his way, Dickon asked eager questions.

"'Tis a sword of Damascus," the old smith said shortly. "Belike he got it where he's been--in the Holy Land."

"Is't holy work then?" The boy knew as much of Palestine as he did of the planet Mars, the folk of his acquaintance being little given to pilgrimage.

Adam Smith snorted. "Nay, 'tis paynim work. Damascus is a heathen city. I mind somebody telling me that the only man that could forge that steel had been carried off to another country, so that no more of it could be made. They have a won'erful knowledge of metal-work, those infidels."

"Belike Satan taught 'em," grunted Wat of the Weald. "I don't hold wi'

such trickery myself."

Adam straightened his back and shook his white head. "Satan never did work as good as yon sword," he chuckled. "'Tis a joy to the touch. Nay, lad, Satan teaches men to be idle--that's his cunning."

Dickon grinned, for Wat was never known to work save when driven, and like many others of his temper, looked at all devices for the increase of output with disfavor. Evidently there was no light on the subject of Damascus blades to be gained here, but the boy never forgot the look of that sword.

As he grew up he saw and heard other things which fitted in with the memory--Toledo blades that were said to be Moorish work, damascened and jeweled daggers, now and then a piece of splendid armor worn in tournaments where royalty itself looked on--Milanese and Spanish work rich with gold. But always the keenest edge and finest steel came of that mysterious heathen forging. Now, thinking of Audrey out in the great world, he determined to see that world for himself and find out whether he, a common smith's son, had any chance of learning the secrets of the Armorer's Guild.

Winchester was a greater city than he had any idea it would be, but he found his way to the house of Lady Adelia only to learn that she had gone to Normandy, taking with her some of her household. Audrey, her own waiting-woman, had gone with her. Dickon went down to Southampton and took passage to Calais. He had not much money, but a smith as good as he was could get a living almost anywhere. There were plenty of English in Normandy, for both that province and Aquitaine were fiefs held by the King of England as a vassal of the King of France. It was often said that the vassal in this case held more land than his lord.

Without much trouble Dickon found the Norman castle he sought, but to his dismay, the lady was just about to set out on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Sir Stephen Giffard, her husband, had been fighting against the Moors in Spain, and she feared that he was dead. She had decided upon this pilgrimage in the hope that her prayers and offerings at the shrine of Our Lady might avail to bring her husband back to her.

The Sussex youth used all his powers of language, which were limited, and all his strength of will, which was great, in trying to induce Audrey to leave service and go home to her people. Audrey was quiet, but she was as set as Blackcap Down.

"'Tis not my own fancy, Dickon," she pleaded at last, her blue eyes dim with tears. "I ha' no love for strange lands,--nor strange folk neither. But my lady has been ever kind to me, and she is in great trouble. If she fall ill on the journey there is none but me that knows her ways. I should ha' no peace if I left her in strange hands. 'Tis my duty, Dickon. There's no two ways of duty for any christened soul."

Dickon grew bolder at the sight of those tears. "Audrey," he said, "when you come back, and your lady is among her own folk again--then will you

break the silver penny with me?"

"Oh," said Audrey shyly and quickly, her eyes downcast, "I'll do that now, if ye like,--Dickon, lad."

So they broke the coin and each kept half, and said farewell, she for the sake of her duty and he for the sake of his own honor, which was bound up with hers. But after she had gone away he was troubled by many doubts whether he should not have held on, and made her come with him in spite of herself.

Meanwhile he had no mind to return to England, and found work where he was. The little shop of Gaston of Abbeville would have interested any lad in love with the armorer's trade, and it had more attraction for Dickon than anything else he had found in that place. Wedged in, like a nutshell in the jaws of a nutcracker, between a round tower built by Rollo's men and the far older wall of a Roman basilica, it was partly built of Norman stone-work and partly of oak. Set close to the old Roman road through Gaul, it was in view of any knight or squire or man-at-arms who went by, and it was so arranged that all the contents could be seen at a glance.

The heavy and bulky forge and tools of an English smithy were not to be seen. Since horses were not shod there, little room was needed, and the armorer could lay his hand on any tool he needed without taking more than a step or two. Hammer, tongs, bellows and other belongings not at the moment in use were hung tidily on the walls. Some of these were most skillfully shaped to their use, and also ornamented with carving on the handles. The carving was not only decorative but was so designed as to give a firmer hold to the hand.

Along the upper part of the rear wall and the end wall on the right, supported on corbels of stone, was a narrow gallery, built of oak, the front carved in a series of open interlacing arches. Inside this were suits of costly armor, and weapons of especial value, which the armorer kept for sale. A flight of steps closed in by a paneled oaken partition descended from this gallery to the ground, and on each step was the straight demure figure of a carved saint in a pointed arch like a shrine. At the foot the stairway was closed by a door of seasoned oak reenforced by wrought iron hinges extending almost across its width. When this door was fastened the treasures in the gallery were safe from thieves. A little wall-shrine of carved, painted and gilded wood, on the opposite wall, held a statuette of Saint Eloi, the patron of metal-workers. In short, the shop, though small, had been made beautiful with the care of one who loved and revered his work.

When Dickon halted there at the close of a dusty summer day Gaston was engaged in some work for a knight of Saint John, which must be done that night and needed four hands in place of two. The armorer was doing it all himself, with the skill of a master-workman, but using much picturesque French language to relieve his mind.

It did not take a minute after Dickon got a hammer in his hand, for Gaston's frown to change to a broad and satisfied smile. Here was a helper

after his own ideas--strong, deft, and no talker. Like many men who love talk for its own sake the master was not fond of chatterboxes. The job was finished in good and workmanlike fashion, and Gaston, who knew some English, went on talking while he attended to other odd matters and waited for his customer.

"If you want to see the world--this is your place. . . . There's not much that goes along this road that doesn't come to Gaston of Abbeville some day. . . . Damaskeening? You'll see as much damaskeened work here as you could in Damascus. . . . Look here, my lad, if you're in want of work, stay with me till snowfall and see the pilgrims, and the knights, and the bowmen, and the free companions with their plunder, go by to the sea. Then ye may go on to Damascus if you're still set on the place, with some hope of not losing your way."

This seemed to Dickon a rather good idea. In his brief sojourn in Abbeville he had come to see the difficulty of travel in a land where no one understands your questions.

It was as Gaston said. People of all races, kinds and conditions traveled the highway that ran past the armorers' shop. Once Guy Bouverel, whom Dickon had met once or twice at Wilfrid's house, gave him surprised and pleased greeting. A little later came Padraig, the Irish clerk, on his way to Rouen. Padraig somehow learned about Audrey in the few hours he spent there.

"I thought 'twas more than hammer and tongs that took you out of Sussex," he said. "I wish ye luck, but there's no knowing, Dickon, what they will do when they are seized with this pilgrimage fever."

"'Tis not the lass, 'tis her lady," Dickon muttered, his head in his hands. "And the worst o't is that I can do nothing but think of her away there among the paynim. A fine lady's train has no call for such as me."

Padraig's brows lifted in humorous but sympathetic understanding. "I see," he said. "I'll tell the maid, if I see her, that she'll find none so well worth her while among Saracens--or pilgrims either."

There was a great jousting at Crecy a little later, and Gaston went there to deal with certain knights and princes among the tilters, and left the shop in Dickon's charge. Restless with the magic of a summer night after he had barred the little place, he wandered away over the white ancient road. He lay down on a grassy bank, where boughs laden with drifting blossoms hung over an orchard wall, and looked up at the stars, thinking.

"'Tis like what they tell of the Saracens' magic," he said half aloud, "this that makes a man do what's clean against his own will."

"Hammer not cold iron, friend," said a deep voice near by. "Saracen magic is naught save the wisdom of necessity, and that we all learn in our time."

Dickon looked up at a tall man in a traveler's cloak, who had come through

the gate in the wall just then. The upper part of the face was hidden by the hood, but the mouth wore a quiet smile. The voice was that of a knight, and Dickon got to his feet and bowed. "I know not what you were thinking of when you spoke of Saracen magic," the stranger went on, "but I would I could find an armorer for a bit of work on my dagger. 'Tis a Damascus blade, but there's no gramarye in it, I promise you."

This was something to do at any rate. "An't please you, my lord," Dickon said quickly, "I am journeyman to Gaston of Abbeville, who is counted the best armorer in these parts. I may be able for the work if 'tis not too skillful."

"I could do it myself," the knight said carelessly, "if I had but the fire and tools. I came but an hour ago, and I must go on to-morrow."

The two went back to the shop, and the fire was kindled, a torch was set in a wrought-iron wall-cresset, and the work begun. Dickon saw with surprise that the knight himself had no small knowledge of the craft of the armorer.

The dagger was of the finest Saracen steel work, the haft inlaid with gold. Inside it the knight wished to conceal some jewels of no very great value, in a hollow made for the purpose and opened by twisting a round boss on the hilt. This was often done by travelers, since a man's dagger was his companion day and night, and in case of disaster he might thus have at hand the means to pay his way.

"That blade," the knight observed, trying its edge, "was the gift of a Saracen emir I made friends with beyond Damascus. Nay, look not so amazed, lad. They are no more wizards than you or I."

He must have divined the questions trembling on Dickon's lips, for when the work was done he still sat in the doorway and seemed in no haste to go. The white moon flooded the place and with the glow of the brazier made curious blended lights and shadows. The knight had thrown aside his cloak, and showed himself bronzed, keen-faced and active, like one who had done his part both in council-hall and camp. "It is like this," he went on, clasping his knee with brown strong hands. "This Christendom of ours is all ringed round with heathenesse--Moors, Danes, Bulgars, Arabs, Turks--peoples white, brown, black, but caring naught for those things which are dear and precious to Christian men and women. I have been where the beacons flashed from hill to hill along the shore of Britain to warn the villages of Danish pirates. I have seen the Moors from Barbary come swarming over the borders of Granada and Andalusia until the Christians were all but driven back into the mountains. Our faith is not their faith, our oaths are not their oaths, nor our ways their ways.

"Now the paynim of the desert live not in towns and cities as we do, but in tents. The wealth of a chief is in his flocks and herds,--sheep and goats, camels, the swift desert horses. The wealth of a sultan is in the lances he can call to his banner in time of war, under their own leaders. There is only one war-cry that makes one host of them all, and that is 'Allah-hu!' Saladin might promise ten times over, and thousands of his

subjects would never know it or be bound by it. And what can you do when a promise is of no value?

"It is the same with the heathen who come raiding over the North Sea. They plunder and pillage as they list, whether it be palace, abbey or nunnery that lies in their way. Honor has no meaning to those who prey on the helpless."

"My lord," said Dickon hesitatingly, "you mean that--that--honor is for all men--though they take no vows?"

The stranger's voice rang like steel on steel. "Honor is for all true men--and women--king or knight, merchant or peasant, bond or free. A slave may be loyal to his master--the master must keep faith with the slave. Christ died for all--for their souls, not their houses of stone or brick or timber. Do you think, if He were on earth now, He would choose to be served only by those of gentle blood?"

This was a new thought to Dickon, though he had always known the stories of the healing of the blind and the leprous, and the birth at Bethlehem. The knight went on, rising and taking up his cloak, "As for the magic you have heard of, it is nothing but the practice of centuries. The desert chiefs, from whom the Moslems are mostly descended, are ever wandering from place to place, where their beasts can find grazing. Hence all their wealth must be carried on pack saddles. They can make with their many-colored shawls and rugs a palace out of a tent pitched for the night. They work leather, iron, brass, because this can be done without long stay in any one place. And when a people can have but few luxuries they grow very skillful in the making of those few. They carry their wisdom in such matters, as they do their wealth, wherever they go, and hand it down from father to son. That is all the sorcery they use.

"I have told you these things because a man should have neither overmuch fear nor any contempt for his enemy, and these paynim are, or may be at any time, our enemies. Our faith must be as this dagger, ready for service by day or night, but for defense, not for assassination. Since Saladin has come to the throne there is a stirring among the tribes that worship the false prophet, and they may be once more dreaming that they may conquer the world for Islam. They can never do it, but they may force us to another Crusade in time. I am on my way to England now to make report to the King of what I have seen. I hope that some day we may meet there. If ever you want work, Sir Gualtier Giffard on the Welsh border will bid you welcome if you say that you were sent by Hugh l'Estrange."

Moved by sudden impulse Dickon told in a few words the story of Audrey's service and their promise. The knight held out his hand in open kindness. "You did well," he said. "Every man who keeps faith with his neighbor, every good soldier, every wise and gentle monk, and more than all, every true woman, is a link in a great chain that makes for the safety of Christendom. A token is a small thing,--yes--but what is our Cross itself but a token? I would wish my own lad Roger to have acted as you did."

AWAKENING

Before the snows are melted that cradle the mountain streams,
Before the bear and the dormouse rouse from their winter dreams,
Before the earliest linnets flutes forth his roundel clear,
There comes an authentic moment that marks the turn of the year.

A brightness in the sunshine, a hint of life in the air,
A soft mist veiling the hilltops that were so brown and bare,
Nothing to note or ponder, nothing to see or hear,--
But there is a mystic difference that marks the turn of the year!

Light as the wings of a sea-mew in the rush of startled flight,
Cool as the touch of clover, shy as the dews of night,
Strong as the love of freedom, sudden as panic fear,
The restless gypsy longing wakes at the turn of the year.

Why do we toil and swelter over the task we hate?
What is to keep us fettered to the benches of sullen Fate?
There is nothing half so fleeting,--there is nothing half so dear
As the unfulfilled desire that comes with the turn of the year!

X

FOOLS' GOLD

"Yes," acknowledged old Tomaso thoughtfully, "I knew Archiater of Byzantium very well at one time,--and yet no one ever really knew much about him. He was more than a clever alchemist,--he was a discoverer of secrets, and a good man. But for all that, he was condemned and executed as a wizard."

Alan of York said nothing for a minute, but his fist clenched where it lay on the table. "How could such a thing happen?" he said at last in a low voice.

"Naturally enough, when wisdom must ever contend against the whelming force of folly. But there is something worse--the will of a ruler seeking to enslave knowledge to his own purpose. A madman with ideals is bad enough, but Barbarossa's son is a diabolically sane person without any. A man is not called 'the Cruel' without reason."

"But what object?" Alan began, and paused.

"Archiater the physician, as I knew him, would have been rather worse than

useless to that prince as I have heard of him," answered the Paduan deliberately. "Such a patron demands creatures who do as they are told,-- which is not the duty of a philosopher. The easiest way to dispose of a man who knows too much is to dub him a wizard. But, of course, all this is merely guessing in the dark.

"The little that I do know is this. When we had been acquainted for about three years he told me that he had been offered the use of a house in Goslar in which he might carry on his experiments privately. The chief inducement, for him, lay in the nature of the country, which is very rich in minerals, and he decided to leave Padua in the hope of making important discoveries in this new field. He went first to Hildesheim and developed a formula for making bronze which is said to be extraordinary, and then began exploring the Harz mountains. He sent me some of the ores he found; it appears that there is nearly everything in those ranges. I heard no more until the news came, in a roundabout way, that he was dead and his ashes cast to the four winds. His writings were supposed to have been burned at the same time, but not all of them were, for three manuscripts at least must have gone to make up the fragments we found among our bezants. I wish for your sake, Alan, my son, that I could tell you more, for I know of no man who would gain more by Archiater's work than you. If he had been your master I think you might have rivaled the Venetians."

Alan was not vain, and he never dreamed that Tomaso thought so highly of his ability. In the Middle Ages the secrets of such arts as glass-making, enameling, leather work, gold and silver work, and the making of dyestuffs, were most jealously guarded. Alan had had two fortunate accidents in his life; he had been taught in the beginning by a master-artist, and later had come upon writings by a still greater genius, the Byzantine philosopher of whom Tomaso had been speaking.

From the first glimpse he had had of the crabbed, clear handwriting, the terse phrases, the daring and independent thought of Archiater, he had been fascinated. Now he had set out to cross the narrow seas and find out what, if anything, remained of the master's life-work.

"May there not have been some friend or pupil," he asked wistfully, "who would have rescued his manuscripts?"

"In that case," Tomaso replied with gentle finality, "I think some of us must have heard of it."

"And yet," Alan persisted, "some one had those parchments--some one who may have received them from Archiater himself."

"Take care," the old man said with a rather melancholy smile. "That a thing is possible and desirable, is no proof that it is true. To search for that man seems to me like hunting the forest for last year's leaves. But here come friends of yours."

Guy Bouverel came springing up the stair, Giovanni and Padraig close behind him. When greetings had been exchanged, and Alan had told the others that he was in London only for a brief stay on his way to France,

Tomaso addressed the young goldsmith.

"Guy," he said, "did you ever ferret out anything more about those parchment scraps we found among the King's coin? You said that you should make some inquiries." "Bezants are bezants and tell no tales," said Guy with a shrug. "And if they did, they might lie, like so many of those who love them. Why, you recall that I repacked that gold in my own chest because I thought one of the clerks was growing too fond of it. I took it as it lay and never looked at the parchments. I met the clerk one day in Chepe and questioned him. He said that the gold was a part of that the King recovered from the London Templars--you know, when he had to come with an armed guard to get his moneys that were stored in their house. Gregory of Hildesheim had something to do with it, for he was very wroth when he found that I had got this particular chest. But he could not have known what these scripts were or he would have kept them in a sealed packet under his own hand."

"He could not have read most of them," said Tomaso. "Archiater usually wrote his diaries in cipher. Who is this clerk?"

"Simon Gastard his name is. He was very anxious to leave England when last I saw him. He was at me to join in a scheme for digging gold out of the Harz mountains--Padraig, what are you grinning at?"

"Only to see how keen is your nose for a thief," Padraig chuckled. "If Simon is after digging gold out of the ground with his hands 'tis the honestest plan he has had this long time. Simon thinks gold is what heaven is made of. He would look at the sunset and calculate what the gold would be worth in zecchins--he would. But why all this talk of the parchments?"

"Because I have a mind to see whether any more of Archiater's work is to be found," said Alan quietly. "It may be a fool's errand, but I could not rest till I had made a beginning."

Three faces looked astonished, sympathetic and interested. Alan had the hearty liking of his friends. They could depend upon him as on the market cross. But they would almost as soon have expected to see that cross set forth on pilgrimage as to find the quiet North Country glassmaker beginning any such weird journey as this.

Tomaso broke the little silence, leaning forward in his oaken chair, his finger-tips meeting. "We may as well sift what evidence we have," he said. "If the manuscripts had been in the hands of any one who knew the cipher he must have done work so far beyond anything else in his craft that it would be heard of. Archiater never made use of half his discoveries--and he was always finding out secrets concerning the crafts. He knew things about glassmaking, enamel-work, dyestuffs, and medicine, that no one else did. He was occupied almost wholly with experiment and research. There are not two such men in a century."

"Giovanni, you are the only one of us who has been beyond the Rhine. Do you know any one there who might possibly aid in this search?"

The Lombard seldom talked unless he was directly addressed. "One man," he said, "might know the truth."

"Would he reply to a letter?"

Giovanni shook his head. "He does not write letters. If I could see him I would ask him, but the air of Goslar is not wholesome for me." He looked at Alan curiously. "Do you think of going there?"

"Why not?" Alan returned.

"There are rather more than half a score of reasons why not," said Giovanni, with a little mocking smile. "Do you speak many foreign languages?"

"Only French."

"And the moment you opened your mouth they would know you for an Englishman. A foreign glassworker searching for the books of a reputed wizard who made the Hildesheim bronze they are so proud of. That would interest the Imperial spies."

"Vanni," said Alan, getting up, "I know well what a hare-brained undertaking this must seem to you. But if you see fit to give me any advice, I shall value it."

The young men took their leave of Tomaso and followed the curving shore of the Thames eastward to the city. "Look you," said Guy presently, "I have a plan--not a very shrewd one perhaps, but you shall judge of that. This clerk, Simon Gastard, knows the country and the language. If his story is true it may be worth looking into. I would not trust him alone with the value of a Scotch penny. But if you were to go with him as my proxy, you would have a chance of talking with this man Giovanni has in mind."

Padraig sniffed. "And Simon would sell ye to the devil if he got his price. 'Tis pure rainbow-chasing, Alan--but I love ye for it."

"Fools are safer than philosophers, in some parts of the world," observed Giovanni dryly. "And they are commoner everywhere. I hear that the Templars are trying to find a tame wizard who can be kept in a tower to make gold."

"Vanni," said Guy demurely, "did you ever, in your travels, hear of any one making gold?"

"No," said the Milanese, "but I have known of a score finding fool's gold, and that's the kind you come on at the end of the rainbow. Alan, if you are resolved on this thing, I will give you a token and a password to a man you can trust."

At London Stone they separated, Giovanni turning toward London Bridge, Padraig wending his way to Saint Paul's, Guy and Alan making their way through clamorous narrow streets to the Sign of the Gold Finch.

"By Saint Loy," said the goldsmith suddenly, "here comes the clerk himself. Gastard," he beckoned to a little threadbare man edging along by the wall, "I have a question to ask about the matter you wot of."

If Alan had heard nothing beforehand he would have taken the man for a fussy, inoffensive little scrivener who would never do more than he was bid--or less. But when they were seated in the private room above the shop, in which Guy kept some of the finest of his gold and silver work, Simon's restless eyes began to glitter, and he reminded Alan of a rat in the dairy.

Guy came at once to the point. Would Simon repeat his story for Alan's enlightenment? Simon would. He related how, when returning from pilgrimage, he had lost his way in the Harz valley and come upon a hermitage where a very old monk lay near death. In gratitude (Simon said) for services to him in his extremity, the hermit had revealed the secret of a rich mine of gold in the mountains. Simon had gone to the mine, secured nuggets of the precious metal, but most unfortunately had shown them to Gregory of Hildesheim, a Templar said to be wise in the arts of alchemy and metal-working. Gregory had seemed interested at first, but afterward had told him that the ore was not gold at all, but a cunning counterfeit devised by Satan. He had not even returned the specimens, but had railed upon Simon for trying to pass them off as gold. That night a heavy snowfall, the first of many, made it impossible to visit the mine again. Now that Gregory was in England Simon wished to go again and secure more of the gold secretly. It was scarcely possible to find the place without direction, but one man, Simon solemnly declared, could, with pick and shovel and leathern bag, bring away a fortune.

"It would be necessary," said Guy, "to purify the gold so far as to make it into rude ingots, if it is, as you say, in the rocks and not in free lumps and particles washed down a stream. You need a companion who understands such work. Now, I cannot take up the matter myself, but my friend here knows enough of metals, though he is no goldsmith, to do that part of the work. Some sort of makeshift laboratory might be arranged for that. Then, if it is really a rich mine, we will see what can be done next. But you will understand that I cannot be expected to undertake any work involving great expense unless I have some other proof than you can give me now. If you will take my friend to this mine, so that he may secure ore enough to make his experiments, and I see the gold for myself, I will pay the cost of the expedition. More than this, it seems to me, you cannot expect."

With this Simon effusively agreed. Alan had been watching Guy's face with interest during the interview. The Londoner's usual debonair manner had become the cool decision of a man with whom it is unsafe to deal slyly.

When Simon's back had vanished in the crowd of Chepe, Guy began rolling up papers and closing books. "That may save you some time and trouble," he said, "if you can stomach his company. I do not believe, you know, that there is any gold in the ledges. Simon knows no more of the nature of metals than Saint Anthony's Pig."

"What is the truth of the matter, do you think?" asked Alan.

"I thought at first that he had invented the whole story. But in that case he would hardly have agreed to my plan so eagerly. It is just possible, of course, that gold is there--it has been found in the Harz. He says that the stuff is not brittle, and can be hammered and cut, which does not sound like an iron ore. And his description of the rocks is too good to be his own fancy. Again, the ore may be 'fool's gold',--a mixture of copper and sulphur. In that case you will know it right enough when you come to the roasting of it. In any case I am interested enough in the tale to take a little trouble, and you and your private treasure-hunt happen to alloy very happily with my curiosity."

"Guy," said Alan, "you may laugh, but your aid means more to me than you know. If the clerk's tale is false you shall be repaid for your outlay."

"Pshaw!" laughed Guy, "a copper mine is good enough to repay me. And then, I take a certain interest in the manuscripts you are after. After all, if you should find them it would be no stranger than those parchments coming to us as they did, through the very hands of both Gregory and Simon. That was a golden jest--but we must keep it hid for awhile. And now, what I know of metals and their ways is at your service."

Behold Alan then, after no more than the usual adventures of a journey, busied with a small furnace in a small stone-floored room over an archway in the walled city of Goslar. It was a late spring and bitterly cold, and the heat of the fire was grateful. Simon had thus far put off taking his companion to see the mine, and Alan had been occupied with fitting up a place in which the ore should be tested when the time came.

Hearing the blare of trumpets, he craned his head out of window, and caught a glimpse of the imperial banner flaunting and snapping in the chill wind. He caught up cap and cloak and ran down the winding stone stairs, coming out upon the market-square just as the guards entered it. So close that Alan could have touched him, there went by a humped and twisted figure with a jester's bells and bauble--a man with a maliciously smiling mouth and wicked, observant, tired eyes. The white pointed beard and worn, lined face belonged to an older man than Alan had expected to see. The eyes met his for a second, he flung his cloak over the left shoulder with the gesture Giovanni had taught him, and a few minutes later an impudent small page pulled his sleeve and whispered that Master Stefano desired to see him.

The boy led him through ancient streets to the entrance of a tall house near the wall, and went off whistling. An old woman opened the door and showed him into a little ante-room where, the jester sat, perched upon the corner of a table. Alan bowed, and waited in silence.

"Very well," said the jester with a laugh. "And now, since we are quite alone, why do you, an honest man, pretend to be the fellow of that rascally clerk?"

Alan always met an emergency coolly. "I did not know the country or the language," he said, "and I took this way of reaching Goslar in the hope of learning the truth about one Archiater of Byzantium."

The jester's high cackling laughter broke in. "Truth from a fool!" he shrilled. "Oh, the wisdom of those who are not fools is past understanding! Why do you rake those ashes?"

"I have read some of his writings," Alan went on undisturbed, "and if there should be more--anywhere--I would risk much for the sake of them."

Stefano shook his head mockingly, and the bells mocked with him. "You English are mad after gold. They say here that Archiater sold his soul for his knowledge."

"That is child's prattle," said the young man a little impatiently. "Gold is all very well, but a man's life is in his work, not his wages. If you can tell me nothing of what I seek, I will not trouble you."

The fool clasped one knee in his long crooked white fingers. "You have no wife, I take it."

"I have not thought about it. But that has nothing to do with secrets of the laboratory."

"Heh-heh! Little you know of women. They have everything to do with a secret. But suppose the manuscripts are worthless?"

"That is not possible," Alan returned. "The lightest memorandum of such a man has value. It is like a finger-post pointing to treasure. There are writings, then?"

"I said nothing of the sort," retorted Stefano. "I know all about your search for treasure. Your clerk is digging the hills up this very day for fool's gold. It has the look of gold--yes--but it is copper and brimstone mixed in Satan's crucible--fool's gold and no more. Neither you nor he will get any true gold out of that mine."

"I tell you," said Alan in sharp earnest, "that I came here with him for convenience, not for treasure. A friend to whom I owe much desired to know whether the clerk's story were true or false. For myself I seek only to know what remains of the work of Archiater, because he was a master whose work should not be lost. There must be those--somewhere--who could go on with it,--if we but knew."

"Aye," chuckled the jester, "if we but knew!" Then leaning forward he caught Alan by the shoulder. "Listen, you young chaser of dreams--what would you give to see what Archiater left? Eh? Would you guard the secret with your life? Eh? They burned the books in the public square--yes--but if there was something that was not a book, what would you do for a sight of that?"

Alan's heart was pounding with excitement, but his face was unmoved. "I am

not good at fencing, Master Stefano. I have been frank with you because I am assured that you are to be trusted, and I think that you trust me or you would not thus play with me. When you are ready to ask a pledge,--ask it."

"Well and straightly spoken," nodded the jester. "If I reveal to you what I know of this philosopher and his work, you shall pledge yourself to betray nothing, to say nothing--not so much as a hint that I knew him--whether I am alive or dead."

Now and then in his life Alan had acted from pure blind instinct. This was the blindest, blackest place it had ever led him to. He did not hesitate. "I promise," he said.

"Very good," said the jester, and drummed thoughtfully upon the table. "We will begin with matters which are not bound up in your promise--for they concern your friend who desires to sift out the clerk's tale about his mine. This is the true story. Archiater found many metals and minerals in these hills, and made some of his experiments in the ruins of an old pagan temple close to the spot where he discovered a vein of copper. He was half a winter trying out what he found, from arsenic to zircon. Simon watched him by stealth, tracked him like a beagle, and finally went to one high in authority with the report that he was making secret poisons. This would have been no crime had the poisons been available for practical use. As it was, they felt it safest to have Archiater seized when he came back to the city, and tried as a wizard.

"They ransacked his house and got his books, of course, but Simon had stolen some stray manuscripts he found in the old ruin and sold them. Nothing, however, was gained by the person who paid the money, because the writings were partly in cipher, and the key to the cipher had been burned in the public square."

"Then the Templars may still have the manuscripts," mused Alan disconsolately.

"Maybe," the fool said with a little laugh, "but I said there might be something that was not a manuscript. Come you with me."

Taking a rushlight from a shelf the jester toiled slowly up two flights of winding stairs, and then a short, straight flight of wooden steps,--opened a door, and stood aside to let Alan pass. The young man paused on the threshold in silent wonder.

The room within was not large, but it glowed from floor to ceiling like some rare work in mosaic or Limoges enamel. The walls were hung with such tapestries as Alan had seen on rare holidays in a cathedral, or in the palace of duke or bishop. They were covered with needlework of silk in all the colors of the rainbow, wrought into graceful interwoven garlands and figures. The cushions of chair and settle, the panels of a screen, the curtains of the latticed windows, displayed still more of this marvelous embroidery, subtly contrasted and harmonized with the coloring of a rich Persian rug upon the floor. The heart of all this glowing, exquisite

beauty was a young girl in straight-hanging robes of fine silk and wool,
her gleaming bronze hair falling free over her shoulders from a gold
fillet, her deep eyes meeting the stranger's with the sweet frankness of a
sheltered, beloved child.

The jester bowed low, his gay fantastic cap in hand, all his fleering,
mocking manner changed to a gentle deference.

"Josian, my dear," he said, "this is the young man of whom I sent you
word. He has traveled many weary miles to see and speak with Archiater's
daughter."

TO JOSIAN FROM PRISON

I

Sweetheart my daughter:

 These three days and nights
(Stephen has told me) thou dost grieve for me
Silently, hour by hour. Yet do not so,
My little one, but think what happiness
We shared together, and attend thy tasks
Diligently as thou 'rt ever wont to do.
When thou dost add thy mite of joyous life
To the great world, thou art a giver too,
Like to the birds who make us glad in spring.
Be happy therefore, little bird, and stay
Warm in thy nest upon the housetop high,
Where may God keep thee safe. And so, good-night.

II

Dearest my little one:

 It hath been ruled
That I shall go away to that far land
Which I have told thee of. Men call it Death.
Thou knowest that our souls cannot be free
Dwelling within these houses of the flesh,
Yet for love's sake we do endure this bondage,
As would I gladly if God willed it so.
Stephen will care for thee as for a daughter,--
Be to him then a daughter; he has none
Save thee to love him. For the rest, remember
That in the quiet mind the soul sees truth,
And I shall speak to thee in our loved books,
As in the sunshine and the sound of music,
The beauty and the sweetness of the world.

Three kisses give I thee,--brow, eyes, and lips.
Think wisely, and see clearly, and speak gently.
Thy little bed at night shall hold thee safe

As mine own arms,--thine elfin needle make
Thy little room a bright and lovely bower.
Thy household fairies Rainbow, Lodestone, Flint,
Shall do thy will. Thy stars have said to me
That thou wilt see far lands and many cities.
Await thy Prince from that enchanted shore
Beyond the rainbow's end, and read with him
Thy magic runes. This charge I lay on him
That he shall love thee--more than I--farewell!

Thy father,
ARCHIATER

To Josian my daughter and
sole heiress.

XI

ARCHIATER'S DAUGHTER

Alan was gathering his French for some sort of greeting, when the young girl spoke in a sweet clear voice and in English.

"I am glad that you have come," she said. "Father Stephen says that you desire to hear of my father."

"I came from England in the hope that I might," Alan answered simply.

"I cannot tell you very much of his work," the girl went on, motioning him to a seat, with a quaint grace of gesture. "I was so very tiny, you see, when he went away. He used to tell me stories and sing little songs to me, and teach me to know the flowers and the birds. My mother would have done so, he said, and he wished so far as he could to be both father and mother to me. It seemed to me that he was so, and I loved him--not as dearly as he loved me, because I was so small, but as much as I possibly could. Oh, much more than my nurse, although Maddalena is very dear to me.

"We lived almost always in the city, so that we had not any garden, but we had pots of flowers in the windows, and I used to tend them. Sometimes, when my father went into the woods and the fields, he would take me, and then I was happy; no bird could have been happier. I would weave garlands of flowers, singing my rhymes about colors, and he taught me how to arrange them to make every blossom beautiful in its place.

"When he sat writing at his table he called me his mouse, and if I kept still I had cheese for my dinner with the bread and fruit. But when I forgot and made a noise he would say that the mouse must be caught in a trap, and he would take me in his arms and call Maddalena to carry me away. And sometimes he went out alone, or shut himself in his own room for days and days. Once he came out in the twilight and found me asleep with

my head on his threshold. After that he said that I must have work to do while he did his work, and he would have Maddalena teach me the use of the needle. He dyed the silks for me himself in beautiful colors, and when I had done my task he would teach me to read in the big books and the small, and to draw pictures of what I read. Here is one of the very books I used to read with him."

Alan would have thought what he saw was impossible if anything had seemed unbelievable in this elfin girl. She laid open upon the table a finely illuminated copy, in Greek, of Aesop's Fables, written on vellum in a precise beautiful hand.

"He himself wrote books for me--not many, for he said there were books enough in the world. One was on the nature of herbs, and another was about the stars and their houses in the heavens. But they were lost, those books. Father Stephen brought me others, but they are not the same; my father wrote those only for me." "Had your father no friends?" Alan asked, with a great compassion for the lonely man bending his genius to make a world for his motherless baby.

"Not many, and none here except Father Stephen, who knew my mother when she was a child, in Ravenna. People came sometimes, but they were not friends; their eyes were cold and their voices hard. Since my father went away two old friends of his have been here with Father Stephen, but they came only once. They were not of this people; they came from Byzantium."

"And you have lived here always?"

The maiden laughed, a merry laughter like the lilt of a woodlark. "Oh, no--o! Father Stephen has taken me to many places--to Venice once, and to Rome, and when I was little we lived in Cordova. That is how I learned to speak in different languages. I learned a new one every year for four years. But for three years I have stayed in Goslar, and Father Stephen says that no one must know I am here. That is queer, is it not, to live in a city where not even the people in the next house know that you are alive? Perhaps some day I shall go away, and live as others do. I wonder very much what it will be like."

The jester's face was shadowed by a sad tenderness. "May you never wish yourself back in your cage, my child," he said. "But it grows late, and I think that you have told this guest all that you can of your father's work."

"All that I know," the young girl said, regretfully. "I really know so little of it--and the books were lost."

In a maze Alan followed the jester down the darkening stairway. At the foot Stefano turned and faced him. "You see what she is," he said. "She is Archiater's only child--she has his signet ring and his letters written her from prison--only two, but I risked my own life to get them for her. When they took him away they did not know that such a little creature existed. She was but seven years old, and her nurse, Maddalena, hid with her in a chest in the garret, telling her that it was a game. That night I

took them to a place of safety."

"And you have taken care of her ever since?" the young man asked. The jester nodded his big head. Then, as a group of courtiers came around the corner, with a mocking gesture, Stefano limped away. Alan heard their shout of laughter at his words of greeting, and went home in a dream.

During the following days Stefano treated him with every appearance of confidence. By the jester's invitation he spent many hours at the tall ancient house, in that enchanted room with its latticed windows looking out over street and wall to the mountains. Stefano spent the time lounging on the divan or in the great chair, or watching the street far below. He said very little and often seemed scarcely to hear the talk of the youth and the maiden.

Their talk ranged over many subjects. The girl could read not only in Latin, the common language of all scholars, but in Greek and Arabian. Many of her books were heavy leatherbound tomes by Avicenna, Averroes, Damascene, Pliny, and other writers whose very names were unfamiliar to Alan's ears. She poised above them like a bee over a garden, gathering what pleased her bright fancy. Sometimes while they talked she would be working upon her tapestry, some rich, delicate or curious design in her many-hued silks.

Alan found that her father had begun teaching her the laws of design and color before she could read. He had told her that colors were like notes in music, and had their loves and hates as people do.

"Is it not so in your work, Al-an?" she asked. "Do not the good colors and the bad contend always until you bring them into agreement?"

Alan had told her of his work, and it seemed to interest her immensely. She was greatly delighted when she learned that he had found memoranda in her father's own handwriting, which had led to the making of wonderful deep blue glass.

"If I had the little books he wrote for me," she said one day, "you might find something beautiful in them also."

He watched and wondered at the sure instinct guiding her deft, small fingers in the placing of colors--the purple fruit, the gold-green vine or the scarlet pomegranate flower in her maze-like embroidery. "But how can you make pictures in the windows," she would say, with her lilting laughter, "if you do not know about color?"

To Alan's secret amusement he perceived that she thought her life very ordinary and natural, while his own adventures on the moorland farm of his boyhood were to her like fairy-tales. She was shyly but intensely curious about his mother. She had never known anything of the ways of mothers except from books and tales.

One bright morning she took from a coffer a prism of rock-crystal. "This is one of the playthings my father gave me," she said. "Look how it makes

the colors dance upon the wall."

Like a quick silent fairy the little rainbow flitted here and there. "He told me," she went on, "that seven invisible colors live together in a sunbeam, but when they pass this magic door they must go in single file, and then we may see them. Not all are good colors. Some are bad and quarrelsome, and some are good when they are alone, but not when they are with colors they do not like. But when they live together in peace they make the beautiful clear daylight, and we see the world exactly as it is."

"As it is--saints protect her," muttered old Maddalena, and the jester smiled his twisted smile.

That evening Stefano said suddenly, "What are you going to do with your clerk?"

"To-morrow," said Alan, "I shall go to his mine."

"You have not been there?"

"No; he has made some silly excuse each time it has been suggested."

"He will never take you there," said the jester. "You will see."

"Simon," said Alan pleasantly that night, "I am going into the mountains with you to-morrow."

Suspicion, fear, jealous greed, chased one another over the clerk's mean face. "You are in great haste," he muttered. "It is not good weather, but we will go of course, if you wish."

In the morning Simon lay groaning with rheumatism, unable to move. Alan made a fire, covered him warmly, left food within his reach, and went out to think the matter over. Unconsciously his steps tended toward the house of the jester. Stefano, coming out, caught sight of him.

"Hey!" said the fool, "why are you not in the mountains?"

Alan explained. The other gave a dry little laugh. "That need not hinder you," said he. "I will send some one to show you the place. Come to the market-square an hour hence and look for a youth with two horses. I think you would pass for a wood-cutter if you had an ax."

Acting on this hint, Alan provided himself with ax and maul, and found in the place appointed a serving boy riding one horse and leading another. He had reason to be glad of the rough life of his boyhood, for he had ridden all over the moors, bareback, on just such wiry half-broken animals, and the road they now took was not an easy one.

At last they left the horses in a dell at the foot of the ledges and scrambled up to a small stone building near the top of the mountain, half hidden among evergreens. Its door was gone and its roof half fallen in, but in it could be seen a stone altar and various tools and utensils, wood

cut and ready for burning. Evidently some one had been using the place--in fact, some one was here now. As Alan stood in the doorway a figure rose from a pile of leaves in the corner.

"Vanni!" said Alan under his breath.

"Oh, he can be trusted," said Giovanni, with a glance at the guide. "I have been here two days. This was Archiater's private workshop. The mountain people think it is haunted, so that it is a good place to hide. I was not pleased when I found that your clerk had taken it for his own. I lay upon the roof for two hours yesterday watching him. Having an errand at Rheims I thought I would come along and see what had happened to you."

Alan had as yet no right to tell the most important thing that had happened. "I have not been here before," he said. "Simon has put me off, and he does not know I am here now."

"Has he shown you his findings? He took a bag away with him--a heavy one."

"Only some minerals which are worth more than he thinks. I have been working with them more or less. He is mightily curious about the action of the furnace. I make a guess he is going to try to test the ore himself."

"There is a donkey-load of it here," said Giovanni, tilting with his foot a stone in the floor. Under it gleamed a mass of irregular shining fragments and yellow lumps of stone. Alan picked up one and scraped it, struck it with a hammer, rubbed it across a chip of wood, "Guy was right," he said, "it is not gold. I can prove that to the fellow if he gives me a chance."

"What shall you do?"

"I am not sure. Are you safe here?"

"So long as they do not know I am here. Master Gay and his son are at Rheims, and I am to join them. If you will come to-morrow or the day after we can go together. I will show you a short way over the mountains that Cimarron found when we were here. Stefano knows of my coming, and I shall see him to-night."

Alan had been thinking. "Vanni, I will do this. I will go with you to-morrow if I can, but if I do not meet you here before noon you will know that I must stay on. Will that answer?"

"I suppose it must. I dislike leaving you here with a twice-proved rascal like this Simon. You do not know what he may do."

"I should like to thrash him," said Alan. "He is planning to get the whole of this gold, as he thinks it, for himself."

"Of course he is. But what good would it do to beat him? You cannot thrash the inside of him, can you?"

Alan laughed, and strode off to the place where the horses were tethered. Before returning to his lodgings he went to see Stefano.

"Well," said the jester when he had heard all, "what shall you do?"

Alan hesitated. "So far as my errand is concerned," he answered, "I might join Giovanni to-morrow. We had all along suspected that the ore was only fool's gold. But--"

"I know," nodded the jester. "And for that other reason, I am going to tell you something. I have known for some time that Josian is not safe in my care. It has never been over-safe, this arrangement, but while she was a child the risk was not so great. Also, having the Emperor's favor, I could do more for her than any one else could--then.

"I have thought for some days that the house was watched, and I do not like that. Some one may have got wind of her being here, or may be tempted by the reports of my hoard of gold. It is not hidden here, but they may think it is. There is danger in the air. I can smell it.

"I have trusted no man as I am trusting you now. I have been looking for some means of sending her away to Tomaso, her father's old friend, but the thing has been most difficult to arrange. I dare not wait longer. Will you take her away, with her nurse Maddalena, and protect her as if she were your sister? You will have the aid of Giovanni, though he has never known this secret."

Alan's eyes met those of the old man eagerly and frankly. "Master Stefano," he answered, "I will guard her with my life. But can she be ready to go at once?"

Stefano nodded. "The preparations that remain to be made will take no more than an hour or two. She is a good traveler. My servant will secure horses for you and meet you just before sunrise, near the gate. Maddalena will come there with her, and you must not ride so fast as to arouse curiosity. I have to play the buffoon at a banquet to-night, and there is but little time, therefore--addio!"

Alan walked home slowly, pondering on all he had seen and heard that day. Coming within sight of his lodgings, he found the street full of people gazing at the windows, out of which a thick smoke was pouring.

"What has happened here?" he asked of a little inn-keeper from Boulogne, with whom he had some acquaintance.

"They say it is the devil," the other replied with a shrug. "Mortally anxious to see him they seem to be."

Alan shouldered his way through the crowd and ran up the stairs. Half way up he met Simon reeling down, and caught him by the arm. "What have you been about?" he asked sternly.

"The gold is bew-witched!" bubbled Simon, arms waving and eyes rolling in

terrified despair. "It is changed in the crucible! It is the work of Satan!"

"Nonsense!" said Alan roughly. "You have been roasting the wrong ore. I could have told you it was not true gold. Be quiet, or we shall be driven out of Goslar."

Simon was too distracted to heed, and Alan went hastily up to the rooms, where he found some copper pyrites in process of oxidation, giving forth volumes of strangling sulphur smoke. After quenching the fire and doing what he could to purify the air he gathered his belongings together and left the house, extremely annoyed. He could see suspicion and even threatening in the look of the crowd.

He went into the alley where Martin Bouvin's little inn was and asked shelter for the night.

"I go away to-morrow," he said, "and there is no returning to that place for hours to come."

"H'm!" said the inn-keeper. "What really happened?"

Alan explained. "My faith," commented Bouvin, decanting some wine into his guest's cup, "you are well rid of that fellow. Do you know that he has been spying on you for a week? He dared not follow you, but he tried to hire some one else to do it--that I know."

It was already late. Alan dozed off, despite his uneasiness, for he had had a tiring day. Suddenly he awoke and sat bolt upright. There was a commotion in the street. The innkeeper was peeping out through a hole in the solid shutters. "It is the clerk again," he said. "He is haranguing the people."

Alan slipped out and came up on the outskirts of the crowd. He caught the words "fool's gold" in Simon's shrill voice, and then the crowd began to mutter, "Die Hexe! Die Hexe!"

Alan waited to hear no more. He knew that this meant that sinister thing, a witch-hunt. If Simon had connected Stefano's house and his reputed hoard of gold with his disastrous experiment, and possibly suspected Josian's existence there, it was a time for quick thought and bold action. He raced down the street leading to the rear of the house, vaulted the wall and found old Maddalena unlocking the small side door.

"Get her away," he said in a low voice, "at once--there is danger!"

The old woman pointed up the stairs, and Alan went leaping over them to find the girl hooded and cloaked for the journey in the small room, now bare and cold as the moonlight. Her soft light steps kept pace with his to the garden gate; he hurried her and Maddalena out, bidding them walk away quietly. Then he turned back, heaped a pile of straw and rubbish under the stairs, and flung the contents of a lighted charcoal brazier on it. As the fire blazed up he heard the snarl of the mob coming down the street which

passed the front entrance. He could hear words in the incoherent shouting-
-"Die Hexe! Die Hexe! Brennen--brennen!"

As he shut the gate and slipped away he found Martin Bouvin keeping pace with him, "Do you know what has happened?" the little man asked. "The guests at the Prince's banquet came late into the street and found Simon raving about his gold. They questioned him, and he told them of a mysterious house where an old witch dwelt and changed into a young girl at sunset. The Prince knew the house. He asked Master Stefano what it meant. When he got no answer but a jest he struck Stefano down and rode over him. He is dead. Then the people caught up the cry and began to talk of burning the witch. They are all out there now, and the Prince is trying to make his guard go in after the gold. That was a good thought of yours, setting fire to the house: they will stay to watch it. I will go with you if I may, Master. If Stefano is gone Goslar is no good place for me!"

Alan remembered now that the jester had spoken in terms of friendship of Martin Bouvin. In any case they were now nearing the gate where the man stood waiting with the horses. Josian and Maddalena were already mounted. As the servant held Alan's stirrup the Englishman looked down and saw under the hood the black piercing eyes and thin face of Giovanni.

"It is all right," whispered the Milanese with a glance at Bouvin. "He can ride the pack-horse. His only reason for staying here was Stefano's business."

The sleepy guard let them out without a look, and they rode on at a good pace toward the mountains. Josian had not said one word.

"Are you afraid, Princess?" Alan asked presently.

She shook her head. When she heard the story of the jester's death she was less shaken than Alan had feared. "He told me last night that he could not live long," she said sadly. "I knew that I should never see him again in this world."

At last they halted for an hour beside a little spring. Josian looked back at the gray pointed roofs and towers of Goslar. "Al-an," she said, "what was that light in the sky?"

"It was your tower," Alan answered. "No one will ever live there again, since you cannot."

Alan marveled at Josian's self-possession during the rough journey. She obeyed orders like a child, showed no fear in the most perilous passes, and fared as roughly as the others did, with quiet endurance. Soon, however, they had crossed the frontier and met the party of travelers in whose company were the London merchant and his wife and son.

Then began days and weeks of travel, the like of which Alan had not known. He had gone from one place to another in such company as offered, many a time, but here were folk who knew every road and every inn, beguiled the hours with songs and jests and stories, and made the time pass like a

holiday. He found that his knowledge of the out-of-door world interested Josian more than the ballads and tales of the others. He often rode at her side for an hour or more, pointing out to her the secret quick life of woodland and meadow, and finding perhaps that she already knew the bird, squirrel, marmot or hare, by another name. "London is well enough," he said one day, "but 'tis not for me. I could never live grubbing in the dark there like a mouldiwarp."

Josian's delicate brows drew together. "Mouldi--what strange beast is that, Al-an?" and Alan laughed and explained that it was a mole.

It was at noon of one of the long fragrant days of early summer, while the travelers rested in the forest, that Josian spoke of the jester once more. In the green stillness of the deep woods, birds singing and shy delicate blossoms gemming the moss, the fierce and savage past was like a dream.

"Father Stephen gave me a packet that last night," she said. "He gave Giovanni gold for the journey, but this parcel he said I must carry myself and show to you when I thought fit. I wonder what it can be?"

Alan took the packet and turned it over. It was sealed with a device of Greek letters.

"That is my father's signet," the girl added. "Here is his ring," and she drew from under her bodice a man's ring, hung on a slender gold chain, the stone a great emerald carved with the Greek "AEI"--"Always." Alan cut the cord of the packet and handed it to her. "It is not for me to open it," he said.

She unfolded, tenderly and reverently, the wrappings of parchment and oiled silk, and disclosed a compact manuscript closely written on the thinnest leaves, in a firm clear hand. Lifting two or three of the pages she read eagerly and then looked up, her eyes alight with wondering joy.

"Here are all the most precious of his writings, Al-an!" she cried, "the secrets that were in all the books that were lost--written clearly so that I myself can read them! Oh, it is like having him come back to speak to us--and Father Stephen, too--here by ourselves in the forest! And now you will know all the secrets of his work, for they are written here."

Alan's face had gone whiter than the parchment. Here indeed was the treasure he had come to seek. And it was Josian's free gift.

But that was not all. "Josian," he said, not putting out his hand even to touch the precious parcel, "you must not give away these manuscripts so lightly. They are worth much gold, child--they are a rich dowry for you. You must wait until you see Tomaso the physician, and he will tell you what is best to do with them."

She shook her head. "Oh, n-o," she said. "Father Stephen said that you would make good use of them, and had earned them--but I think he knew quite well what you would say. Perhaps some day you will feel differently."

Dame Cicely of the Abbey Farm welcomed Josian in due time as a daughter. When she and Alan had been married about three months Josian was surveying a panel of just-completed embroidery in which all the colors in exquisite proportion blended in a gold-green jeweled arabesque. Alan came up behind her and caught the sunlight through it. He asked to borrow it, and reproduced the design in painted glass. That was the first window which he made for York Minster.

Among the formulae in the scripts which were Josian's dowry were several for stained glass and the making of colors to be used therein. By means of one of these it became possible to make glass of wonderful rich hues, through which the light came white, as if no glass were there. This is one of the secrets known to the workers of the Middle Ages and now lost; but in old windows there still remain fragments of the glass.

If to-day certain precious bits of glass, ruby-red, emerald-green, sapphire-blue, topaz-yellow, set in the windows of old cathedrals, could speak, they would say proudly that they are the work of Alan of York and Josian, the daughter of Archiater, the philosopher.

NEW ALTARS

I Publius Curtius, these many years dwelling
Among these barbarians, a foe and a prefect,
To Those whom they worship unreasoning,
Gods of the Land, I raise this new altar.

To Thee whom the wild hares in silence foregathering
Worship with ears erect in the moonlight,
(And vanish at sound of a footstep approaching)
God of the Downs, I pour this libation.

To Thee whom the trout in the rainbow foam drifting
Behold in the sunlight through wet leafage sifting
(And vanish like shadows of clouds in the water)
God of the Streams, I pay this my tribute.

To Thee whom the skylark, in rapture ascending
Adores in his dithyramb perfect, unending,
(And vanishes in the high heaven still singing)
God of the Mist, I utter this prayer.

To Ye whom my children, born here in my mansion,
Reverence beyond the gods of their fathers,
And love as they love their own mother,
Gods of the Land, I build ye this temple!

COLD HARBOR

Wilfrid, the potter, stood with his wife and children, looking at what was left of a little old cottage. Fire had left it a heap of ashes and half-burned timbers and rubbish. The red roof-tiles glowed like embers of dead centuries.

"I'd never ha' turned the old man out," he said pensively, "but now he's gone and the cot's gone too, we'll see what's under this end of Cold Harbor."

Edwitha, his wife, looked up, her eyes sparkling through quick tears.

"I was hoping you'd say that, Wilfrid," she said with eager wistfulness. "I've longed so to know--but he'd lived there since our fathers and mothers were children. 'Twould ha' been like taking the soul out of his body to drive him away."

She was a slender, pretty creature, almost as childlike in her way of speaking as if she had been no older than Dorothea or Alfred. The children listened with pleased excitement commingled with a certain awe. Gaffer Bartram had seemed as much a part of their lives as the sun or the wind or the old pollard willow. When he was strong enough he taught Alfred to snare rabbits and catch moles; when rheumatism crippled him he sat by the door making baskets and telling Dorothy rhymes and tales of seventy years ago. Then first his old gray cat Susan had disappeared, after that the old man himself, and last the cottage caught fire and burned. And father was actually giving orders to the men to dig up the garden and see what lay under it.

There is a mysterious immovable setness about the Sussex Downs. What is there seems to have been there always. The oldest man cannot say when the great white hollows were first scooped out of the chalk, or the dewponds made on the heights. Ever since there were people in Sussex--whether it is five thousand years ago or fifteen thousand--the short wind-swept turf has been grazed by woolly flocks. Before ever a Norman castle held a vantage-height the tansy grew dark and rank in cottage gardens and the children went gathering woodruff and speedwell and the elfin gold of "little socks and shoes." Any change, good or bad, is a loss to some one--the land is so full of the life of the past.

Wilfrid and Edwitha well understood this, though they would never have put it into fine phrases. They could not have said it except to each other, and for that there was no need of speech. Because of it they had left the old man at peace in his cottage, and even after he was dead they put off the uncovering of what might lie under the soil of his garden and his orchard.

Wilfrid's pottery had grown up in the last ten years near a claybank, not far from the boundary between his father's land and Edwitha's old home. An

irregular terrace broke the slope above it, and here the tilled land had come to an end at one point because the plows came hard against a buried Roman wall. Not being able to break up the solid masonry of Roman builders done a thousand years before, Wilfrid's father had cleared away the soil, roofed over the ruin which he found, and used it to store grain. This was Cold Harbor.

As Wilfrid's pottery prospered he found another use for the building. There was no tavern thereabouts, and when the Saxon abbey five or six miles away could house no more guests, or his workmen could not all find lodging in the neighborhood, it was possible to shelter there. The roof was weather-tight, a wood fire could be built on the stone hearth, and with fresh straw from Borstall Farm for beds, provisions from the same source, and their own cloaks for covering, travelers found themselves fairly comfortable.

Like others of its kind the building came to be known as "Cold Harbor," a "herbergage" or lodging, without food or heat being provided. Sometimes an enterprising innkeeper would take possession of such a place after a time and furnish it as an inn.

At this very time, unknown to Wilfrid, some of his friends were discussing such a possibility as they rode up from Dover. Gilbert Gay the merchant, his wife Thomasyn and his son Nicholas were returning from France, and in their company were Alan of York and Josian his wife, Guy Bouverel the goldsmith, and others. West of Canterbury they came up with a stout bright-eyed little man who looked as if he had fed well all his life, and was called Martin Bouvin.

"What luck, Martin?" asked Master Gay. The little man spread his hands in a gesture of comic despair. All the tavern-sites seemed to be held by some religious house that owned the land, or some nobleman who allowed the innkeeper to use his device as a sign.

"There ought to be an inn there in Sussex where Wilfrid's pottery is," observed the goldsmith. "When I halt there to see Wilfrid I find nine times out of ten that I must e'en quarter myself on him. D'ye remember that old place he calls Cold Harbor? That would be a proper house for a tavern."

"It is not large enough," objected the merchant. "Any tavern worth the name would need more room than that within a twelvemonth. Still, other buildings could be added. If you and the potter can come to an agreement, Bouvin, I will aid you in fitting up the building and you may repay me in dinners. There's not a cook this side Rouen who can match your chestnut soup."

"Made with the yolk of an egg and a little wine of Xeres?" asked Guy with interest. "Giovanni made it so for us once."

The merchant waved a protesting hand. "No, no, no, no--lemon, man, lemon, with white stock, pepper, salt, a little parsley. Sherry is an excellent drink, but not in chestnut soup, I pray you."

"What matters it," asked Alan innocently, "so the food is wholesome and pleasant?"

"That is what might be expected of you, you Northern barbarian," laughed Guy. "Where did you get your cunning, Martin?"

The little man's beady black eyes twinkled knowingly. "A true cook, Master Bouverel, takes all good things where he finds them. I make bouillabaisse for those who like it, but--between you and me--Norman matelote of fish is just as good. I cook pigeon broth as they do in Boulogne, I make black bean soup as they do in Spain. I was born in Boulogne, but I have cooked in many other places--in Avignon, where they say the angels taught them how to cook--Messina, Paris, Genoa, all over Aquitaine with the routiers. Perigueux is a very agreeable place--you know the truffles there? I cook sometimes cutlets of lamb and veal in a casserole with truffles, mushrooms, bacon in strips, a lemon sliced, shallots, some chicken stock, and herbs--yes, that is very good. Oh, I can cook for French, Norman, Gascon, Spanish, Lombard--any people. Only in Goslar. That was one horreeble place, Goslar! The people eat pork and cabbage, pork and cabbage, and black bread--chut!" He made a grimace at the memory.

"I fear you will find some of that sort among our English travelers," said Gilbert Gay amusedly. "Not all of them will appreciate--what was that you gave us in Paris? epigrammes of lamb, the cutlets dipped in chicken stock and fried. Swine are still among our chief domestic animals."

"Oh, as to that," said the chef quickly, "I am not too proud to cook for people who like simple things--meat broiled and roasted with plain bread. And do you know that one must be a very fine cook to do such work well? When I am alone, which is not often, I prepare for myself fresh vegetables, broil a fish that has not forgotten the water,--and with a roll and a little fruit, that is my dinner. The soteltes at kings' tables, all colored sugar and pastry and isinglass--they are only good for people who can eat peacock, and those are very few. Do you know, Master Gay, what is the great secret of my art? To know what is good, and not spoil it."

"I foresee," laughed the merchant, "that we shall all be making excuses to come down from London if you stay in Sussex with your saucepans. But hey! there are the towers of the abbey already, and it is not yet mid-afternoon. Let us ride on to see Wilfrid and find out whether he approves of our fine plan."

While this discussion of the noble art of cookery was going on miles away, Wilfrid and Edwitha, with no thought of inns, were watching the laborers digging where Wilfrid thought the rest of the building ought to be. In his travels he had seen other Roman houses better preserved than this, and by inquiring of learned men had gained some idea of Roman civilization. He had been told that Roman officials in England often built villas in places rather like this terrace, and since the building already unearthed was the end of the walls in one direction, the rest of the villa might be found under the cottage of old Bartram and his orchard, garden and cow-byre.

No other house in the neighborhood was as old as that cottage. It was built of beams put together without nails and filled in with a rude wattle-work plastered thickly with coat after coat of mud. Instead of being thatched like most houses of its kind the roof had been covered with fine red tiles,--possibly Roman work. It seemed that the soil must have washed in over the ruins of the Roman building so very long ago that there had been time for trees to grow above it.

Thus Wilfrid reasoned. As his laborers dug and moiled and sweated under the hot clear sun, he watched with lively interest for whatever they might turn up. It is to be feared that Edwitha's maids were less carefully looked after than usual after the work began, and the children spent every minute they could in following their mother or their father about to see what was going to happen.

There was another reason besides curiosity for keeping watch of the work. If any pottery should be discovered, Wilfrid did not wish to have it broken by a careless mattock.

Then Dorothy came running from the house to find her mother and father bending over a newly-unearthed Roman wall. "Father!" she cried, "a man is come to see you!"

"Oh!" said Wilfrid, not very eagerly. He brushed some of the earth from his clothes with a handful of weeds and went toward the gate, where a horseman sat awaiting him. As he came nearer the man dismounted and came toward him with outstretched hand.

"Alan!" cried the potter joyfully. "I heard you were abroad. Come in, and I'll send for Edwitha."

"Not so fast," said his guest. "I am but a harbinger. Guy Bouverel and Master Gay the merchant with his wife and son, and some others, are coming along. We'll stay at the Abbey, but we rode on to see you first. I've my wife with me, Wilfrid."

"That's news indeed," said the potter cordially. "And who may she be? Some foreign damsel you met in your pilgrimage?"

"That's one way of saying it," answered Alan smiling. "You shall see her and judge for yourself. How's all here?"

Wilfrid smiled rather sheepishly. "You and your wife must come and stay with us," he insisted. "We'll make you welcome, spite of being a bit upset. Edwitha has been taking holiday. We're digging up the farm to see what's at the other end of Cold Harbor, lad."

"Make no ado about us," Alan protested. "It's partly about Cold Harbor that we came--but here they all are, upon my life!"

A merry company of travelers rode up the lane, and as they dismounted Edwitha came over the little footpath across the field, with the children clinging to her hands--a little embarrassed to find so many folk arriving

and she not there. The boy scampered up to his father piping loudly, "Father, come you quick--we've found a picture in the ground!"

"What's all this?" asked Master Gay. And after Wilfrid's explanation nothing would do but that they all should go immediately to see what had come to light. When they beheld it the younger men could not keep from taking a hand themselves. With brooms of twigs, and potsherds, and water from the well in Cold Harbor, they industriously swept and scraped and washed the pavement which the men had now partly uncovered.

It was a mosaic floor of tiny blocks of red, black, yellow, white, brown, cream and slate-blue, set in cement so strong that not an inch of the fine even surface had warped. It was not a large pavement, and might have been the floor of a small dining or sitting-room so placed as to command a view of the valley. A part of one wall remained. It had been plastered and then covered with a finer plaster which was frescoed with a row of painted pillars against the deep marvelous red of Pompeii. The design of the floor was not at first clear. The edge was decorated with a conventional pattern in gray and white. The corners were cut off by diagonal lines making an eight-sided central space. This was outlined by a guilloche, or border of intertwining bands of brilliant colors. Inside this again was a circle divided into alternate square and triangular spaces with still brighter borders, containing each some bird or animal. In the central space was a seated figure playing on a harp, while around him were packed in a close group a lion, a ram, a bull, a goat, a crab, fishes, and other figures. Nobody at first saw what it could be.

"If I mistake not," said the little stout man, Martin Bouvin, at last, "it is Sir Orpheus playing to the beasts."

"To be sure!" cried Guy Bouverel. "Do you know books as well as cooking-pots, O man of the oldest profession?"

Martin grinned. "I heard a song about that once," he answered, "and I have never forgotten it. It was a lucky song--for some folk."

It was fortunate that at that time of year the sun does not set until after eight o'clock, for no one could have borne to leave that pavement without seeing the whole of it. The children, quite forgotten for once in their lives, grubbed in the piles of earth and found bewitching bronze lion-heads and ornamental knobs and handles, and pictured tiles. At last they all went in to a very late supper. All the guests could be sheltered at Wilfrid's home if the young men were satisfied to lodge in Cold Harbor.

"It is like finding out the people who lived here when the land was young," said Wilfrid, his eyes very bright.

"And there were also the men who made the dewponds," mused Master Gay.

"And there were those Druids of whom my father told me," said Josian wonderingly. "This is like a fairy tale, Al-an. Is York the same?"

"Brother Basil said once that our England is a land of lost kingdoms,"

Alan answered her. "I see what he meant."

Excavation went on during the following days until all the pavements of the old Roman house had been cleared. The two others were larger but not so fine as the first they had uncovered. One was of stone blocks laid in a sort of checkerboard pattern, and the other of mosaic in a conventional pattern of black and gray and brown and red. They found that under these floors there was an open space about two feet high. The tiled floor which was covered with the mosaic was supported by a multitude of dwarf pillars of stone and brick. This space, although they did not know it, was the hypocaust or heating chamber of the colonial Roman house, and had been kept filled with hot air from a furnace. Beams of wood and heaps of tiles indicated that there had been an upper storey of wood. This in fact was the case, the Romans having a strong objection to sleeping on the ground floor.

Now there was no more doubt that Cold Harbor might be made into a well-appointed tavern. With a little masonry to reenforce them the walls would form a base for a half-timbered house roofed with tiles from Wilfrid's pottery. The largest room would be the general guest-room in which the tables would be set for all comers, and those who could not afford better accommodation might sleep there on benches or on the floor. For guests of higher station, especially those who had ladies in their party, private chambers and dining-rooms would be provided. Master Gay intended to furnish a suite for himself and any of his friends who came that way.

"And by the way," said Guy suddenly, "Cold Harbor will never do for a name. What shall you call the inn, Martin?"

Bouvin snapped his fingers. "I have thought and thought until my head goes to split. I would call it Boulogne Harbor, but there is no picture you could make of that."

"'Mouth' is the English for harbor," suggested Wilfrid. "But all the country people would call it 'Bull-and-Mouth.'"

Padraig began sketching with a bit of charcoal on the broken wall. "Make it that and I'll paint the sign for ye. 'Bull-and-Mouth'--every hungry man will see the meaning o' that."

With a dozen strokes he sketched a huge mouth about to swallow a bull. This, done with a fine show of color, became the sign of the tavern. Martin never tired of explaining the pun to those who asked. Even before the guest-rooms were finished, travelers began arriving, drawn by the fame of Martin's savory and succulent dishes. Pilgrims, merchants, knights, squires, showmen, soldiers, minstrels, scholars, sea-captains--they came and came again. Almost every subject in church or state, from Peter's pence to the Third Crusade, from the Constitutions of Clarendon to clipped money, was discussed at Martin's tables, with point and freedom. Cold Harbor entered upon a new life and became part of the foundation of a new empire.

GALLEY SONG

Amber, copper, jet and tin,
Anklet, bracelet, necklace, pin,--
That is the way the trades begin
Over the pony's back.

Mother-o'-pearl or malachite,
Ebony black or ivory white
Lade the dromond's rushing flight
Over Astarte's track.

Crucifix or mangonel,
Steel for sword or bronze for bell,--
That is the way we trafficking sell,
Out of the tempest's wrack.

Marble, porcelain, tile or brick,
Hemlock, vitriol, arsenic--
Souls or bodies barter quick--
Masters, what d'ye lack?

XIII

THE WISDOM OF THE GALLEYS

It was Nicholas Gay's last night at home. At dawn his father's best ship, the *Sainte Spirite*, would weigh anchor for the longest eastward voyage she had ever undertaken. His father's brother, Gervase Gaillard of Bordeaux, was going out in charge of the venture. Gilbert Gay, the London merchant, who had altered his name though not his long-sighted French mind in his twenty years of England, thought this an excellent time for his eighteen-year-old son to see the world.

Since Nicholas could remember, he had known the wharves of the Thames and the changeful drama of London Pool. He had been twice to Normandy, but to a lad French by birth, that was hardly a foreign land. Now he was to see countries neither English nor French--some of them not even Christian. Half Spain and all the north coast of Africa were Moslem. Sicily and Sardinia had Saracen traditions. This would be his first sight of the great sea-road from Gibraltar to Byzantium.

During the past three years Gilbert Gay had been often absent, and the boy had taken responsibility of the sort that makes a man. With the keen aquiline French profile he had a skin almost as fair as a girl's, and yellow-brown waving hair. The steady gray eyes and firm lips, however, had nothing girlish about them.

As luck had it these last hours were crowded with visitors. Robert Edrupt, the wool-merchant, and David Saumond, the mason, were taking passage in the Sainte Spirite. Guy Bouverel had a share in her cargo, and came for a word about that and to bid Nicholas good-by. Brother Ambrosius, a solemn-faced portly monk, had letters to send to Rome. Lady Adelia Giffard came to ask that inquiry be made for her husband, who had gone on pilgrimage more than a year before, and had not been heard of for many months. The poor soul was as nearly distraught as a woman could be. She begged Gervase Gaillard to ask all the pilgrims and merchants he met whether in their travels they had seen or heard of Sir Stephen Giffard, and should any trace of him be found, to send a messenger to her without delay. She was wealthy, and promised liberal reward to any one who could help her in the search. It was her great fear that the knight had been taken prisoner by the Moslems.

"I think that you must have heard of it in that case," said Gilbert Gay gently, "since these marauders ever demand ransom. I pray you remember, my lady, that there are a thousand chances whereby in these unsettled times a man may be delayed, or his letters fail to reach you. 'Tis not well to brood over vain rumors."

"I know," whimpered the poor lady, "but I cannot--I cannot bear that he should be a captive and suffering, and I with hoarded gold that I have no heart to look upon. 'Tis cruel."

"Holy Church," observed Brother Ambrosius, "hath always need of our hearts and of our gold, lady. Peace comes to the spirit that hath learned the sweet uses of submission. To dote on the things of the flesh is displeasing to God."

"When I was in Spain," said Edrupt, "I heard a monk preaching a new religion. He urged his hearers to aid in rescuing the captives held in Moslem slavery. 'Tis said he has saved many."

"Were it not well," pursued Brother Ambrosius as if he had not heard, "to think upon the glorious opportunity of a captive to bear witness to his faith? We read how angels delivered the apostles from prison, and how Saint Paul in his bonds exhorted and rebuked his people, to the edification of many."

"True," commented Gilbert Gay rather dryly, "but we are not all Saint Pauls. And I have never known of God sending angels to do work that He might properly expect of men and women."

This was a new idea to Brother Ambrosius. Not finding a place in his mind for one just then, he looked meek and said nothing, and presently took his leave.

"Saint Paul was a tentmaker, was he not?" queried Guy Bouverel when the door had closed upon the churchman. "Had he rowed in the galleys I doubt whether we should have had those Epistles."

Nicholas recalled this conversation the next day, as the sturdy little ship of English oak filled her great sails and went blithely out upon the widening estuary of the Thames. The last of the dear London landmarks faded into the gray soft sky. Soon the sailors would begin to look for Sheerness and the Forelands, Dungeness, Beachy Head. Nicholas leaned on the rail above the dancing morning waters and remembered it all.

There was his mother's sweet pale face under the white coif, her busy fingers completing a last bit of stitchery for him. There was his father's fine, keen, kindly face bent over his account-books and coffers. There was pretty Genevieve, his sister, with her husband, Crispin Eyre. And there were the comrades of his boyhood, and the prating monk, and the unhappy lady with her white face framed in rich velvets and furs, and her piteous beseeching hands that were never still. Those faces, in the glow of the fire and the shine of tall candles in their silver sconces, were to be with him often in the months to come.

Edrupt came up just as a long Venetian galley went plowing out to sea, the great oars flashing in the sunlight, one rank above another. "They do not have to pray for a fair wind, those Venetians," Nicholas commented idly.

"That galley's past praying for anything," Edrupt said grimly. "You may be glad that your men fear neither wind nor seas--nor you. 'Tis an ill thing to sail the seas with those who serve only through fear."

Nicholas had not thought of it in that way. He knew, of course, that the slaves who rowed the racing galleys were the offscouring of mankind, desperate men, drawn from all nations. It was as much as two men could do to handle one oar, and all must pull in unison as a huge machine. The Venetian dromond was to other merchant-ships as the dromedary to other camels. To make the speed required the rowers must put forth their whole strength, hour after hour, day after day.

Any work which makes men into parts of a machine is not likely to improve them as men. When they have no love for their work and no hope of reward, and do not even speak the same language, the one motive which can be depended upon to keep them going is fear. The whip of the overseer bred festering, burning hatred, but it kept the sweeps from breaking their monotonous unceasing motion. If the voyage were quick, the profits were the greater, and no one cared for anything else.

Thinking of the hard sea-bitten faces of the galley-slaves Nicholas rejoiced that rather than live so the crew of the Sainte Spirite would every man of them choose a clean death at sea.

Some days later it seemed as if they were fated to die so. A Biscay tempest caught them, and from dark to daylight they were buffeted by the giant battledores of wind and sea. Nicholas spent the sleepless hours in lending a hand and cheering the men as he could.

At last they sighted the great Rock of Gibraltar, fifteen hundred feet of it clear against the sky, like the gateway pillar of another world. Between Europe and Africa they passed into the blue Mediterranean,--blue

with the salty sparkle beloved of all sea-lovers since Ulysses. Light warm winds, the scent of orange-groves and rose-gardens, a sky only less deep in its azure splendor than the sea itself--it seemed indeed another world.

But the Sainte Spirite had not come whole out of her struggle with the powers of the abyss. Timbers were sadly strained, a mast was gone, every man on board was weary and muscle-sore. And then a Levantine gale drove the crippled merchantman down on the Barbary coast.

The blackness of that storm ended, for Nicholas Gay, in a plunge into the black waters and a glimpse of the high lantern of his father's ship dancing above the tossing foam like a witch-fire, for an instant before she went down. When he came to himself he was lying on hot sand in the sunshine, and Edrupt and David Saumond were bending anxiously over him.

Half the seamen were gone; so was the captain; so was all of the cargo. Gervase Gaillard had been injured by a falling mast and was helpless. The coast was strange to them all, but the old merchant and Edrupt made a guess that it was a part of Morocco somewhere near the town of Fez. Food they had none; water they might find; and the merchants had not lost quite all they had in the wreck. Some gold and jewels they had saved, secured about their persons. These would pay the passage of the company to London--if they had luck.

They were considering what to do next when a body of some twoscore horsemen swept down upon them. The leader might have been either Turk or Frank. He was as dark as a Saracen and wore the chain-mail, scimitar and light helmet of the heathen, but he spoke Levantine rather too well for a Moor, and with a different intonation.

"Who are you?" he asked curtly. Nicholas Gay stood up, not yet quite steady on his feet.

"We are London merchant folk," he said, "from the wrecked ship Sainte Spirite, whereof my father, Gilbert Gay, was owner. My uncle here is our chief man, but as you see, he is injured and cannot move. If we may get food and lodging until we are able to return to England, we will requite it freely."

"London," repeated the soldier. "A parcel of London traders, eh?" He spoke a few words to the Moor who rode next him, in another language. "This is the domain of Yusuf of the Almohades," he went on, "and we make no terms with the enemies of God. Yet we condemn no man to starve. Ye shall have food and lodging so long as ye remain with us. Doubtless ye are honest and will pay, but in this barbarous land there are many thieves. Therefore we will take charge of such wealth as ye have. As for that old man, he cannot live to reach his home. Abu Hassan!"

A trooper spurred toward the old merchant and thrust him through with his lance. He half rose, groaned and fell back, dead. Others, dismounting, seized upon the astonished and indignant castaways, and took from them with the deftness of practiced hands whatever they had of value. This was too much for the Breton and English sailors. They would have fought it out

then and there. But Nicholas spoke quickly so that only those nearest him heard.

"There is no gain in being killed here one by one. Wait and be silent. Pass the word to the rest."

When the prisoners had been herded into a compact company in the center of the mounted troop, the leader chattered to his horse. "It grows late," he said. "Y'Allah!" And at the point of the lance the captives were driven forward.

They were taken through the crowded narrow streets of a squalid town and left in a walled enclosure where two negroes brought them an earthen jar of water and some sort of cooked grain in a large bowl. The sun blazed down upon their shelterless heads and flies hummed about the filth in the unclean place. Nicholas, when their hunger had been partly satisfied and there was no more to eat or drink, addressed himself to the others in a cool and quiet voice.

"Friends, it is like we are to be sold into slavery among the infidels. If each man is left to shift for himself they may break us. If we stand by one another and keep our faith we may yet win home to England. They may not separate us at first, and I have been thinking that if they find out the value of a company of men freely choosing to work together in harmony, they will hardly separate us at all. But we must obey their will, we must keep order among ourselves, and above all, we must seem to have given up all hope of escape. What say you?"

Edrupt spoke first. "I'm with you, lad. 'Tis our one chance of seeing home again, I do think."

David Saumond's shrewd eyes were scanning the faces of the sailors. "I'll no be the last to join ye," he said. "But all must agree. One man out would make a hole i' the dyke."

A big Breton sailor stepped forward. "Kadoc of Saint Malo sticks to his ship," he growled, and drew with his forefinger a line in the dust. "Who's next?"

One after another, but with little hesitation, the men crossed the line. All had some idea of what awaited them in the Moorish provinces. It was no new thing for captives of European blood to be sold as slaves. Gangs of them toiled on canals, walls, fortresses, in grain-fields, on board galleys. Those leaders of Islam who urged a holy war sowed fortifications wherever they went. The need for slave labor for such work was greater than the supply. Much of the slave population was unfit for anything but the simplest and rudest tasks, and could be kept at work only by the constant use of the whip.

All the tales Nicholas had heard of slavery crowded into his mind in the first moments of captivity. Once a black-browed Sicilian had told of a night of blood and flame, when the slaves of a galley, mad with toil, privation and hatred, killed their masters and attempted to seize the

ship,--and almost succeeded. "Slaves cannot unite," the Sicilian ended contemptuously. "There is always a Judas." But Gilbert Gay had chosen his men for this voyage with especial care. Every man of them, Nicholas believed, could be trusted.

They had never dreamed of anything like the next few days--the filth, the degradation, the cruelty. Nicholas was glad, when half-naked Moslem boys called them names from a safe distance, that the others could not understand. The insults of an Oriental are primitive and plain--and very old. Nicholas had a trick of absorbing languages, and already knew half a score of outlandish tongues and dialects.

Not only the townspeople but their Moslem fellow-slaves held the Kafirs in contempt. Their rations were sometimes food condemned by the Moslem faith. Edrupt's cool common sense and David's dry humor were of valiant service in those days. The Scot averred that better men than Mahomet had been bred on barley bannocks, and that the flat coarse cakes of the Berbers were as near them as a heathen could be expected to come. He also warned them that Moses knew what he was about when he forbade pork to his people, and that the pigs that ran in the streets of an African town were very different eating from the beech-fed hogs of Kent. From a Jewish physician for whom he had once built a secret treasure-vault he had picked up a rough-and-ready knowledge of medicine which was of very considerable value.

One morning they were all marched off, in charge of a greasy indifferent-looking Turk, to work on a canal embankment. The garden of an emir's favorite was to have a new bath-pavilion. Here the great strength of Kadoc, the hard clean muscle and ready resourcefulness of Edrupt, and the Scotch mason's experience in the ways of stones and waters, set the pace for the rest. The seamen studied how to use their strength to the best advantage as they had once studied the sky and the sea. They moved together to the tune of their own chanteys, and the Turk discovered that this one gang was worth any two others on the ground. When questioned, Nicholas replied briefly that it was the way of his people.

The foreign-looking officer smiled incredulously when this explanation was given, and watched them for some time with obvious suspicion. But the men seemed not to be plotting together, and to be thinking only of their work. If the English were fools enough to do more than they were made to do it was certainly no loss to their masters.

"I should like to know the name of that vinegar-faced captain," said Edrupt one day. "I mistrust he wasn't born here."

"No," said Nicholas. "They call him the Khawadji, and they never use that name for one of themselves."

"He's too free with his whip. Yon tall man that tends his horses could tell something of that, I make my guess."

One night they came on the Khawadji's stable-man caring for a lame horse with such skill that Nicholas spoke of it. By some instinct he spoke in Norman-French. The other answered in the same tongue.

"Every knight should know his horse."

"You are of gentle birth, my lord?"

"Call me not lord," the Norman said wearily. "I have seen too much to be any man's lord hereafter. Since my fever I am fit only for this, and none will know the grave of Stephen Giffard."

Nicholas' heart leaped. "Sir," he said quickly, "ere we left London the Lady Adelicia, your wife, came to my father's house to beseech him to aid her in searching for you. If any of us ever see home again I will take care that she is told of this."

The knight looked ten years younger. "I thank you," he answered gravely. "And if I should not live to see her again, I would have her know that my thoughts have been constantly of her."

"Is not this Khawadji a caitiff knight of France? He does not seem like a Moor."

The Norman nodded. "He is Garin de Biterres, a miscreant of Guienne. My brother balked him in some villainy years ago. He took me for Walter when he saw me, and let it out. Aquitaine being too hot to hold him, and the Normans in Ireland refusing to enlist him, he came through the Breach of Roland and took service under the Crescent. He was once a slave among the Moors of Andalusia, and owes his deformity to that. He cozened an old beggar into treating his leg with some ointment which would wither it up so that he could not work, and it never wholly recovered."

"How comes it that he has not allowed you to send word to your people? Most of these folk are greedy for ransom."

"I think he keeps me here for his pleasure. At first he took the letters I wrote and pretended to have sent them, and gibed in his bitter fashion when no reply came. That is how I know that the letters were not sent at all. Had my lady heard so much as a word of my captivity she would have searched me out."

The approach of some troopers broke off the conversation, and Nicholas went his way, marveling at the strange chances of life.

Some months passed, during which the English worked at varying tasks--brickmaking, the hauling of brick and cut stone, the building of walls. Then a merchant called Mustafa came seeking slaves for his galley. After much crafty bargaining he secured Nicholas and his companions for about two-thirds the original price asked. But the Khawadji refused to part with Stephen Giffard.

The galley was a racketsy, noisome trading-ship that plied along the coast. On board were already some rowers of various races, accustomed to the work, but the bulk of the labor was to be done by the new men. It was killing toil. Fed on black beans and coarse bread and unclean water, they

worked the ship from one filthy white-walled port to another, never seeing more than the dock where the galley anchored or some mean street where their barracks might be. There were times when Nicholas seemed to himself hardly more human than the rats that gnawed and scabbled in the dark at night. He began to see how a galley-slave is made--molded and tainted through and through by that of which he is a part.

The clean comradeship of the little group of Northern exiles did not count for so much in this work. The pace of the ship was the average pace of the whole crew. They became too weary to think or feel, too ravenous to disdain the most unwholesome rations. Nicholas found himself mysteriously aware of the moods of those about him, as men are when herded together in silent multitudes. In the free world one feels this only now and then--in an army, a mob, a church. Among slaves the dog-like instinct is common. They know more of their masters than their masters can ever know of them.

Nicholas had been carefully trained by wise parents to the habit of self-control, but he found that he was moved nevertheless by the mad unreasoning impulses of the half-barbarous people about him, ridden fiercely by their black thoughts of hate and fear. That it was the same with his comrades he knew from little things they said--and even more from what they did not say. They grew dulled to beauty and suffering alike. There were glorious dawns, that flushed the white walls of a seaport rose-red, above waters of mingled ink and blood that changed as by magic to blue like lapis-lazuli. Then the sky turned saffron and the minarets were of a fleeting gold above the deep blue shadows of the streets. There were velvet nights when the stars blazed like a king's ransom, and white-robed desert men moved in the moist chill air like phantoms. But all this was as little to them as to the lizards that crept along the walls or the sweeps they handled with their hardening hands. Years after, Nicholas recalled those nights and those mornings and knew that something that sat within his deadened brain had been alive and had stored the memories for him. But he did not know it then.

Mustafa bragged among his friends, from Jebel el Tarik to Iskanderia, of his fine ship and his unparalleled crew. The listeners would smile and stroke their beards and exclaim at intervals, "Ma sh'Allah!"--believing perhaps one tenth of what they heard. Oftenest he boasted of the Feringhi rowers whom he had purchased from the sheikh's own steward in the slave-market of Lundra--a city of mist and wealth and pigs and fair maidens. Thus it came about that Ahmed ibn Said, the host, and Abu Selim, the letter-writer of the bazaar, devised a jest for a supper at the khan. They would send for one of these Frankish slaves and see what he would say. The flattered Mustafa agreed, and the messenger returned with Nicholas Gay, whose gray eyes and yellow hair caused a mild sensation.

The guests began to ask questions, first in Levantine, then in Arabic. Were there bazaars in Lundra? Did the people drink coffee? Had they camels? Did the muezzin call them to prayer? Did the women sleep upon the housetops? Was the city most like Aleppo the White, or Istamboul, or Damasc-ush-Shah? How many Muslimun were there? How many of the idolaters?

To these inquiries Nicholas replied, at first with faint amusement at the

mingled shrewdness and ignorance of these men, then with a fierce pride in his city which made his words, as the letter-writer expressed it, shine like rubies and sing like a fountain. The merchants listened, and munched their sticky baclawi, ripe olives and dates and figs, and drank many tiny cups of coffee, more entertained than they had ever been by Mustafa. Finally the host sent for a basket of fruit--great pale Egyptian melons, pomegranates, oranges, figs--and graciously bestowed it upon the gifted galley-slave. He meant to come next day, he said, and with Mustafa's permission behold the prowess of the English in swimming.

To every one's surprise, Ahmed really came. Those who could swim were had out of their stifling quarters and allowed to do so. Nicholas could swim like an eel, and all were amazed when, after swimming farther out than any of the others, he flung up his arms, uttered a loud cry, and vanished. They watched and searched, but nothing more was seen of him, and there was mourning among the English.

But there was a Genoese galley in the harbor, and Nicholas had seen it. He had dived, swum under water as far as he could inshore, and come up with his head inside the scooped-out rind of a large melon. During the search the seeming melon quietly bobbed away toward a reedy shallow, and the swimmer hid among the reeds until dark, and then swam across to the Genoese ship. The captain knew Gilbert Gay and listened with interest to the youth's story.

The Genoese captain did not care to interfere with Mustafa in a town full of his Moslem countrymen. He waited until the crazy trading-galley was well out to sea and rammed her with the beak of his own ship. Crossbowmen lined the rail, grappling irons were thrown out, and the captain, with Nicholas and some soldiers, went and unearthed Mustafa among bales of striped cotton. When he understood that they merely wanted all of his Feringhi slaves, he thankfully surrendered them.

"Shall we put this fellow to death?" inquired the captain. Mustafa understood the tone and gesture though not the words, and turned a dirty yellow-gray. "No," said Nicholas Gay. "He was a good master--for an Arab."

Mustafa took heart. He would never reach port, he complained, being so short-handed.

"You can work your ship under sail for that distance," said the Genoese, twisting his mustachios, "if you dare loose your other slaves." At that Mustafa had an ague. When they saw the last of him he was making slow and crooked progress.

"And after all," said Edrupt one day, as they sighted the cliffs of Dover, "you bore witness among the heathen, as the fat old monk directed."

"Stupid pig!" David grumbled. "I'd like fine to have him bearing witness in a Barbary brick-yard, sweating and whaizling over his tale o' brick. He'd throw his six hundred a day or I'd have his hide."

"All the same," said Edrupt thoughtfully, "a Londoner beats a Turk even

for a galley-slave--eh, Nicholas?"

"We were never slaves," said Nicholas. "We were free men doing the work of slaves for a time. We had memory and hope left us. There is nothing to be learned at such work. Stick together and give them the slip if you can-- that's all the wisdom of the galleys."

HARBOUR SONG

Sails in the mist-gray morning, wide wings alert for flight,
Outward you fare with the sea-wind, seeking your ancient right
To range with your foster-brethren, the sleepless waves of the sea,
And come at the end of your wandering home again to me.
By the bright Antares, the Shield of Sobieski,
By the Southern Cross ablaze above the hot black sea,
You shall seek the Pole-Star below the far horizon,--
Steer by Arthur's Wain, lads, and home again to me!

Caravel, sloop and galleon follow the salt sea gale
That whispers ever of treasure, the ancient maddening tale,--
Round the world he leads ye, the sorcerer of the sea,
Battered and patched and bleeding ye come again to me.
By the spice and sendal, beads and trumpery trinkets,
By the weight of ingots that cost a thousand dead,
You shall seek your fortune under hawthorn hedges,--
Come to know your birthright in the land you fled.

Sails of my sons and my lovers, I watch for ye through the night,
My lamps are trimmed and burning, my hearth is clear and bright.
With every sough of the trade-wind that blows across the sea
I wake and wait and listen for the call of your hearts to me.
By Saint Malo's lanterns, by Medusa-fires
Rolling round your plunging prows in midnight tropic sea,
You shall sight the beacon on my headlands lifting--
All sail set, lads, and home again to me!

XIV

SOLOMON'S SEAL

Where the moor met the woodland beyond the Fairies' Hill, old Izan went painfully searching for the herbs she had been wont to find there. The woodcutters had opened clearings that gave an unaccustomed look to the place. Fumiter, mercury, gilt-cups, four-leaved grass and the delicate blossoms of herb-robert came out to meet the sun with a half-scared look, and wished they had stayed underground. The old wife was in a bad humor, and she was not the better pleased when her donkey, moved by some eccentric donkeyish idea, gave a loud bray and went trotting gleefully off

down the hill.

"Saints save us!" muttered the old woman, shaking a vain crutch after him. "I can never walk all that distance."

But the donkey was not to get his holiday so easily. There came a shout from the forest, and a boy on a brown moor pony went racing off after the truant beast, while a lady and a young girl looked on laughing. It was a very pretty chase, but at last Roger came back in triumph and tethered the donkey, repentant and lop-eared, to a wind-warped oak.

"O Mother Izan!" cried Eleanor, "we've found a great parcel of herbs. I never saw this before, but mother thinks it's what they called polygonec in France and used for bruises and wounds."

The old woman seized eagerly on the plant. It was a long curved stalk with a knotted root and oval leaves almost concealing the narrow greenish bells that hung from the joints of the stem. "Aye," she said, "that's Solomon's Seal, and 'tis master good for ointment. The women," she added dryly, "mostly comes for it after their men ha' made holiday."

Eleanor was already off her pony, and Roger followed her. "We'll get you all you want, Mother Izan," she called back; "there's ever so much of it up here among the rocks."

"I should like to know," queried Roger as they pulled and pried at the queer twisted roots, "why they call this Solomon's Seal. I don't believe Solomon ever came here."

"Maybe it was because he was so wise," said Eleanor sagely. "Mother said it was good to seal wounds. We'll ask David."

In those days a knowledge of herbs and medicines was part of a lady's education. Physicians were few, and in remote places the ladies of the castle were called upon not only to nurse but to prescribe for cases of accident, fever, wounds or pestilence. Rarely did a week go by without Lady Philippa being consulted about some illness among her husband's people. She had begun to teach Eleanor the use of herbs, especially the nature of those to be found in the neighborhood, and here Mother Izan was of great service. In her younger days she had ranged the country for miles in every direction, in search of healing plants, and she knew what grew in every swamp, glen, meadow and thicket.

"Mother Izan must have been uncommonly anxious to get that Solomon's Seal," said Roger as they rode home in the purple dusk. "I believe Howel has been beating Gwillym again."

Almost as well-informed as Mother Izan was David Saumond, the stone-mason, who was rebuilding the village church. He had come to the castle one day with news of Sir Stephen Giffard, Eleanor's uncle, who had been a prisoner among the infidels but had now been ransomed and was on his way home. Finding that David understood his business, the lord and lady of the castle had decided to give into his hands the work to be done on the

church. Masons were scarce in England at that time, and most of those who had skill were at work on half-built cathedrals. David was a wise and thorough builder, but he had the reputation of being rather crotchety. Sir Walter Giffard suspected that this was due to his absolute honesty. He would rather pick up a job here and there which he could do as it should be done, than to have steady employment where scamped building was winked at. This suited the knight very well. He wanted a man whom he need not watch.

"An unfaithful mason's like a broken tooth or a foot out of joint," observed the Scot when he saw some haphazard masonry he was to replace with proper stonework. "That wall's a bit o' baith."

David would take all the pains in the world with a well-meaning but slow workman, but he disposed of shirkers and double-dealers without needless words. Neither did he encourage discussion and idle talk about the work.

"A true mason's no sae glib-gabbet," he observed one day. "There's no need o' speechmaking to make an adder bite or a gude man work."

David confirmed Mother Izan's opinion of the virtues of Solomon's Seal. The Turks, he said, used to eat the young shoots, cooked. The children already knew that Solomon was the Grand Worshipful Master of all the masons of the world. About his majestic and mystical figure centered legends and traditions innumerable. Solomon's Knot was a curious intricate combination of curving lines. Solomon's signet was a stone of magical virtues. The temple of Solomon was the most wonderful building ever seen, and the secrets of its masonry were still treasured by master masons everywhere. No sound of building was heard within its walls; the stones were so perfectly cut and fitted that they slid into their places without noise. And Solomon himself was the wisest man who ever lived. He could understand the talk of the martins under the eaves, the mice in the meal-tub and the beasts of burden in the stables, when they conversed among themselves.

"Aiblins that's what gar'd him grow sae unco wise," David ended. "You bear in mind, Master Roger, that every leevin' thing ye see, frae baukie-bird tae blackfish, kens some bit cantrip he doesna tell, and ye'll be a Solomon--if ye live."

David was eating his bread and cheese on the lee side of the wall when Eleanor came by with a gray lump of clay in her hands.

"See what Gwilym has made," she said.

David stopped with the cheese half way to his mouth. "Who's Gwilym?" he asked.

"He's a boy we've known ever since he was very little--he's only eight now--and he does make the most alive looking things out of clay. He heard you telling about Solomon talking with the birds and beasts, and he made this."

The clay group was really an unusual piece of modelling for an untrained hand. That a child should have made it was more than remarkable. The thin bent figure of the wise King was seated on a throne formed of gnarled tree-roots. On his wrist a raven perched; on his shoulder crouched a squirrel, with tail alert for flight; two rabbits sat upright at his feet; a lamb huddled against his knee on one side and a goat on the other. The figures all had a curiously lifelike appearance. As Eleanor said, one felt that if they heard a noise they would go away. Moreover she saw with wonder that the head of King Solomon and his lifted hand made him a fair portrait of David.

David took the clay group in his hand, turned it about, whistled softly. "Wha owns this bairn?" he inquired.

"Howel's his father," said Roger. "He's quite good to him--unless he's drunk. Then he pounds him. He hates to have Gwilym make images; he thinks it's witch-craft. Gwilym made an image of him once and the leg broke off, and that very same day Howel's donkey kicked him and made him lame for a week."

"There's ower mony gowks in the land for a' the mills to grind," said David, and that was all they could get out of him. They knew he was interested or he would not have been so Scotch. David could speak very good English, and did as a rule, but with Eleanor and Roger he often returned to the speech of his boyhood because they liked it so much.

They liked David exceedingly. He had seen more interesting things than any one else they knew. He showed Roger how to make a fish-pond, and he told Eleanor how the Saracen city in her tapestry ought to look. He had himself been a slave among the infidels, and the children heard his adventures with awe and delight. Eleanor loved the story of the bath-pavilion like a tiny palace, built by the emir for the lady Halima, and the turning of the course of a river to fill her baths and her fountains, and water her gardens. Roger's hero was the young English merchant who had escaped by swimming, under his master's very nose. If one could have such exciting experiences it seemed almost worth while to be a captive of the Moslems. But when Roger said so, David smiled a dry smile and said nothing.

But it was of King Solomon that he spoke most, and he seemed to have the sayings of the wise king all by heart. A Hebrew physician whom he had once known used, he said, to write one of Solomon's proverbs on the lid of every box of salve he sent out.

"You follow his wisdom, Master Roger," David said one day, "and you'll see how to build ye a house or a kingdom. 'Envy thou not the oppressor and choose none of his ways,' he says. 'Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of man to do it,' he says. 'God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.'

"I tell ye," David added, glancing from the trim gray wall of the lychgate up to the castle on the hill, "every day's judgment day wi' a builder--or the head of a house."

Thus the stonemason was touched more deeply perhaps than he would have owned, by the likening of his face to that of Solomon in the clay figures of little Gwillym ap Howel.

As the work on the church progressed three friends of David's journeyed from Salisbury to see him. They had come from Lombardy a long time ago, when they were Piero, Andrea and Gianbattista. At Avignon they were known as Pierre, Jean-Baptiste and Andre, and in Spain they were rechristened Pedro, Juan and Andres. Now they were called Peter, Andrew and John,--and sometimes the Apostles. Peter understood vaulting; Andrew could carve a stone image of anything he saw, and John had great skill in the laying of pavements. They talked of cathedrals and palaces with a familiarity that took one's breath away.

The building of a cathedral seemed to be full of a kind of fairy lore. The plan was that of a crucifix, the chancel being the head, the transept the arms and the nave representing body and legs. The two western towers stood for Adam and Eve. There was a magic in numbers; three, seven and nine were better than six, eleven or thirteen. Certain flowers were marked for use in sacred sculpture as they were for other purposes. Euphrasy or eyebright with its little bright eye was a medicine for sore eyes. The four-petaled flowers,--the cross-bearers,--were never poisonous, and many of them, as mustard and cabbage, were valuable for food or medicine. But when Roger took this lore to Mother Izan for her opinion she remarked that if that was doctors' learning it was no wonder they killed more folk than they cured.

In fact the three Lombard builders, while each man was a master of his own especial art, had done most of their work in cities, and when it came to matters of the fields and woods they were not to be trusted. But when David found Roger a little inclined to vaunt his superior woodcraft he set him a riddle to answer:

"The baldmouse and the chauve-souri,
The baukie-bird and bat,
The barbastel and flittermouse,--
How many birds be that?"

And the masons were all grinning at him before Roger found out that these were half a dozen names for the bat, from as many different places.

The vaulting of the roof of the church was now under consideration. For so small a building the "barrel vault," a row of round arches, was often used; but David's voice was for the pointed arch throughout. "The soarin' curve lifts the eye," he said, "like the mountains yonder." He drew with a bit of charcoal a line so beautiful that it was like music. It was not merely the meeting of two arcs of a circle, but the meeting of two mysteriously curved perfect lines. Sir Walter Giffard saw at a glance that here was the arch he had dreamed of.

He saw more than that. David was that rare builder, a man who can work with his hands and see all the time inside his soul the completed work. He

could no more endure slipshod work or graceless lines in his building than the knight himself could do a cowardly or dishonest thing. David would have done his task faithfully in any case, but it rejoiced his soul to find that the knight and his lady would know not only that their village church was beautiful, but why it was so.

Andrew was at work upon the decorative carving of the arches of the doorway. The outer was done in broad severe lines heavily undercut; the next inner arch in a simple pattern of alternating bosses and short lines--Andrew called it the egg and dart pattern--and the inner arch in a delicate vine rather like the ivy that grew over the keep. Andrew said it was a vine found in the ruins of the Coliseum at Rome.

When it came to the carving of the animals and birds and figures for the inside of the church, Andrew's designs did not quite suit Lady Philippa. They were either too classical or too grotesque; they were better fitted to the elaborate richness of a great cathedral than to a little stone church in the mountains. She would have liked figures which would seem familiar to the people, of the birds and beasts they knew, but Andrew did not know anything about this countryside.

"Mother," said Eleanor one night after this had been talked over, "what if Roger and I were to ask Andrew to go with us to Mother Izan's and see her tame birds and animals, and Gwilym's squirrel? And we could explain what he wants of them."

Like many children in such remote places, Eleanor and Roger had picked up dialects as they did rhymes or games, and often interpreted for a peasant who knew neither Norman nor Saxon and wished to make himself understood at the castle.

The idea met with approval, and the next day Lady Philippa, Eleanor, Roger and Andrew went to the cottage by the Fairies' Well. They found that David had been there before them.

"He's a knowledgeable man, that," the old woman said with a shrewd smile. "He's even talked Howel into letting the clay images alone, he has. Gwilym's down by the claybank now, a-making Saint Blaise and little Merlin."

The cottage evidently was a new sort of place to Andrew, and his dark eyes were full of kindly interest as he looked about. The old dame sat humped in her doorway among her chirping, fluttering, barking and squeaking pets. An ancient raven cocked his eye wisely at the visitors, a tame hare hopped about the floor, a cat with three kittens, all as black as soot, occupied a basket, and there were also a fox cub rescued from a trap, a cosset lamb and a tiny hedgehog. Birds nested in the thatch; a squirrel barked from the lintel, and all the four-footed things of the neighborhood seemed at home there,

The stone-carver readily made friends with Gwilym, who seemed to understand by some instinct his broken talk and lively gestures. When Andrew wished to know what some bird or animal was like, the boy would

mold it in clay, or perhaps take him to some haunt of the woodlands where they could lie motionless for a half-hour watching the live creature itself.

But there was one among Gwilym's clay figures which they never saw in the forest, and to which the boy never would give a name. It was a shaggy half-human imp with stubby horns, goat-legs and little hooved feet. He modeled it, bent under a huge bundle, perched on a point of rock, dancing, playing on an oaten pipe. Andrew was so taken with the seated figure that he copied it in stone to hold up the font.

"What's that for?" asked David when he saw it. "Are ye askin' Auld Hornie ben the kirk, man?"

Andrew laughed and dusted his pointed brown fingers. "One of Pan's people, David. They will not stay away from us. If you sprinkle the threshold with holy water they come through the window."

That figure puzzled David, but Gwilym would say nothing. At last the church was finished, and the village girls went gathering fresh rushes, fragrant herbs and flowers to strew the floor. David went fishing with Roger in Roger's own particular trout-stream. Coming back in the twilight they beheld Gwilym dancing upon the moss, to the piping of a strange little hairy man sitting on a rock. An instant later the stranger vanished, and the boy came toward them searching their faces with his solemn black eyes.

"That was my playfellow," he said. "I have not seen him for a long time. He and his people lived here once, but they ran away when there came to be so many houses. I used to hide in the woods when father came seeking me at Mother Izan's, and my playfellow gave me nuts and berries and wild honey. He said that if father beat me I was to go and live with his people. I think I should if you had not come."

Howel, the mason, was a bewildered man that night. He agreed, before he fairly knew what he was about, to David's adopting Gwilym as his own son, to go with him to the house of a good woman in London and be taught all that a lad should learn. In time he might be able to carve stone saints and angels, kings and queens, gargoyles and griffins, for great cathedrals. And all this had come of the forbidden clay toys.

"I beat him week after week," he muttered, "for melling wi' mud images and running away to the forest to play wi' devils. 'Twas no good to him, being reared by an old witch."

David's mouth set in a grim line and he rubbed the little black head with his crooked, skillful, weatherworn hand.

"Even a child is known by his doings, whether his heart be pure, and whether it be right," he said half aloud as he led Gwilym away toward his own lodgings. "But the fool hates knowledge. The hearing ear and the seeing eye are the gifts of the Lord--and if a man was meant to be a bat or a donkey he'd ha' been made so. When Solomon said that a wise son

maketh a glad father he didna reckon on a father being a fule. Ye'll say yer farewells to Auld Hornie, laddie, and then we'll gang awa' to London and leave Solomon's Seal i' the wilderness."

And that was how the little wild cave-man of the forest came to be inside a village church, under the font for the christening.

THE LEPRECHAUN

Terence he was a harper tall, and served the King o' Kildare,
And lords and ladies free-handed all gave largesse to him there,
And once when he followed the crescent moon to the rose of a summer dawn,
Wandering down the mountain-side, he met the Leprechaun.

And a wondrous power of heart and voice came over Terence then,
For a secret in his harp-strings lay, to call to the hearts of men,
That he could make magic of common songs, and none might understand
The words he said nor the dreams they bred--for he had them of Fairyland.

Eily she was a colleen fair, the light of the harper's eyes,
And he won by the aid of the Leprechaun his long-desired prize.
The wedding-feast was but just begun,--when 'twixt the dark and the day,
Quick as the water that runs to earth the Leprechaun slipped away!

So the daylight came, and the dreams were past, and the wild harp
sang no more,
And Terence looked at the cold black hearth and the silent open door,
And he cried, "I have sold my life this night, ye have my heart in
pawn,--
Take wife and gold, but come ye back, ye little Leprechaun!"

XV

BLACK MAGIC IN THE TEMPLE

No one could say just how it came to be whispered that the Templars of Temple Assheton dealt in black magic. Travelers told strange tales of France, where the Order was stronger than it was in England--tales of unhallowed processions and midnight incantations learned from the infidels of Syria. A Preceptor, Gregory of Hildesheim, was said to possess writings of a wizard who had suffered death some years before, and to have used them for the profit of the Order.

Swart the drover, who had sold many good horses to the Templars and expected to sell more, laughed at these uncanny rumors. Wealthy the Order was, to be sure, but that was no miracle. Its vaults, being protected not only by the consecration of the building but by its trained body of

military monks, often held the treasure of princes. Moreover, this powerful military Order attracted many men of high birth. Their estates became part of the common fund, since no individual Templar could own anything.

Unfortunately, Swart's facts were so much less romantic than the tales of enchantment that they made very little impression. The grasping arrogance of the Templars caused them to be hated and feared, and if they were really wizards it was just as well not to investigate them too closely. And if they had in truth learned the art of making gold, it was only another proof of that old and well-tried rule, "He who has, gets."

Gregory had not, however, discovered that secret as yet. He had had great hopes of certain formulae bought at a large price of a clerk named Simon, who stole them from the reputed wizard; but when he tried them, there was always some little thing which would not work. At last he bethought him of one Tomaso of Padua, who had been a friend of the dead man and might possibly have some valuable knowledge. The physician was at the time in a market-town about twelve miles off, resting for a few days before proceeding to London. He was an old man and journeys were fatiguing to him. Gregory sent a company of men-at-arms to invite him to come to Temple Assheton. The request was made on a lonely path in a forest, along which Tomaso was riding to visit a sick child on a remote farm. It would have been impossible for him to refuse it.

Rain was dripping from the drenched bare boughs of half-fledged trees, clouds hung purple-gray over the bleak moors; the river had overflowed the meadows, and the horses floundered flank-deep over the paved ford. Few travelers were abroad. Those who saw the black and white livery of the Temple, and the old man in the long dark cloak who rode beside the leader, looked at one another, and wondered.

When the cavalcade rode in at the great gate, where the round Temple crouched half-hidden among its grim and stately halls, the physician was taken at once to Gregory's private chamber. The Preceptor greeted him urbanely. "Master Tomaso," he said, "men say that you have learned to make gold."

"They say many things impossible to prove, as you are doubtless aware," Tomaso answered.

"Do you then deny that it is possible?" persisted Gregory.

"He is foolish," Tomaso returned, "who denies that a thing may happen, because he finds it extraordinary."

"Under certain conditions, you would say, it can be done?"

"When the donkey climbs the ladder he may find carrots on the tiles," was the Paduan's reply. The weasel-like face of the Templar contorted in a wry grin.

"You bandy words like an Aristotelian, sir alchemist," he said sharply,

"therefore we will be plain with you. You shall be lodged here with suitable means for your experiments until such time as your pretensions are justified--if they are. Should you prove yourself a wizard, a dabbler in the black art and a deceiver of the people, you shall be so punished that all men may know we share not in your guilt. Reflection hereupon may perchance quicken your understanding. Until you have news of importance for our hearing, farewell."

With what he could summon of dignity, the Preceptor turned from the calm gaze of the physician and left the guards to conduct him to his lodging. There was really nothing else to do. It was a risk, of course. Tomaso was well known. He had the confidence of the King himself. But the situation was difficult. Prince John, who was usually in straits despite his father's generosity, had hinted to Gregory lately that he meant to inquire in person about the reported making of gold in the Temple. Could he have guessed somehow that two chests of ingots from a Cadiz galley had come to Temple Assheton instead of to the King's treasury? Or did he believe the story of the making of gold?

Gregory was but too certain that if John found any treasure of doubtful title he would seize it, and he was acutely unhappy. However, if Tomaso possessed the secret--or some other secret of value--there was yet a chance to save the Cadiz ingots. If this plan failed the scapegoat would not be a Templar.

Tomaso knew what was passing in his enemy's mind, not through any supernatural means, but by his knowledge of human nature. He was aware, as he lay on his narrow straw bed, that his life was in imminent danger. No one knew where he was; no message could reach his friends. A discredited wizard could count on no popular sympathy. The record of his studies for many years would vanish like the wind-blown candle-flame. Yet after some hours of wakefulness he slept, as tranquilly as a child.

A red-headed youth in the dress of a clerk, who was to have met Tomaso on the morrow, waited for him in vain. On the second day he started in search of his old friend, and weary and mud-bespattered, came at last to Temple Assheton. On the road he fell in with Swart the drover, who told him of the reported alchemy. "Gold would be common as fodder if any man could make it," Swart growled, "and when a man's wise beyond others in the art of healing, 'tis wicked folly to burn him alive for't."

Padraig's face lost every trace of color. "W-who says that?"

"The crows and herons, I suppose," said the drover coolly. "Anyhow none of the folk in the village know where the story started, and nobody but a bird on the wing could see over those walls. 'Tis said that ten days hence, if the old doctor don't make gold for them, they'll burn him for a wizard. Now that's no sense, for if he could make gold he'd be a wizard no bounds, and they'd not burn him then, I reckon."

Padraig looked down the valley at the tender gold-green grass and the snowdrift apple-boughs of spring, It seemed impossible that those grim gray walls held within them this cruel and implacable spirit. "Can I get a

trustworthy messenger?" he asked. "I would send a letter to the Master's friends."

With the ready understanding of men who see and judge strange faces constantly, Swart and Padraig had taken each other's measure and been satisfied. "My nephew Hod will go," Swart answered. Hod was the son of the farmer whose house Tomaso had visited.

Padraig was busy with tablets and inkhorn. He folded and sealed his note, written in the clear stubbed hand of the monasteries. "I am Padraig," he said, "a scribe of the Irish Benedictines. If the Master comes to harm there will be a heavy reckoning, but that will come too late. I will rescue him or die with him--are you with me?"

Swart pulled at his huge beard. "The Swarts of Aschenrugg," he said, "have dwelt too long in these parts to bow neck to a Templar. Hod shall ride with the letter, and if it be thy choice to risk thine own life for thy master's I've no call to betray thee."

A dark-browed yokel came to the door with the bridle of Swart's best horse over his arm. "Take this," Padraig directed, "to Robert Edrupt, the wool merchant at Long Lea near Stratton. If he be from home give it to his wife Barbara and tell her to open and read it. She is wise and will do what is right. Here is money--all I have--but you shall be paid well when the errand is done; I have asked Edrupt to see to that."

Hod stuck his thumbs in his belt. "Put up thy money," he muttered. "The old doctor he cured our Cicely, he did."

The messenger gone, Padraig went straight to the Temple and asked to see the Preceptor. Gregory listened at first with suspicion, then with wonder, to what the stranger told. It seemed that, hearing that a famous alchemist was at work in the Temple, he had come to crave the privilege of acting as his servant. It was, he said, absolutely necessary that such a master should have a disciple at hand for the actual work, and be left undisturbed in meditation meanwhile."

"Is this necessary to the making of gold?" asked Gregory.

"Surely," Padraig assured him. "The pupil cannot do the work of the master, the master must not be compelled to labor as the pupil. It is written in our books--Feliciter is sapit, qui periculo alieno sapit--Those are fortunate who learn at the risk of another,--and again, He is wise who profits by others' folly."

Gregory eyed the stranger warily, but in Padraig's blue eyes he saw only childlike innocence and fanatical zeal. If a madman, he was a useful one. By his help the experiments could be carried on without imperiling any Templar. He directed a page to show Padraig the way to Tomaso's chamber.

"My son!" said the physician as he lifted his eyes from his writing and saw who was in the doorway, "how came you here?"

"I came to be with you, Master," Padraig answered with a glance behind him to make sure the page was gone, "to rescue you if I can. What else could I have done?"

Then he related his conversation with Gregory. "Through a drover of this place who is our friend," he ended, "I have sent word to Robert Edrupt asking him to get word of this to the King or to the Bishop. But if help does not come in time--"

"Che sara sara (What will be, will be)," said Tomaso coolly. "I have made a fair copy of these writings in the hope that I might send them to Brother Basil."

Padraig knelt at the physician's feet, his beseeching eyes raised to the kindly, serene old face. "Master Tomaso," he stammered, "they shall not do this thing--I cannot b-bear it! We have--we have the formula for the Apples of Sodom, and--and other things. They would give more than gold for that knowledge."

Tomaso laid a gentle hand upon the young shoulder. "My dear son," he said, "when we learned the secrets of Archiater--those secrets which mean death--we promised one another, all of us, never to use them save to the glory of God and the honor of our land. Which of these, think you, would be served by lending them to the evil plots of a traitor?"

Padraig caught the hand of his master in both his own. "It is beyond endurance!" he cried piteously.

"I have knowledge," Tomaso went on, "that this Gregory is partly pledged to the faction of Prince John. The Templars have no country, but they think, with some reason, that they can bend John to their purposes. What would they do, with the power these fires of Tophet would give them? Padraig, there is no safety in the breaking of a pledge."

A thought came into the boy's mind, and a wild hope with it. "Master Tomaso," he cried, "if I can find a way to use our knowledge without breaking the pledge, will you give me my way?"

The Paduan looked long into the uplifted eager face. "It is good to be so loved," he said. "I will trust you. Yet grieve not, whatever comes,--the stars are my fortress, God is my lamp. The bridge to eternal life is very short."

Padraig's cell was the one just below, and the window looked out across the moors. Chin on his crossed arms, he pondered long under the stars. The next day he informed the Preceptor that the alchemist was ready to begin the making of Spanish gold, and must on no account be disturbed.

He showed Gregory the formula. It was not very easy to understand, but it was impressive. Cockatrice eggs were to be placed carefully in a nest in a stone walled underground chamber, which must be sealed from the outer air when all was ready. Snakes and toads brooding thereon would in time hatch out baby monsters--creatures with cocks' heads and the tails and wings of

dragons. Their look was sure death, but they could be poisoned by a draught compounded of agrimony, dill and vervain. This must be prepared beforehand and left in a bason where the cockatrice when hatched would find and drink of it. When all were dead they were to be brayed in a mortar with other necessary ingredients. When the stars indicated that the fortunate hour was at hand, the compound was to be heated in a crucible over a large brazier, covered with a layer of chaff to absorb the poisonous gases that arose. That which remained in the crucible would be pure gold.

"'Tis a fearsome business," said Padraig naively, "for men hate wizards."

"Let them hate, if they fear us as well," muttered Gregory poring over the mysterious phrases. Visions arose in his mind of a Grand Master whose power should have no limit, whom Kings must serve and Sultans fear. Nay, not only should the Holy Temple be recovered, but it should be built anew, overlaid with gold as in Solomon's day. He called a steward and ordered him to fit up a cellar, formerly a passage into the vaults of the oldest part of the building, with all needful utensils. Braziers, crucibles, retorts and all the usual materials in the way of metals and powders were there, but of course, no cockatrice eggs.

"He brought these from Andalusia," said Padraig, showing seven small eggs mottled with crimson and black in a medicine box. Gregory touched one very gingerly. They were in fact waxen shells filled with volatile liquids, and Padraig had spent most of the night preparing them. He explained that they were no larger than frogs' eggs when he first had them,--which was perfectly true, the wax having been carried in the form of balls.

Sulphurous odors came from the cellar where the eggs were supposed to be hatching in their nest. An unwary hound sniffing about the door got a throatful of the stinging smoke and fled yowling. Hydrochloric acid, vitriol and nitre-glycerine are kittle things to meddle with, and the place was religiously avoided.

From the too free tongue of a cellarer one night Padraig learned that this chamber adjoined the treasure-vaults of the Temple, but the communicating door had been walled up. When the gold should be ready it could be conveyed into the treasury direct, by reopening this doorway.

One evening Prince John rode up to the gate with a company of Norman men-at-arms and a few courtiers. It was understood that he had come to investigate the reputed sorceries. On the same day three strangers came into the village and tarried at Swart's house on Aschenrugg. He often lodged travelers for a night, being near the highway. Padraig, spying a white signal on the giant ash which gave the ridge its name, told the impatient Preceptor that the hour was at hand.

Among the villagers it was said that the physician and his disciple were guarded closely night and day, and that the Paduan certainly would be burned at the stake if he did not succeed in making gold. Country folk had seen the stake set up and the faggots piled. In case the wizard proved a false prophet Gregory meant to make the execution as public as possible.

Padraig explained that the final trial must take place inter canis et lupus--between dog and wolf--in that hour which is neither daylight nor dark. As dusk fell the knights and esquires of the Temple ranged themselves in orderly ranks along the walls, at some distance from the door of the underground chamber. The low archway was now open; the glow of a brazier showed red against the rear wall. Torches lighted the stone-paved yard, and beyond the open gate the white faces of peasants crowded, awe-stricken and expectant. When the physician was brought out by the guards to a seat near the stake, the sobs of a woman were heard in the outer darkness. Padraig, following, cast a swift glance through the gate and saw the dim shapes of horsemen outlined against the sky.

Last of all appeared the Preceptor and Prince John with their immediate followers, and took their seats midway in the ranks of onlookers, directly opposite the door, where they could see every stage of the proceedings. Gregory, furtively scanning the face of the physician, saw therein not a sign of fear. Padraig advanced into the open space before the cellar, and bowed to Prince John and the Preceptor. Then from a niche within the door of the chamber he lifted a large crucible, and a siffle of indrawn breath was heard in the crowd as he carried it toward the fire. Gathering pitchy twigs and chaff from a heap of fuel he packed them deftly into the open top, and set the jar on the brazier, returning then to the side of Tomaso.

The minutes passed but slowly. The nerves of all the spectators were strung to the snapping-point. Gregory finally began to explain to Prince John, who looked half curious and half skeptical,--

"This crucible, your Grace, is now throwing off the vapors generated by fervent heat. When these have been absorbed by the chaff above, the gold will be found beneath. The possibilities of this priceless formula are not as yet altogether known. We do not know what may come to light. You may be astounded--"

The chaff in the crucible caught fire from a wisp that thrust up into it from the brazier, flared up of a sudden and lighted every corner of the old cellar. It revealed the craning neck and slack jaw of Gregory, the covetous glittering eyes and incredulous smile of Prince John, the scared faces of the huddling peasants. Then there was a crash that shook the earth. Battlements rocked, pavements cracked, blocks of stone leaped into the air like a fountain of masonry. When fire encounters high explosives in a tunnel the results are remarkable. Torches dropped or were blown out, and stumbling, cursing men ran right and left--anywhere to escape the pelting stones. Padraig, holding to his master's arm, guided him out of the gate and toward the sound of trampling hoofs upon a little hillock. There they found Edrupt, Guy and Alan struggling with their frantic horses. Swart came up with two more horses, and soon the party was beyond all danger of pursuit.

When the stunned and bewildered Templars recovered their breath, they saw nothing of the alchemist or of his disciple. It was felt to be just and right if they had been carried off bodily by the foul fiend. No one else was missing, though broken heads and bruises were everywhere. Only when

dawn paled the heavens did the boldest of John's mercenaries venture back to the place of terror.

There was a great hole in the rear wall of the cellar, and among the ruins lay shining heaps of gold--not bezants or zecchins, but wedges and bars of a strange reddish hue. They touched it warily; it was not red-hot. They filled their pouches, and others came and did likewise. The hard-riding veterans had had no opportunity to plunder for more than a year, and John had little money for himself and none for them. When Gregory came on the scene, white and shaking with rage, and somewhat damaged about the face from flying stones, it was too late to hide his ingots. Gold of Spain or of Beelzebub, it was all one to John Sansterre. What little the troopers had left went into the gaping leather bags of their master, while Gregory looked on, grinding his teeth.

It was not in the nature of Prince John to believe much in miracles, but it suited him to accept this one, whole. With a jesting compliment upon the success of the formula and an intimation that he would like more such entertainment, John departed next day well pleased with his perquisition.

All this came duly to the ears of Swart the drover, and was told by him when he came by Edrupt's house a few days later.

"How did it happen so suitably, Padraig of my heart?" asked Tomaso, his deep eyes twinkling.

Padraig chuckled in pure delight. "I guessed that if our Apples of Sodom were properly ripe they'd blow a hole in the treasury wall. Those Norman thieves are not the men to balk at a little brimstone, and I figured that Master Gregory would be too busy to think of us for awhile. He took that formula for himself. Much good may he get of it. In place o' the copper and sulphur and nitre and the like I set down our cipher--snakes and toads and scorpions, Maltese cocks, unicorn's blood and so on. The cellarer said there was a lot o' foreign gold locked up in there, and that must ha' been what was heaved out. I warrant there'll be no more Black Magic in Temple Assheton."

THE EBBING TIDE

The sun has gone from the heights of heaven,
The knights a-tilting no longer ride,
The sails are vanished, the beaches empty--
There is nothing left but the ebbing tide.

At dawn we sounded our heady challenge,
At noon our blood beat high i' the sun,
At eve we rode where the wolf-pack follow--
The night is falling, our course is run.

But the tide runs out through the gates of sunset,
And the living fires of Atlantis glow
Between the clouds and the long sea-level,

Beyond the waters we used to know.

Hy-Brasail gleams with its towers of beryl,
Tourmaline, hyacinth, topaz and pearl,
Free to the King if he have but the pass-word,
Free to the veriest low-born churl.

For Earth levels all who have known her and loved her,
And the soul fares forth where the great stars guide
On the viewless path of the calling waters--
Out to Hy-Brasail upon the tide!

XVI

THE END OF A PILGRIMAGE

Eleanor and Roger sat together in their own especial loop-hole window. When that window was new and they were little, the great stone hall with its massive arches was unfamiliar and lonely to them, and they liked to sit apart in this nook that seemed made for them. Four steps led up to it, a stone seat was within it, and it was at a comfortable distance from the warmth of the fire. Sitting there, they could look out upon the changeful beautiful landscape, or down upon the doings in the hall.

Now all the land was blanketed with heavy snow. The tree-trunks were charcoal-black under the stars; lights twinkled in the huts at the foot of the hill; the frozen river made no sound beneath the castle wall. Cattle and sheep were snug and safe in the byres, guarded by the wise watch-dogs. Very far away in the woods an owl hooted.

It was the beginning of Yule, in that breathing-time before the holiday begins, when one gets the fine aroma of its pleasure. The festivities this year would be greater than ever before, for a new banquet-hall was to be opened with the Christmas feast. This hall was the realized dream of years. Thus far the only place for entertainments had been the hall of the keep, which was also the living-room of the household. The new hall was a separate one-story building, not unlike a barn in shape, spacious enough for thirty or forty guests with their retainers and servants. Its red tiled roof, raised upon seasoned beams two or three feet thick, made an imposing show. The doorway took in almost half of one end and was lofty enough for a standard-bearer to come in without dipping his banner. There was a fireplace near the middle of one side, with a hooded stone arch to draw the smoke upward and outward. Opposite was a musicians' gallery of paneled oak, supported by corbels of stone placed about eight feet above the floor. A dais was built at the other end of the building from the entrance, for the master's table, and from this a smaller door opened into a stone passageway leading to the castle, while near it another door, leading to the kitchens, was placed. The stone walls were wainscoted about halfway up, and plastered above, the plaster being first painted a golden

brown and then decorated with a pattern of stiff small flowers and leaves in green, red, bright blue and a little gilding. The floor was of stone blocks laid in a pattern of black and gray, and two steps led from the dais to the lower part of the hall. At intervals along the upper part of the walls were cressets of wrought iron in which to set torches, and above the dais were silver sconces for large wax candles. At intervals also were hooks of ornamental iron-work, from which to hang tapestries by their metal rings.

Eleanor had spent the greater part of the afternoon helping her mother get out the sets of tapestries reserved for holiday occasions, among them some which had been kept for this very hall. Not all were the work of the lady herself. Some were woven and embroidered by her maids under her direction, others were gifts from friends, and the superb piece which hung above the dais and represented the marriage of Ulysses and Penelope had been woven in Saumur and was the gift of the King. The chairs of state with their ebony or ivory footstools were placed, the candles in the sconces, the rushes and sweet herbs had been strewn upon the floor. Even the holiday meats and pastries were cooked or made ready for cooking. Until after Twelfth Night the only work done would be the necessary duties of each day.

There was shouting and laughter in the courtyard. In came most of the boys and young men of the place, bearing the great Yule log into the hall. Collet the maid, who had just come in with her mistress, bearing the Yule candle, was sent to get the charred remnant of last year's log. Both log and candle would burn through the twelve holidays without being quite consumed, and the bit that was left would be saved to light next year's fires. These familiar homely ceremonies were not for the stately untouched newness of the banquet-room.

Supper was but just over, and the roasted crab-apples were spluttering in the bowls of brown ale, when the mummers came, capering in their very best fashion and habited in antic robes whose pattern--if not the costume itself--had come down from past generations. These actors were village clowns who had seen such pageants in their boyhood, and they played their rude drama as they had seen it then, with perhaps a new song or two and a few speeches to tickle the ears of the new audience. All the household and many of the villagers crowded in after them to look and laugh and make remarks more or less humorous about the performance. The lord of the castle and his family disposed themselves to give their countenance to the merrymaking, and Sir Walter ordered the steward to see that the players had a good supper. He himself would distribute some money among them when the time came. Then they would go on to give the play wherever else they could hope for an audience.

The drama was supposed to be founded on the life of Saint George, but no one could say with truth that it was very much like the legend. First came a herald tooting on a cow-horn, to proclaim the entrance of the champion, who was Clement the carpenter mounted on a hobby-horse and armed with wooden sword and painted buckler. There was much giggling and whispering among the maids, directed at the demure black-eyed Madelon, of the still-room. This may have been a reason why Saint George stumbled so desperately

over his rather long speech. His challenge was at last finished, and then was heard a discordant clashing of tambourines and horse-bells, supposed to indicate Saracen music. In cantered a turbaned Turk on another hobby,--black this time--and in another long speech very smoothly delivered defied the saint to mortal combat. There was more tittering, for Tom the blacksmith was also an admirer of that minx Madelon. The fight was a very lively one, and Saint George had some trouble in holding his own.

When the Saracen lay gasping for breath (very naturally, the victor having placed his foot upon his breast) the saint somewhat awkwardly expressed sorrow for his deed and sighed for a doctor. There was a burst of laughter and applause as Ralph the bowyer, the comedian of the company, came limping in, got up in the character of an old quack who had physicked half the spectators. He bled and bandaged and salved and dosed the fallen warrior, keeping up a running fire of remarks the while, until the wounded man arose and went prancing off as good as new. There was no dragon, but Giles the miller appeared as Beelzebub to avenge the defeat of the paynim, and was routed in fine style. At the end a company of waits sang carols while the performers got their breath and repaired damages. The cream of the comedy, to the friends of the wicked Madelon, lay in the fact that she had the day before given her promise to Ralph, binding him to say naught to his rivals until the mumming was safely over.

While the players were drinking the health of their lord in his own good brew, the horn sounded at the gate, and the old porter, who had been watching the mummery, elbowed his way out with some grumbling to see who could be there. In a few minutes a tall man entered the hall, wearing the garb of a Palmer or pilgrim from the Holy Land--a long cloak with a cape and a hood that shadowed the face, a staff, a scrip and sandals. At sight of him a surprised hush fell upon the company. The common folk drew apart to let him pass, not quite sure but this was a new figure in the play. But Sir Walter Giffard rose to his feet after one swift glance at the newcomer, and as the latter threw back his cowl, the host quickly advanced to embrace him, crying, "Stephen! We feared that you were dead!"

Lady Philippa came forward also, with shining eyes and parted lips, beckoning to the children to join in the welcome of the stranger. Eleanor scarcely remembered this uncle of hers, whom she had not seen since leaving Normandy. His eyes were so sad that she felt very sorry for him, but his smile was so kind that no one could help loving him. He reminded her of Saint Christopher, who had always been a favorite of hers because he kept away bad dreams.

Stephen Giffard had been ransomed by John de Matha, the Provencal monk who had given himself to the work of rescuing and befriending prisoners. Hearing from his rescuers that Lady Adelicia, his wife, had gone with rich gifts to the Holy Land in the hope that her prayers might bring him home, he took ship to Jaffa and there learned that she had died in Jerusalem. Now he had settled his affairs and come in the guise of a pilgrim to spend the Christmas season with his kinfolk in England.

The two brothers sat and talked by the smoldering fire until late that night, speaking of divers things. It was no wish of Sir Stephen's that his

unexpected coming should interrupt or change the holiday plans. Indeed, many of the guests were his friends as well as his brother's. Eleanor wondered a little next day, why this recovered kinsman made in one way so little difference in the life of the household, and yet made so deep an impression. He was not himself merry, and still he seemed to enter into the joy of others and make it more satisfying. She tried to express this thought to her mother. The lady smiled, and sighed.

"He is a very good man," she said. "He was always good, and although he has had great troubles they have not made him hard or bitter--which is not a common thing. We must do all that we can for him while he is here, for that will not be long. He is going back among the paynim."

"But why, mother?" asked Eleanor, bewildered.

Lady Philippa shook her head. "I think because he is almost--or quite--a saint. Perhaps he will tell you by-and-by."

It seemed passing strange that Sir Stephen should wish to return to the Moslems after suffering as he had suffered among them, but there was no time for further discussion then.

Later in the day, when Sir Walter was talking with his steward and Lady Philippa was giving final directions to maids and cooks and dapifers, Eleanor and Roger found Sir Stephen seated alone by the flickering, purring Yule-log. Before they quite knew it they were telling him of all their favorite occupations and plays. He seemed as much interested as if they had been his own children.

"This Yule," he said musingly after a little, "might be in another world from the last. And once I spent the day in Bethlehem of Judea."

It sounded almost as if he had said he had been to heaven. They had never seen any one who had actually been in Bethlehem.

"There was a company of us," he went on, "some twenty in all, who landed after a rough voyage, very sea-weary and thankful to the saints. Glad were we to find the Knights Templars ready to guard us through the desert. Since our people have built churches and shrines in the Holy Land, and pilgrims who visit these places bring with them gold and gems for the decking thereof, there be many bands of robbers who infest the desert in the hope of plunder. Often finding no spoil, they maltreat or murder their victims. For this cause were the Templars and the Hospitallers established. The Templars may have grown proud and arrogant as some say, but I must give them this credit, that their black and white banner is mightily respected by the heathen.

"Having come safely through the wilderness, we entered Bethlehem as it chanced upon Christmas Eve, and the town was full of pilgrims and travelers, so that we had to find shelter where we could. The inns there are builded in a very old fashion. I think they have not changed since the time of our Lord. A large open space is walled in with mud or brick or stone, and hath a well in the middle. Around the inside of the walls are

shelters for horses and pack animals, and sometimes--not always--there is a house where rooms are let to those who can pay. The one at our inn was already crowded, so that we had to make shift with fresh straw in the stalls with our beasts. They gave us flat unleavened cakes of bread, dried dates, and something like frumenty, with kebobs of mutton roasted, and water to drink. When we had supped we sat about on our baggage and watched the people still coming in,

"You have never seen a camel? No? They be marvelous beasts. They stand taller than the tallest charger, and travel like the wind on four feet. I saw three humps like mountains against the sky, coming in at the gate, and the beasts kneeled down at the word of command and were unloaded. Their masters came from the East, somewhere beyond Arabia, and were wise in the lore of the stars. How know I that? Wait and I will tell.

"Shepherds came also with their sheep, softly bleating and huddling in their cramped quarters. Last of all came a poor man and his wife with a very small babe, and they and their donkey took the last bit of space in our corner.

"I tell you it is surprising what men will do for a tiny child and its tender mother. There was a grumpy old Flanders merchant in our company, who thought only of his own comfort, but now he sent his servant to take a mantle to the mother because she looked like his daughter at home, who had named her boy for him. And there was a peevish clerk who had paid for the last bowl of pottage they had, who gave it to the little family and supped on bread.

"Weary as we were, and much as our bones ached, we found solace in looking at the child as it slept and thinking of the children we had known at home. I think," the knight added with a half smile, "that if it had wakened and cried out, the spell might have broken. But it was a sweet small thing, and it slumbered as if it had been cradled in down.

"Through the still air we heard the bells calling the monks to prayer. And then the baby woke, and looked about with wondering innocent eyes, and stretched out its little hands and laughed. I would you could have seen that grave company then. Every man of them sought a share in that sweet sudden laughter. The merchant dangled his gold chain, the clerk made clownish gestures, the merchant put a golden zecchin into the tiny fingers for a toy. And when it slept again we slept also, or watched the stars and thought of that star which long ago stood over Bethlehem.

"There was a learned doctor in our company who understood Eastern languages and could converse in Arabic with the wise men from the East. They told him that in their country there is a tradition that their astrologers, reading the heavens as is their wont, saw Saturn, Jupiter and Mercury foregather in the House of the Fishes that rules Judea, and knew by this that at such a time and in such a place a prophet should be born. Therefore came they to visit the child with rich gifts, and gained from the parents a promise that when he was of an age to learn, he should be brought to their country to learn of their wisdom, even as Moses was skilled in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. I know not whether there can

be any truth in the legend, but that is their belief. And yet they are not Christians, but heathen."

Sir Stephen smiled at the two puzzled young faces.

"Nay, more," he went on, "even the followers of Mahound revere Christ as a prophet. Their name for Him is Ruh' Allah. I have seen a Moslem beat his Christian slave for using an oath that dishonored the name of Christ. In truth, I have come to think that there are very few unbelievers in the world. Much wickedness there is--but not unbelief."

"Mother says," Eleanor ventured shyly, "that you are going away to live among the paynim."

"Aye." The knight smiled his fleeting, tender smile. "It is a grief to her, sweet lady, that I cannot dwell in comfort among you and think no more of voyages. But there is a work laid upon me, which I must do."

"A Crusade?" The word was just inside Roger's lips, and it slipped out before he thought. Sir Stephen smiled again.

"Nay. My fighting days are over. But I believe that even a broken man may serve if he be honestly so minded. I must tell you that for many years I had been troubled, and found no peace, because even among churchmen there was sloth and selfish greed, and the desire to rule, and the pilgrims whom I met seemed often moved rather by vanity and love of change than from any true fear of God. But as you know, I had but begun my homeward journey when our ship was taken by pirates and the few who were left alive were sold as slaves.

"It is not needful to tell all that befell me as a bondman among the Moors of Barbary. My master was a renegade knight who had forsworn the Cross and risen to some preferment among the Almohades. His hate was upon me day and night, and I knew that my lady and my kindred must believe me dead. And in that black horror of loneliness and despair I found my faith.

"God speaks to us not always in books, nor in words, nor in one place more than another. His ways are as the wind that blows where it will. It is not what men do to us that kills--it is what they make of us. They cannot make a soul cruel or foul or treacherous, that hath not lost God. What is the power of a multitude? Christ died. And His life is the light of men.

"Knighthood is a fair and noble thing, but its vows have no magic--no more than the oaths of the guilds, or the monastic orders, or the allegiance of the vassal to his lord. It is the living spirit that keeps the vows--and when that is gone their power is less than nothing. Once I could not see how it was possible for a man to renounce his knighthood and his Lord. I have lived with such a man, and I know that it came of his losing faith. He lost the power to believe in good. I think that he hated me because I reminded him of his own land and all that he no longer wished to remember.

"Now having known the scourge and the fetters, I may speak to the bondman as a brother. I am alone, with none to need me. Therefore I go hence to

join the brethren who are giving their lives to this ministry."

The Palmer rose to his feet as if in haste to be gone. "I weary you perchance with talk too serious for holiday-time," he said with that quick smile of his, "but when you come to your own work you will know how close to the heart that lies. Now be glad and make others glad--it was never God's will, I am right sure, that this world should be a doleful place for the young."

The piercing silvery notes of the trumpets in the chill air, the trampling of horses in the bailey, gave notice of the arrival of guests. There was no more leisure that day.

In the glitter and glow and splendor of the banquet hall, with its music and gayety, the tall gray figure of the Palmer moved like a spirit. As the guests came one after another to speak with him of his experiences and his plans, their kindling faces proved his rare power of making them see what he saw. To Stephen Giffard the presence of God was as real as the sunrise. In the light of his utter self-sacrifice the loyalty, sweetness and courage of other lives seemed to shine out more brightly. It was all one with the immortal world of Christendom--ruled by the living spirit of the child cradled in Bethlehem centuries ago.

THE CRUSADERS

Daily we waited word or sign--
They were our children, these
Who held the unsleeping battle-line
Beyond the haunted seas,
Who gave their golden unlive years
And that clear pathway trod
Lifting through sunset gates of fire
To the far tents of God.

Through trackless realms of unknown space
They wander, unafraid,
For nothing do they fear to face
In worlds that God has made.
Freed from the shattered bonds of earth
They meet their comrades free,
To share the service of the Lord
In truth and loyalty.

Elizabeth's wise admirals guard
Their dear-loved England's coast.
From Somme and Meuse no cannon barred
The Maid's undaunted host.
And still the Foreign Legion hears
In every desperate chance
Her children's crashing battle-cry--
"For France! For France! For France!"

The captains of the hosts of God
Know every man by name,
When from the torn and bleeding sod
Their spirits pass like flame.
The maid must wait her lover still,
The mother wait her son,--
For very love they may not leave
The task they have begun.

If secret plot of greed or fear
Shall bid the trumpets cease,
And bind the lands they held so dear
To base dishonored peace,
How shall their white battalions rest
Or sheathe the sword of light,--
The unbroken armies of our dead,
Who have not ceased to fight!

NOTES

PEIROL OF THE PIGEONS

The troubadour, minstrel and jongleur or joglar, were not the same in dignity. A troubadour or trouveure was a poet who sang his own compositions to his own music. A jongleur was a singer who was not a poet, though he might make songs. He corresponded more nearly to the modern vaudeville performer. The minstrel was something between the two.

THE TAPESTRY CHAMBER

Saint George was not formally adopted as the patron saint of England until some time after this.

LULLABY OF THE PICT MOTHER

This song may be sung to a very old Scotch air called "O can ye sew cushions."

THE WOLVES OF OSSORY

The werewolf superstition is very persistent, and has been held in many countries until quite recent times.

ST. HUGH AND THE BIRDS

The reference is to St. Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, who is represented with his pet swan in most of his portraits. He founded a Carthusian monastery by the invitation of Henry II., at Witham in Somerset, and built the choir and a considerable part of Lincoln Cathedral. The stories of his love for

birds are found in old chronicles.

THE SWORD OF DAMASCUS

An armorer's shop very like the one described has been brought from Abbeville and set up in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in one of the rooms devoted to armor.

THE WISDOM OF THE GALLEYS

"Y'Allah!" (O God!) is a common exclamation, often used as meaning "Make Haste!" Abu Hassan is "the father of Hassan," In Moslem countries a father often uses his son's name in this way, allowing his own to be almost forgotten.

Khawaja, Khawadji or Howadji is a title of respect given exclusively to unbelievers.

The Breach of Roland--Roncesvalles.

Jebel el Tarik--Gibraltar.

Iskanderia--Alexandria.

"Ma sh' Allah!" (What does God mean!) the commonest exclamation of surprise.

Feringhi--Frankish, French.

Kafir--Infidel, heathen, a term of extreme contempt.

Ahmed ibn Said--Ahmed the son of Said.

THE EBBING TIDE

Hy-Brasail is the Celtic name for the Fortunate Islands, the Isles of Avilion, said to be situated somewhere west of Europe. The dead were said to go westward to these islands, which were a paradise.

THE END OF A PILGRIMAGE

John de Matha founded the Order of the Holy Trinity, sometimes known as the Redemptorist Fathers, sometimes as the Mathurins. He was afterward made a saint. He was the first to make any serious effort to alleviate the condition of prisoners, especially slaves among the Moslems.

The legend of the Star of Bethlehem referred to is one which is still current in India.

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