THE CONSTABLE'S TOWER

OR

THE TIMES OF MAGNA CHARTA

BY

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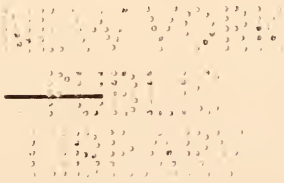
AUTHOR OF "THE HEIR OF REDCLYFFE," "UNDER THE STORM," ETC.

"Hubert, I love thee."

SHAKESPEARE'S *King John*



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PREFACE.

HUBERT DE BURGH, a man of unflinching faith, courage, and loyalty, is one of the few figures that can be looked at with satisfaction in the reign of John, since he was always patient and consistent with his own principles.

That he saved Arthur of Brittany from being blinded, as in the scene given by Shakespeare, has always been believed. He was then Seneschal of Poitou, and afterwards Constable of Dover Castle. His name is among those who signed Magna Charta on behalf of the King, but he did not take part with the Barons when John attacked them, holding himself bound by his faith to the King.

For fifteen weeks Dover Castle was held out against Louis the Lion; but it must here be explained that there is no authority for his having had, at that time, a daughter, though he could not have been at that time a very young man; but it was not till after the troubles of John's

reign, when he was Justiciary of England, that he is known to have married the sister of the Scottish king.

The events of the close of the siege, and the threat to execute Thomas de Burgh before his brother's eyes, are matter of history. The relief by Pencester belongs to the story of the Castle, and likewise that Pencester succeeded to the government of it, and left a tower called by his own name.

During the minority of Henry III., all went well with Hubert, and he recovered for the crown much that had been alienated under John, but his stern uprightness offended many of the nobles, and the Bishop of Winchester was his bitter enemy. This man, whose French name was Pierre des Roches, had been designated by the great Friar Bacon as a dangerous person in the saying, "Beware of stones and of rocks." He gained the ear of the foolish young king, whom he actually persuaded to proceed against Hubert for having gained his affections by sorcery, with other equally frivolous charges. Hubert took sanctuary at Merton Abbey, and the king actually ordered the Lord Mayor to take a body of men and remove him by force. The

Archbishop of Dublin, however, protested against such an act of sacrilege, and messengers were sent to stop the mayor. While the good Archbishop obtained that four months might be granted to Hubert in which to prepare his defence, during which time he was to be at large.

Nevertheless, when he set out to see his wife at St. Edmund's Bury, the King was persuaded to send his old enemy, Geoffrey de Crawcombe, leader of the Black Band, to seize him on the way. De Burgh was in bed at the little town of Brentwood in Essex when he received warning, and fled, still unclothed, to the church, where, with the crucifix in one hand and the host in the other, he stood by the altar. The Black Band were not, however, thus to be withheld. They rushed in with drawn swords, dragged him out, and fetched a smith to put fetters on him.

The brave blacksmith, however, stood firm, declaring that he would rather die the worst of deaths than put irons on the man who had saved Dover and driven away the French fleet.

However, these shameless men put this great and valiant knight on horseback, just as he was, and carried him to the Tower of London. On this, such a storm was raised by the clergy on

the violation of sanctuary, that Henry was forced to send him back to Brentwood Church, but at the same time was dastard enough to command the Sheriff of Kent to blockade him there on pain of death. A palisade was erected round the churchyard, a trench dug, and the Black Band watched day and night, but it was not till the fortieth day that he was starved into surrendering.

He was taken back to the Tower, and by and by was stripped of all save his own hereditary possessions, and sent a captive to the Castle of Devizes. There he remained nearly a year, when, learning that his worst enemy, Pierre des Roches, had obtained the castle, he resolved to escape at any risk, and in the middle of a dark night he climbed over the battlements, and dropped into the moat, whence he proceeded to a country church. Again he was beleaguered by the sheriff of the county, but a party of horsemen sent by the barons came down and rescued him, and carried him off into Wales.

Finally his lands and honors were restored, and he was again admitted to the king's council, ending his days in peace and honor.

MAY 30, 1891.

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CHAPTER I.

THE ARRIVAL.

With many a cross-bearer before
And many a spear behind.

ALL, massive, and noble, upon its own cliff, stood — as long may it stand — the grand Castle of Dover, ruling over the Strait that links two seas together, and looking to the opposite coast, whence, happily for herself, Great Britain must have been torn in some long past convulsion of nature.

There were the eight knights of the Castle guard. The court and the great hall were filled with servants, squires, and the five and twenty men each was bound to bring, all hurrying hither and thither, strewing rushes and sweet herbs on the stone floor of the hall, setting up tables upon trestles, carrying the joints of beef, mutton, and

venison, that the fleshers were cutting up, to the cooks and scullions in the kitchen, supplemented by the swans, geese, fowl, fish, lobsters, and crabs, while the superior cooks were building fabrics of jelly and blanc-mange, and baking marchpane, almond cake, and other dainties.

The best tapestry was being hung to its hooks in the chambers, the fat white candles on the altars of the two chapels were being renewed, the chaplains were looking to their vestments, and making their pupils practise their chants. For there had come a messenger to announce that the Archbishop of Canterbury was about to make a visit to the Constable of Dover.

The Archbishop was Stephen Langton; the Constable was Hubert de Burgh; and it was the early autumn of the year 1215.

The Castle was in a commotion of preparation, and its Constable was walking up and down the hall in some anxiety, musing and muttering to himself, as though considering his part, but interrupted every moment by questions from knight, squire, seneschal, or groom, to whom he replied briefly and impatiently, as one who could ill afford to have the tenor of his meditations broken. He was a tall, broadly-made man of great strength,

of that darker type of Norman who showed a strain of Celtic blood, with a grand, broad forehead, shaded by grizzled hair, deep, dark, flashing eyes, a mouth often very stern, but capable of the sweetest of smiles, when the eyes softened in accordance. By the few he was intensely loved, by all respected and feared, but by many dreaded, and by some hated. He had a path of duty of his own, and not the same as that of either of the parties around him : and thus in many points he stood alone. His dress was a long buff woollen gown, richly embroidered, and reaching to the feet, girt round the waist by the broad belt that sustained his sword, and likewise the dagger or knife used at meals, and his head was covered by a small pointed cap.

Watching him with wistful eyes, and turning them from him to the window that looked out over the steep ascent, stood a young maiden, resembling him in the dark eyes and high brow, but with a chestnut tinge in the dark hair that hung on her shoulders. Genealogists call the daughter of Hubert de Burgh Magota, but to her father and all around her she was known as Mayotte.

She was only fifteen, but it had been arranged from her infancy that she was to marry Stephen

de Pencester, who had grown up beside her as her father's page, and was to have been married to her the next Martinmas-day if differences had not arisen between their two fathers. Sir Richard de Pencester had taken part with the barons who forced Magna Charta upon the unwilling John, and were resolved to have it carried out ; while Hubert de Burgh, though signing it with the rest, held that, whatever the King might do, it was the bounden duty of those who had sworn allegiance to stand by him, and never take up arms against him, even when the Charter was violated in the most flagrant manner. Very few good men held by John, whose supporters were mostly violent and rapacious men like himself, who adhered to him for the sake of what they could get, and encouraged his wickedness. But Hubert tried to save him from himself, and without joining in, or profiting by his crimes, to protect him from their consequences. Thus the Constable stood almost alone, and was hated by both parties, while he sternly kept his own straightforward course. Sir Richard de Pencester had been very angry, and swore that his son should not be in the service of John's minion, who no doubt would be ready to give the boy up as a hostage, to be dealt with like the Lady of Braose and her

children. Hubert, who had done his best to save the lady, was provoked in his turn, and declared that he would not give his Mayotte to the son of one who was a rebel and traitor. So Stephen de Pencester was taken away from Dover, and placed in the train of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was bound to have as many knights, squires, and pages in his service as any of the great earls, whose superior in dignity he was reckoned.

It was with wonder and doubt whether he would come in the suite of the Archbishop, and, if he came, whether she should be allowed to speak to him, that made Mayotte's heart throb so high as she gazed from the narrow window. She had never known her mother, but had grown up under the care of the Lady of Braqueville, whose husband was the deputy-governor of the Castle, and whose daughter, Bertrade, was her constant companion, and stood watching with her. All that they said was in Norman French, and the words here put into their mouths must be considered as translation :

"There they are, lady ; I see the sparkle of the double cross. Hark, there are all the bells in the town striking up. There, do you see the black

line going out to meet them? They are the good fathers of St. Mary's. Oh! and there's the mayor all in scarlet, and the aldermen. Isn't it goodly? There's armor flashing; there must be a whole troop of knights and men-at-arms. Will our young damoiseau, Stephen, be there, think you, lady? He will be an esquire by this time, I trow."

"Peace, peace, Bertrade, you chatter so fast that I cannot hear the singing," said Mayotte, who, however, heard little but the throbs of her own heart, though the chant of all the clergy and religious of Dover came up to her, *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Dei*, as the Archbishop was welcomed by them.

The Constable did not go out to meet them, but, with all the male portion of his household drawn up in order behind him, stood at the great port-cullised gateway with the drawbridge in front of it, over the moat — waterless indeed, but so deep and precipitous between nature and art as to be an equal defence.

Here he held the stirrup of the Archbishop. Mayotte could not see the greeting and the kiss exchanged in token of amity and esteem, in spite of diversity of politics. Nor, indeed, did she look

at the Primate as her father led him across the court. Her eyes were scanning the train, as four abreast they emerged from under the archway, Church dignitaries first, then knights and squires. At last she caught sight of the grizzled beard and rugged face of Sir Richard de Pencester, with the white cross on a red field on his breast, and following him, carrying his square-headed helmet, a tall stripling in a bright hauberk of chain-mail with the same white cross, fitting him closely as a jersey. His helmet was on, and the unclosed visor did not leave much visible of the fair rosy young face, but quite enough to allow the bright blue eye to turn to the accustomed window, and a flash of greeting to pass thence to Mayotte's darker eyes.

All the more exalted portion of the company disappeared in the very ancient church, close to the old Roman pharos or light-house, whither the Archbishop went at once to offer his devotions. The court remained full enough and noisy enough, and Mayotte's eye was still able to follow Stephen, who remained in charge of his father's horse and helmet, and by and by vanished into the passage leading to the stables.

Mayotte's eyes were free to watch the Arch-

bishop led out of the church by her father. He was less tall, and was a spare wiry man with a grave, high forehead, and thoughtful eyes, the head and countenance of a scholar; yet withal there was something keen in his glance, something resolute about the closing of his thin lips that marked him as on occasion a practical and determined man. His brother, Archdeacon Simon Langton, who followed near at hand, was very like him, but without that expansive lofty expression, or the scholarly thoughtfulness of eye and brow that denoted the higher side of the Archbishop's nature. He was more of the lawyer, less of the student.

Not that Mayotte or Bertrade saw all this. The robes of state and the glittering hauberks were the attractions that drew forth their exclamations, and all the time there was eager watch for Stephen de Pencester's reappearance.

As the guest was an ecclesiastic, and there was no countess to play hostess, the banquet in the hall did not include the ladies of the house. There were only the Constable and the gentlemen of his garrison, the Archbishop and his suite, and the chief abbots, priors, and knights of the military orders then at Dover. Lady Braqueville, her

daughter and Mayotte peeped down at them from the open-work of a gallery, at right angles to that where the musicians were braying away with trumpets, accompanied by harps and viols, varied by songs and chants from the chorister-boys borrowed for the occasion. Bertrade was almost wild with delight at such a break in her dull life, and kept up a fire of exclamations at handsome squires and handsome pages, while Lady Braqueville was chiefly interested by her bird's eye view of the sturgeons, porpoises, bustards, and other dainties that she had superintended as much as the master-cook would let her, and which the squires carved into portions. These the pages and other attendants carried round on trenchers or on spits, and held while the company helped themselves therefrom with their own private daggers. Choice wines from Gascony, jellies, and all manner of elegancies of the kitchen, took their turns, and squires and pages had to eat after their lords, so that Mayotte's patience was well-nigh worn out ere a light step came springing up the narrow spiral stair, and a voice said, low and eagerly:

"Mayotte, art there?"

In a few moments she was out upon the summit

of the keep, her hand fast clasped in his. The two had never been very affectionate while they lived together, and Mayotte had been often teased by Stephen, but she had found her life over her distaff a great deal more dull without him, and when he said in Norman French, "So the old donjon and the sea look just the same as ever," she answered:

"Ah! you have seen the great world and the court, gay jousts and merry jongleurs, and all that is never admitted within these stern high walls."

"Archbishops' cloisters are scarce the place for such gear," returned Stephen.

"Nay, but you have not been all the time at Canterbury?"

"Truly, no, indeed," said he emphatically.

"You have seen the King," she added, in a voice of awe that made him laugh with a strange sound like mockery.

"Now, Stephen, you know that my lord father never will take me to court, and whenever the King came here I was sent off to a convent, and never allowed to see him."

"Best known from afar," said Stephen. "Sir Hubert may cleave to his lioncel himself, but not take his lambs into the den."

"Nay, but Stephen, why such hard words of our liege lord? He did ask for me to serve his queen."

"Mayhap you would like to be treated like the Lady of Braose and her children, and die of hunger at Windsor Castle, or like poor Maude Fitzwalter, stolen from home and kept a captive till they say she is poisoned. Nay, the very queen herself was, against her will, robbed from the brave Count of Lusignan, her betrothed."

"Stephen, where did you learn these frightful tales? I am sure my father does not know of any."

"He knows them only too well, but 'tis his will to cleave to the King, though he will not work villanies and crimes."

"My father cannot believe them."

"Ha! ha! Didst never know that he barely saved the eyes of the poor young Duke of Brittany, when your good king would have put them out, nor how that same beloved liege lord of thine put forth from Falaise Castle, on the river, with the stripling, his nephew, and came back alone?"

"Stephen, where did you hear this?"

"Hear? From the mouth of the Lord Arch-

bishop himself. I stood behind my father at Stamford when the Archbishop, the Earl of Salisbury, and my Lord of Pembroke, and Lord Fitzwalter and the rest spake of his deeds, and swore that he must be restrained, as one would chain a mad bull, and that the good old laws of England must and should be kept — as the king had sworn to the Archbishop when he was absolved at Winchester."

"Nay, but my father, as well as my Uncle Thomas, were among those men who were present when the king granted the Charter of the good old laws of his free grace!"

"Verily free grace! I saw him, Mayotte, in the field at Runnymead; and if ever you saw a black thunder-cloud over the sea, it was like his brow as he gnawed the pen ere signing the Charter."

"How could he brook to see his barons in arms against him?"

"You did not hear how he comported himself when the deed was done? I had it all from one of his squires. No sooner was he within the Castle at Windsor than he raved like one possessed. He had kept in his curses till then, but they broke forth as if they would blast the very walls, so that

Piers Mandeville held his ears for very horror, and he is no saint nor monk. But he shuddered as he told me how the King had bitten his lip till the blood came and mixed with the foam, and he rolled on the floor, writhing with rage, and clutching up the rushes, which he gnawed like a wild beast. What think you of that, Mayotte? Did your father never tell you?"

"He will never have a word spoken against the King — by himself or any others, in this place."

"I mind that well enough. Besides, he rode off from Runnymead at once, and saw not the King's fury, or mayhap he might have checked it."

"Was it all at having to grant good laws?"

"Every whit! The very laws he had sworn to keep when he was absolved! Then, when his fury was spent, what next doth he do but write letters and send off messengers right and left to bring in the Free Companies to burn and lay waste the lands of whosoever hath sealed the Charter, he or his men."

"Yea, two messengers have been here, to be sped on their way to the Low Countries, but they said the King was sore bested, and needed all aid that could be sent him against the traitor barons, who are shutting their castles against him."

"With good reason," said Stephen.

"And thy Archbishop has ever been his enemy."

"My Archbishop, as you call him, is on the way to show his Holiness the Pope how matters truly stand."

"And art thou going with him?"

"Ay. He needs an escort across those robber hills of the Lombards; so my father, and a score more knights, as thou seest, will go with him, besides all his clerks."

"Thou wilt see Rome and the tombs of the Saints?"

"Yea! And mayhap some mountain wolves on the way. They say those hills swarm with them. Shall I bring thee home the biggest wolf-skin?"

"I had rather thou wouldst bring me a holy relic — one blessed by the Pope — if so it may be."

"Meseems that curses be more in the way of this same Pope than blessings," said Stephen.

"Oh, blaspheme not, Stephen," cried the girl. "Thou wilt bring me some holy fragment, were it but a stone from where the martyrs died. That is — that is if —" And she burst into tears.

"Nor Pope nor Primate, King nor Kaiser, shall ever make me untrue to thee, my Mayotte," exclaimed the young man, clasping her hand.

"Ah! ah! but how know we what my father will do with me?" sighed Mayotte, fully aware, like all the maidens of her time, that she was merely a chattel at her father's disposal.

"If thy father would only hear reason," said Stephen; "mayhap he will yield to my Lord Archbishop! There is none wiser in counsel than he! See, they are walking up and down the hall together."

"Mayotte, Lady Mayotte, where art thou?" called the Lady of Braqueville. "Damsel, damsel, where is thy discretion? Mindst thou not that thou art no more a child? And where is Bertrade, my giddy Bertrade? I am half-dead with looking after you two madcaps."

Bertrade was discovered by her laughter, lurking in the angle of the stair, feasting on the honey-cakes that the equally lively young squire, Piers Mandeville, had purloined — in obedience, as he said, to her wistful eyes. She had to pay for them by a stern rebuke from her watchful mother; and when she answered pertly, her ears were boxed, and both girls were sent to bed, according to the discipline of the Middle Ages.

CHAPTER II.

THE PROMISE.

THE Archbishop and the Constable of Dover were, as Stephen de Pencester had said, pacing the hall together in deep debate; Langton, who was the smaller in stature, with his arm passed through that of the tall knight. They were talking out the old argument on which men will be divided as long as the world stands, depending on whether the good word "loyalty" means faithfulness to the law or to the sovereign, and whether the monarch who has broken his covenant with the nation should still command their allegiance, or should forfeit the power he has misused.

The Archbishop, a scholar and traveller, who had seen many courts, and taken his share in the great struggle between the ecclesiastical and temporal powers, was all for the maintenance of law and abstract right and justice, apart from the consideration of persons; nor had he the feeling of

reverence to the English princes which was felt by those who had spent their lives under them, for he had lived in foreign convents and universities from his boyhood, until King John had been absolutely forced to receive him.

Hubert de Burgh, on the contrary, was, though in action a most able man, a thoroughly simple-minded, straightforward soldier and knight, incapable of admitting that anything could interfere with the absolute duty he had once for all sworn to his liege lord. As to right and justice, he declared, with all due respect to the Lord Archbishop, he could not see any right or justice in breaking an oath.

"If the King breaks his" —

"If ten thousand men list to forswear themselves, is that any reason that I should do so?" burst out Hubert.

"Ten thousand men on your own side, sir; but how if the other party keep not the conditions?"

"There were no petty, haggling conditions in my mind when I paid my homage."

"Sir Hubert, I cannot choose but honor such faith. Yet I could speak of holy — nay, verily, the most holy of examples. When Israel brake their covenant" —

"My lord, this passes!" cried De Burgh. "Would you liken the King himself to a pack of dog Jews?"

"The Jews would have cause to complain of the comparison," dryly muttered Langton; but he added, "Sir, each man has his own conscience. I would that all, King John like the rest, had one as firm and true as yours. You swore, resolved in your own heart; but there were others, it may be equally true and honest of purpose, who took their pledge dependent on their lord keeping his in return."

"The more foul shame theirs!" exclaimed the Constable. "I tell you, my lord, it is this miserable yea and nay, and haggling over the other side, that makes men mere traitors and rebels, and leaves the land a desolation and a mockery, and a prey to all such as pass by; all unlike to what it was in King Henry's time, when no man durst gainsay a word from our liege."

"Methinks there is cause for the change," said the Primate dryly.

"In sooth, my lord, you may be set against the lad, for he did his best to keep you out of the land."

"Far be it from me to bear malice on that

score," said Langton. "Had he fulfilled his oaths of protecting the poor, abstaining from violence and rapine, and dismissing his lawless followers, I could have loved him and toiled with him as heartily as though I had been his prime choice."

"Yea, if you had your own way. That is what all say."

"Nay, Sir Hubert, it is his own deeds, not to me, but to the clerks who suffered for my sake, and to the poor — my Master's poor — that have turned me against him."

"A pack of beggarly, hypocritical villains!" muttered Hubert; "a thousand of whom are not to be weighed in the scale against one prince of the royal blood."

"Not in earthly scales; but how as to the heavenly scales?" demanded Stephen Langton.

"You speak as a priest, my lord," said the Constable, with a gesture of impatience. "Now, I tell you that you have never rightly known this lad — John of Anjou I mean — nor his winning ways. His wise old father loved him with all his heart" —

"And did he not break that heart?" muttered Langton. But Hubert went on unheeding: —

"So do all who have come close to him. Alack,

that many of them are evil men, who lead him into their courses, and whose crimes are saddled on him, while the better sort sting him to mad and savage deeds by their carping insolence, such as his father's son cannot brook. No, my Lord Archbishop, I cannot but stand by the youth."

"Yet your brother Thomas is with us."

"My brother is no rule for me."

"Sir Constable, I can but honor you and your father," said the Archbishop. "The Saints forefend that I should ask any man to act against his conscience. Yet, sir, all I would fain ask of you is to own that a man's conscience may light him to a different course, yet he may still be a good man."

"I see it is so with you, my lord," with some difficulty Hubert avowed.

"And with an older friend, I trust," said the Archbishop, indicating Sir Richard de Pencester, who was anxiously watching the conference from a distance.

"Sir Richard de Pencester is my guest and your vassal, my lord," said De Burgh stiffly. "He is bound to follow you. I have naught to pardon him."

"Is there not," inquired the Archbishop, "a treaty of marriage that hath been broken off?"

"My lands in Kent are not to be used against the King," returned Hubert.

"Yet were the Holy Father at Rome to bring the King and the barons into accord?" —

"That were a different matter. I loved the knight of Pencester till he turned against my master."

"And the young folk love one another."

"That is naught to the purpose," said Hubert, who, though a really kind father, kinder and more just than most men of his day, had no more idea of letting his daughter's affections weigh in the balance than he would have done those of a pullet he ordered for his dinner. The Archbishop, however, is reported to have always borne a sore spot in his heart from an early love which had been disappointed, and thus sent him to become a student and a priest. He had more pity for his young esquire, and for the damsel of whom Sir Richard had spoken to him.

"Be that as it may," he said; "may I ask it as a favor that you will not hastily give away the maiden and her inheritance till there has been

time for his Holiness the Pope — when I have explained matters — to set at one the King and his barons."

"Did I promise that the maid would lead apes in hell?" said Sir Hubert grimly. "Do you believe, my lord, that any bull, or aught else from the Pope or from all the Saints themselves, would make yonder barons peaceable or loyal?"

"There are those on whom it would have small effect," granted Stephen Langton; "but there are others who would be content if the King would abide by the Great Charter, and of these Sir Richard de Pencester is one."

"H'm!" said Hubert. "Ay, I trow he loves not strife for its own sake."

"Then, sir, will you wait to give away your daughter and her inheritance till at least you have heard the Pope's decision, and if Sir Richard can in conscience be reconciled to the king."

Sir Hubert felt that the inheritance that his daughter carried with her could not without a certain injustice be taken from the Pencesters, and, as the very soul of honor, this would have grieved him. He therefore made answer: "Well, my lord, I will wait to pledge my daughter for a year and a day from the Martinmas octave,

when she will be sixteen years old; and if so be that you and Sir Richard can reconcile it to his tender conscience to obey his liege lord, to whom he has sworn fealty, all shall be as it was aforetime."

CHAPTER III.

FAREWELL TO STEPHEN.

THE Archbishop celebrated his morning mass in the venerable church of the castle, where he had before heard vespers. There knelt Mayotte between the Lady of Braqueville and Bertrade, whose eyes roved over much; and after it was ended, before breaking their fast in the hall, the Constable gratified his little daughter by asking that she might receive the Lord Archbishop's blessing.

"I was about to ask for the damsel," returned Langton kindly.

So Hubert led up the young girl, blushing under the long veil that descended on each side of her face, mingling with her chestnut hair, bound with a fillet of green, clasped with an emerald.

Mayotte knelt, low and reverently, while Archbishop Stephen signed the cross and pronounced his blessing, then took her hand and raised her, saying kindly, "I have heard before of thee, fair

daughter. Thou hast friends among my following."

This made Mayotte raise her bright eyes with a bright gleam of joyous hope, while her lips parted, and her color glowed even more; but between shyness and dread of her father she durst not speak, though her face was eloquent enough to make the Archbishop smile and say, "Young hearts are not solely in minstrel's songs, Sir Hubert."

"I marvel to hear your grace speak of such folly," returned the stern Hubert. "Minstrel and troubadour trash, and all their courts of love and nonsense, such as came in with the old queen, have been the bane and corruption of the land, man and woman alike. Your trouvères and minstrels, as they call themselves, what has their work ever been but setting the son against the father, the wife against her husband, and dressing up foul sin in fair colors so as to make a fair show? If I thought my daughters were lending an ear to the like — !" and his hand went on his dagger.

"Too true, too true, Sir Hubert," owned Langton; "it does my heart good to hear things called by their true names. Provence and Aquitaine

have not mended Norman or English men or women."

"No, by St. Hubert! they have but cast a glamour over what at least we owned for sin before. And you, my lord, holy bishop though you be, can speak for them!"

"Nay, Lord Constable, I do not speak for them. I loathe their sin, but all I say is that the trial and temptation would be less if parents gave their children less for the sake of their lands and more for that of their loves and likings."

"And how should the little fools know what is good for them?" growled Hubert. "Trust me, my lord, a true and honest God-fearing woman is ready to do her duty and give her heart to whomsoever her father finds for her, and therewith be content."

"So it may be, so hath it often been," allowed the Archbishop; "but it is due from the parents to seek out one who is truly meet to be her lord, and not to strive to break bonds between hearts, bonds which once forged it is not in the power of man to sever."

Hubert gave a sort of growl of scorn at the idea of any virtuous woman being swayed by her affections, but he so far gave way as to

say, "You and Sir Richard have my word, my lord."

"A word that never was broken," said the Archbishop.

In consequence, perhaps, Stephen and Mayotte were not prevented from going together to visit the hawks, with which they had had many a gay canter together, chasing larks over the broad open spaces lying between Dover and Deal.

"She knows thee!" exclaimed Mayotte, as the brown mottled bird drew itself up and unclosed her wings caressingly as Stephen took her on his glove and smoothed down her plumage.

"Ah! pretty Joliette," he said, talking to the hawk, a delicate little merlin, "wouldst thou not fain forth with me, if only thy master would let thee go?"

"Ah! would she not?" returned Mayotte; "but she has a master who will not brook unfaithfulness to him any more than he will fly off from his devoir to his King."

"But he has pledged himself!" exclaimed Stephen. "For a year at least we are safe, *ma douce* Mayotte. He has so promised my father and my Lord Archbishop, and his word is a rock."

"Oh! then all is safe for a year!" said Mayotte, infinitely relieved. "Blessings on the Saints!"

"A year!" sighed Stephen, "when we ought to have been one by this time."

"How knowest thou that?" demanded Mayotte, tossing her head. "Not even a knight yet! Thou wert as glad enough to get away from me a year ago as was Spotted Dragon, when he went off over the sea, and no lure would get him back."

"Aye, but I have come back, thou seest."

"With no more of thine own will than if thou wert a hooded hawk held fast by the jesses!"

"How knowest thou that? I might be a squire in my Lord of Pembroke's train, seeing war, instead of only in the train of a shaveling, Archbishop though he be."

"Dost not wish thou wert?" laughed Mayotte.

"I might, save that I know that to lift up hand against this beloved King of thy father's is what he never would pardon."

"Never!" said Mayotte, shaking her head gravely; "but tell me, Stephen, was this offer made thee in earnest?"

"Verily it was, and my father, thinking it time that I bore arms, was in favor of my going; but he would not command me, and so here I am."

Mayotte was more touched by this renunciation than a certain maidenly bashfulness allowed her to show ; and Bertrade, who had remained at the gate of the mews, where she could laugh and talk with those of her acquaintance in the court, hurried up to say that there was a call for Stephen.

He hastened out into the court and found the Archbishop's suite getting into order for the transit to the harbor, which had to be made in full state and order. The clergy of the train, hooded and gowned, were standing at ease, conversing with their brethren from the town, their mules having been sent forward for embarkation. The horses of the lay members of the household were likewise to be sent off, and Stephen was wanted by his father to go with their chargers, and superintend the embarkation.

The two maidens begged the Lady Braqueville to go down to the harbor with them to watch the departure, but she would not hear of it. "Is the harbor a place for discreet damsels ?" said she to Bertrade. "You must have been putting folly into the young lady's head for her only to speak of such a thing ! Get you to your bower and spin me an ell before noon !"

"Oh! dear lady," entreated Mayotte, "let us at least go to the top of the Constable's Tower and see it."

"Idle maids! Well, I suppose I must e'en consent, though your giddy pates need to be kept to the distaff!"

"It's very hard," grumbled Bertrade, "when you have had full half an hour with your Stephen, and I have scarce nodded at Piers."

"But Stephen is my betrothed — almost," said Mayotte, "and you never saw Piers till a week ago."

"As if the grim old Constable would ever let you have Stephen now he is on the wrong side. I should like something new if I were you. Oh, there are the ships — look at the horses!"

The embarkation was a difficult and troublesome matter, for the ships were very small, and for the most part only half decked. The poor horses, much frightened, were got on board with a great struggle, and had to be fastened most securely lest they should injure themselves or one another in their terror, as they had to stand exposed to the weather with their heads over the water. Stephen's own beautiful mare, Blanchequeue, was so much distressed that he could not

find it in his heart to leave her, but stood by her, soothing her and stroking her white nose and mane, for she was a chestnut with white mane and tail, the gift of the Constable. His shield, like those of the other warriors of the suite, was hung over the bulwark of the vessel in which it had been intended that he should sail. The ships were mostly either the larger fishing vessels of the coast or the merchant ships used in the trade with Flanders, hired for the occasion — all very small but very numerous. The archbishops had so often to go abroad on expeditions to the Pope or to follow the King, that they kept a vessel of their own, its flag marked with the figure of the pall.

To this ship Stephen Langton was escorted by Sir Hubert de Burgh, while Mayotte climbed to the top of one of the towers to watch the sails crossing the blue sea, and try to guess which contained Stephen, as well as her tearful eyes would allow — for she could weep for him now he was gone, though she was too shy to let him see how entirely her heart went with him.

CHAPTER IV.

PILGRIMS TO ROME.

JOURNEYS to and from Rome were by no means uncommon. Every metropolitan had to go there to receive his pall, the lamb's-wool scarf marked with crosses which was the token of his authority, and besides there were continual appeals and answers passing to and from the head of the Western Church. There were likewise a great number of pilgrims, who went to pray at the martyrs' shrines at Rome, and to receive the Pope's blessing.

It was an old saying that all roads led to Rome, and so indeed they did, for the only good ones were the old Roman roads made by the soldiers for communication with all parts of the empire. Thus the Archbishop's party travelled along a well-known and fairly good road, where there were at due intervals monasteries regularly used on the journey, with places of entertainment for persons of all degrees, guest chambers for

legates, cardinals, or bishops, as well as for nobles, halls for the squires, and ruder shelter for the poorer pilgrims, who were fed at the cost of the hospitable abbeys, as indeed were the greater guests, though these requited their entertainers with gifts.

The language of the English nobles was still chiefly French, so that Stephen de Pencester was no more in a strange country than if he had been visiting a new county in his own. The chief difference that he observed was that there was much more waste land and forest than at home, and that there were none of those farms of sturdy franklins which still survived in England; and the lay brothers at the monasteries were a smaller, leaner set. Except in the cities, there seemed to be nothing between the villein or serf and the noble.

The first sense of being among strangers was when northern France was passed, and what was called the *Languedoui* was left behind for the *Languedoc* — *oui* and *oc* being the northern and southern terms for yes. There was more of Latin in the speech, though still it was possible to understand it; and it was a land of vines loaded with rich autumnal grapes, and of olives, with hand-

some walled cities at short intervals, and a general look of prosperity; but Archbishop Langton here kept his train close in hand, and was unwilling to let them consort with the people of the cities, for he feared their becoming tainted with the false doctrines prevailing in those parts, of which he heard from the bishops and abbots, his hosts. Indeed, in a few years more such a terrible vengeance was taken on those heretics that the country has never recovered the beauty and prosperity it was then enjoying.

The band was strong enough to protect itself against robbers in the Alps, and there was no danger in Lombardy for such a cavalcade, except when the cities were taking the part of the Emperor against the Pope, and all was at this time peaceful.

Thus in due time they were crossing the Campagna, in early autumn glory — green and rich-looking, but with herds of milk-white, long-horned cattle, and flocks of sheep, feeding at intervals, watched by black-eyed, elf-locked boys and wolfish-looking dogs. The Archbishop permitted scarcely a halt here at any wayside hovel or small runnel to water the horses, aware that fevers and agues were rife in these parts.

However, other parties coming in from the different Roman roads which intersected Italy had already begun to join the English cavalcade, for a summons had been sent out by Pope Innocent III. to attend a great council at Rome.

The banner and cross were carried before each party, and as every one was more or less acquainted with blazonry, the rank, diocese, or abbey of each prelate or abbot could be plainly read. Some of these were old acquaintances of the Archbishop, and joined company with him on the way; and Stephen de Pencester found himself riding with two or three Provençal and Lombard young squires, like himself in attendance on their bishops. Conversation was not very easy, but he could more than half understand the Provençal, who on his side seldom mistook the language of the Italians, when they named a Tuscan or Venetian arrival, pointed out the buildings that began to be visible among the dark cypress, spires, and gray olive-trees on the low hills before them, or gave the story of the spots where wayside crosses stood, in commemoration of violent deaths, or of crimes there perpetrated. Stephen had seen the like before, but he was astonished here. "I thought,"

said he, "that the Holy Father's domain would be a land of peace."

"What saith he?" asked the Italian prince. "Ha! ha! This home of the Pope is the very heart and centre of all the warfare in Christendom. Not a day passes without a tumult between the nobles or the clergy or the citizens, or, if not, the pilgrims. Hark!"

For, as he spoke, loud clamors of yell and shriek rose on the breeze, and as they neared the gates two bands of pilgrims were seen struggling, screeching, waving their staves, striking and objurgating one another in the foulest of language and shrillest of voices for the right of first entrance and prayer at a little church by the wayside. Even the gleam of a dagger was seen held aloft, when the two prelates, advancing with their crosses before them, made a sudden lull, without the least exertion on their part.

They rode quietly along, their fingers raised in benediction, and on either side of the way the brown-clad pilgrims dropped on their knees. But no sooner had their band passed by than the screaming was renewed, and Stephen, turning his head, could see the sticks in the air, and the rival throngs rushing again to the encounter. Nobody

thought it worth while to stop and redress such a trivial matter as a fray between pilgrims.

The gate was one of the lofty arched structures of ancient Rome, once richly sculptured, and, though defaced, still dignified. It was a strange world to which the troops of travellers were admitted — a world of ruins, interspersed with fortified houses, their massive walls built up out of fragments of columns, statues, and pediments of temples. Dominant over all were the two enormous family mausoleums, still called the Mole of Augustus and the Mole of Adrian, both made into fortified castles. The Lombard youth, ere they separated for their different destinations, pointed out the figure of St. Paul surmounting the column of Trajan, and the angel upon the Mole of Adrian, from whom it is now known as the Castle of St. Angelo. When he was called away, he was in the midst of telling how St. Gregory, like David, beheld the Destroying Angel hovering over the city struck with pestilence, and how the prayers of the sainted Pope prevailed.

The huge walls of the Colosseum were passed, one of the clergy of the suite observing that if they were fortunate they might see a mystery play performed there by the Brotherhood of the Holy Standard.

Churches rose in every direction; convents as huge fortified structures, houses equally strong — all as if every family, every religious order, might at any moment be in a state of warfare.

Why the Romans should allow so many arches to block their streets, puzzled Sir Richard, who supposed them too lazy to clear away these obstructions, left by the old heathens, and bade Stephen not to be in too great haste to cross himself at every statue, till he knew whether it represented an idol or a saint.

CHAPTER V.

KING INA'S HOSPICE.

RCHBISHOP LANGTON took his way, on entering Rome, to what was then the English hospice, founded by King Ina of Wessex, and is now the Propaganda or Missionary College. Here was the regular official residence of English bishops at Rome, with all their attendants, and it was also a lodging for English pilgrims of all ranks and degrees. It had once been a school or college for young students; but Bologna and Padua were now preferred for scholarship, so that the pupils were few, and the brethren of the house were chiefly devoted to hospitality, for which the Peter-pence raised at home were supposed to be the provision.

The Prior, Brother Benedict or Bennet, a dignified-looking man — English, but by long residence become Roman in his ways — came at the head of his brethren to receive the Archbishop with due reverence, but as an old friend and fellow-student, whom he was delighted to greet.

The courts within had much of the old Roman style of house. There were the fountain in the centre and the marble pavement, and the rooms to which the Archbishop was conducted were more like those of an ancient senator than the apartments of the Chapter of Christchurch. He was used to these arrangements, but to the Pencesters, father and son, these marble floors and mosaic walls, with couches running round them, were very strange.

Their hopes were high, for they believed that their Archbishop had only to see the Pope, and make him understand what King John really was, and when the Pope, so powerful in England, restrained his vassal, then there would be no more differences with the Constable of Dover, and Stephen's marriage would be secure.

So Langton had thought when he set out, and almost his first words to the Prior, as they crossed the court together, was to ask him to arrange for his chief clerk and his good knight Sir Richard to intimate to the Pope that he had arrived, and hoped for permission to kiss his feet.

"It shall be done," said the Prior, but with a certain lack of readiness in his tones.

"He is always ready to welcome old friends,"

said Langton securely. "I thought, as I passed through Paris, of the many days of study — ay, and mirth — he and I, and thou, Bennet, had together, over our Augustine, in those old youthful times, and how we laughed together over our mistranslations when we found each other out, and Lotario dá Segni, Italian born, had such an advantage over us."

Prior Bennet smiled rather uneasily, saying, "My Lord Archbishop at least has a kindly memory;" and then he asked whether the Primate would not, after the toils of his journey, rather be served alone.

"If thou wilt partake the meal, dear brother," responded Langton.

It had been a hot and dusty ride over the Campagna, and welcome baths, warm and cold, were provided in the old marble chamber of the Roman times, very astonishing to the English attendants, though Sir Richard observed: "This is all very well for once, but much of it would take all the manhood and hardihood out of one's limbs! No more of this hot steam for thee, Stephen lad, unless thou wouldst be stewed like a tough old ox-skin at the end of winter."

The Archbishop, after the bath, which was far

more congenial to him, had been robed in fresh purple by his chamberlain, and was conducted to an inner chamber, with one side open to a little garden of myrtle and roses, and a vine trained over the porch. Here a meal was served, very simple — for Langton had refused the luxuries of travellers — merely bread, polenta, and figs, with water to drink, but served with a daintiness and nicety unknown even to the Normans, though they were far more refined than the English. Langton welcomed the polenta — a sort of wheaten porridge — with a smile, saying that the taste reminded him of old times, when, instead of the silver bowl, a royal gift to the hospice, three or four comrades were glad enough to pass round one spoon to sup out of a single wooden bowl. He evidently expected Pope Innocent to be as willing to recur to those student times as himself, but the Prior thought it needful to warn him.

"His Holiness puts on more state each year," he said.

"Nay, but 'tis not so long since he sent me to England with a kiss, and bade me conquer that demon, John of Anjou, in whom all the wickedness and contumacy of three accursed houses were joined. I have to give him proofs enough of it."

"My father, I fear you will find that the demon is only he who resists the Holy Father."

"He has ever declared that he wields his power for the restraint of wicked princes. I know that Italian tongues — of fellows who care not how they lie, so that they may gain — have bedaubed this John with praise and smoothed over his vices, so that the Holy Father, who so stanchly resisted the sin of the King of France, and forced the English into admitting me, now upholds him when guilty of the foulest crimes, such as he cannot be informed of —"

"Alas! my Lord Archbishop," said the Prior, "have you yet to learn that no sin, in the eyes of Pope Innocent, equals the sin of resistance to his will?"

"It was not so when I left him."

"Not altogether; but he hath had many triumphs since, and hath become more and more persuaded that no sin equals that of resistance to himself, and that whosoever submits thereto must be blameless, whatsoever mouths are opened against him."

"Nay, but what can he say to the hundreds of poor clerks, both secular and regular, who have been robbed and pillaged for obeying his inter-

dict, who were promised redress, but cannot obtain it?"

"I know them well, poor caitiffs," said the Prior. "There are a score of them tarrying here, but they never have beheld the face of the Pope. He does but — that is, his secretary does, but refer them back to the Legate."

"Who only heeds to fill his own pouch, and send the tribute to Rome," said Langton. "A score, saidst thou, brother? They are but a tithe of those too much stripped to make their way hither. I tell thee, Brother Bennet, I will gather them and lead them in procession to the throne of the Pope, and make him hear the wrong they have suffered. The Lotario dá Segni I once knew cannot be deaf."

The compline bell rang before the Prior answered.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LATERAN COUNCIL.

THE Archbishop felt so sure of the Pope's old affection for, and confidence in, him that he did not dwell much on Prior Bennet's forebodings. He had long ago been actually invited to Rome and made a Cardinal, because he was one of the very few men whose word and honesty could thoroughly be trusted, and he fully believed that he had only to see Innocent face to face, to be able to convince him of the utter unworthiness of John, of the reasonableness of the demands of the barons, and of the terrible injustice that the obedient clergy were allowed to suffer.

But time went on, and the Pope was not to be seen — only his secretary, who declared, as Langton only knew too well already, that the Cardinal Legate in England was perfectly satisfied with King John's submission to the Church, and viewed the barons as turbulent rebels. When the Archbishop began to represent some of the

deeds to which these barons objected, the secretary waved his hands at them. They were mere trifles, not worth troubling an obedient vassal of the Pope about, and, in fact, Langton could not but remember that such things did happen every day among the robber nobles of the mountains in Italy, and that nobody took any particular account of them.

All that he could obtain was that the secretary would carry his representation to his Holiness and endeavor to obtain an interview for him, but the Archbishop knew the man's smooth manner too well to expect that the promise would be fulfilled.

And so it was. Day after day went on and still no interview with the Pope was granted. Stephen de Pencester, with his father, had visited all the noted places in Rome, and said their prayers there — the Mamertine dungeon where St. Peter and St. Paul were shut up before their execution, and which was not worse than those where victims of King John were pining without the glory of martyrdom; the church that commemorated the legend of St. Peter being met by his Lord and Master with the cross on His shoulder going to suffer in his stead; that of St. John at the Latin Gate, which stood on the spot where the Evan-

gelist was plunged in the boiling oil, so powerless to hurt him. These and many more they visited, Sir Richard observing that he was laying up enough matters of this sort to last him the rest of his life, and Stephen not feeling even this a compensation, but heartily weary and very impatient. The only sight of the Pope that they had was when he went to open the Council. It was a magnificent sight as the procession made its way to the old basilica, St. John Lateran, afterwards burnt down ; abbots and priors in their dark robes walked first in rows, eight hundred in number; then followed bishops four hundred and twelve, their mitres and pastoral staves glittering in the October sunshine ; seventy-one metropolitans with their crosses borne before them then marched along, the Archbishop of Canterbury, further marked by the scarlet robes and cape of a Cardinal, wearing his mitre, but his hat borne before him ; and there were two Patriarchs, but these were Latins thrust upon the East. Last of all came the Pope himself, carried aloft in a chair on men's shoulders, and surrounded by attendants with fans of peacock plumes (a relic of the imperial pomp imported from the East). He was entirely dressed in white, and wore on his head the tall

cap called the tiara — another inheritance from the ancient times, but then only encircled by a single crown. Beneath this appeared his face, now aged and lined, but with the same fire in the dark falcon eyes that Langton had always remembered, and now enhanced by the whitened eyebrows, while the thin lips had assumed a still more stern and haughty expression.

After the old fashion of Rome, the Pope's place was at the back of the high altar, which stood forward, leaving a space, and the Cardinals, in their scarlet robes, sat forming a semicircle, the prelates filling the choir, and the other clergy massed in the body of the church. To most minds the magnificent scene seemed a realization of what is asked for in "Thy Kingdom come;" for had not that grand-looking head of the Western Communion actually subdued four great princes, whose ambassadors were before him, so as to become the supreme power in Europe? If anyone had thought of the words, "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation," he would have doubted of the material splendor of this scene, perhaps the culmination of the glory of the Roman patriarchate. In the countenance of Innocent, though full of genuine devotion and thanksgiving,

might be read something that revealed that the Kingdom had not been fully established in the heart of him who claimed to be the ruler! For, though his purpose was high and lofty, Innocent took his own will for the Divine will, and thus shut his eyes to the sins of the instruments whom he employed. It was no wonder that John appeared to him a submissive vassal, his barons as mere rebels, and Langton as an ungrateful and malicious traitor; but he had no right to close his ears utterly to the defence, and to refuse to hear what were the crimes that had driven England to desperation.

His feeling toward Langton was shown by the two Eastern Patriarchs being seated beside him; whereas at the Pope's right hand had always been the place of the Archbishop of Canterbury, as having almost patriarchal authority.

"Italian impudence," muttered Sir Richard to his son. As attendants on their Cardinal, they had been squeezed into a tiny and perilous gallery, niched into the roof.

"Shall we not go forth and challenge them to give the fit seat to our lord?" asked Stephen.

"Nay, nay, lad; this is no place for brawling, and we should only prejudice our master."

Father and son were destined to still deeper disgust; for, no sooner was the mass ended, and the formal opening of the council complete in the nave of the church, than there advanced up it the Abbot of Beaulieu, attended by two knights.

"Ah-h!" growled Sir Richard; "a mot of Peter des Roches. What mischief is forward now!"

"The knights!" said Stephen. "Do you know them, father? They have evil faces."

"Know them? Ay; Geoffrey of Crawcombe and Thomas Hardington, fellows fitter for a robber's den than for a Council of the Church!"

They were too far off to hear what was said, but they could see the mitred abbot prostrating himself to kiss the Pope's jewelled shoe, then kneeling to address him, and pointing as if challenging their Archbishop.

"By all the saints, the rascal is accusing him!" cried Stephen.

"Hush, boy! Walls have ears, and doubly walls like these. But I would that I had yonder Geoffrey in a fair field to choke the lie in his throat!"

"Mark, mark, sir! Here's our Archbishop coming forth now. He will have his own weapons

for the fellow after their own kind. Nay, now he kneels!"

"That he must needs do to the Pope."

"Yea! But — ha! he holds up his hands in supplication. He doth not answer the malicious shaveling!"

"Wait! Bide his time, Stephen. He will know how to make his answer. Nay; what now?"

For, to their great disappointment, there was no sign of a discussion. Langton knelt until waved aside by the Pope, when he returned to his seat.

"No doubt," said Sir Richard, "a time had been appointed by the Pope for hearing the case."

When, however, they had made their way down the narrow, broken stairs to take their places in the train of their Primate, they learned that it had not been so. The Abbot of Beaulieu had accused the Archbishop, on behalf of King John, of inciting the barons to rebellion, and of disregarding the sentence of suspension passed on him by the Pope, and pronounced by Bishop Pierre of Winchester. Instead of replying, the Archbishop had only knelt to request that the sentence of suspension should be removed, and this was

hardly refused. He had reserved his defence for a private audience of the Pope; but still it was not granted, and there were tidings that made him very anxious to return to England.

The suite of the Abbot of Beaulieu spoke of disunion among the barons, as was only too likely without such a leader as Langton, and, moreover, of an invitation to the son of the King of France to support their cause and dethrone John.

"Short-sighted! mischievous!" cried Langton, walking up and down his chamber at the English hospice. "As though to give the realm to a powerful prince were not the surest mode to overthrow our freedom. Home must I go at once to stop this madness."

The Pencesters had, on their side, heard news that disquieted the father and almost maddened the son; for the squires of Sir Thomas Harpington reported that Hubert de Burgh's daughter and heiress was to be given by the King in marriage to Fulk des Roches, the nephew of the Bishop.

"Sir Hubert's word is never broken," said the Archbishop, "and he hath pledged himself to keep her unwedded for a year."

"What recks John Lackland of a plighted

word, of his own or of another man's?" said Sir Richard.

"Too true, alas! Yet De Burgh has more power with him than any other man when they are in presence together, and to him I would trust as to a rock, even though he be opposed to me. Would that such faith were to be found here! We will hurry home, Sir Richard. If I cannot see his Holiness within three days, I will wait no longer."

Stephen ground his teeth at the delay, but, after another fruitless attempt, the Archbishop decided on an immediate start. However, the mules were in the act of being packed when a messenger arrived with a mandate from the Pope, commanding the "Reverendissimo Cardinale Arcivescovo not to leave Rome save at his Holiness's pleasure."

Thus a prisoner at large at Rome Langton was to continue as long as Innocent lived.

He turned pale at the tidings, and resigned himself.

"The will of the Lord be done! He can bring peace and freedom out of this turmoil without His servant as well as with him. But there is no hindrance for thee and thy son, good Richard."

Stephen's face brightened with hope of return, but there was still delay, for the Archbishop's letters had to be written. Moreover, a party had to be made up of sufficient strength to cross Lombardy and the Alps in safety from the attacks of robbers.

The whole of Langton's suite busied themselves in making inquiries after returning pilgrims or travellers, seeking them one after another in the churches, which were the great resort of worshippers. Stephen had great faith in his sword and lance, and chafed a good deal because the more cautious did not think these a sufficient dependence. At last, however, a French baron, on a mission from Philip Augustus, was glad to let the Pencester troop join his escort.

Stephen brought in the tidings joyfully.

"It irks me," sighed Sir Richard, "to be beholden to a Frenchman, the foe of good old King Henry Court-mantle. What would King Richard have said to see the dastard Philip stretch his greedy hand over our England?"

"'Tis for English freedom, sir," said Stephen.

"I know not. 'Tis a strange fashion of maintaining English freedom to call in a Frenchman who knows not what freedom means. These are

evil times, son; I would fain not be among our own folk once more; when 'tis hard to say which cause is the right. I know, too, that we shall have bickerings with that French troop."

He spoke sadly and wearily, and Stephen could not think what had come to his father, usually so alert and eager for action, and so decided in all his opinions. He could hardly be roused to have an interview with the French baron's squire as to time and manner of starting; and in the morning it was plain that the cause of his depression was illness.

Sir Richard had sickened of Roman fever. All the leechcraft of the English college was put into requisition, but Prior Bennet thought ill of him from the first. Day after day he lay in a state of lethargy, scarcely waking even when the Archbishop visited him, and growing weaker and weaker every day.

At last, when to poor Stephen's terror and dismay the leech-brother had pronounced that it was time to give him the last rites of the Church, the dying man called for his son.

"Stephen," he said, "thou wilt be a good lord to our vassals."

"Ay, father."

"And faithful liegeman to my Lord Archbishop. Moreover, Stephen, swear to me, ere I pass away, that no love of woman nor lust of land shall ever make thee forsake the upholding of the charter of our freedom." So Stephen, overpowered with sudden grief, took the oath, scarce knowing to what he bound himself.

"It is well, my son! It is the nobler part," said the Archbishop, who stood by the bed, and held out his hands in blessing over father and son.

Thus died Sir Richard de Pencester, and was laid, like many another victim to the Roman climate, in the burial-ground of King Ina's College.

It was well that Stephen should go home to secure the property and the feudal service of the vassals, which it was only too possible that the King might secure. The French baron had gone on his way a month previously, but Prior Bennet discovered a Flemish archbishop who had come for his pall, and who was by no means sorry to add to his guard a sturdy young squire with half a dozen men-at-arms at his back.

CHAPTER VII.

MAYOTTE'S SUMMONS.

MESSENGER from Court arrived at Dover Castle with a summons to the Constable to attend the King at Windsor, and to bring his daughter to perform her devoir to the Queen, and to be bestowed in marriage according to the King's will and pleasure.

There was great agitation when Sir Bernard Braqueville came tramping in with the tidings to the room where the three ladies sat at their tapestry and spinning, anxiously awaiting news of the purport of the tidings brought by the pursuivant, whom they had watched riding into the Castle.

"And will my father really go and take me?" inquired Mayotte, divided between the desire of change and alarm at the possible peril to her betrothal to Stephen de Pencester.

"What the King commands, that will he do, so far as his honor and conscience be not concerned," returned the deputy-governor.

"But me?" inquired the damsel anxiously.

"I said so far as his honor and conscience permitted," said Braqueville; "and my lord is a very rock as to his word! He is loath enough to go, for there be tidings that the barons have called over the French king's son, and it behooves that the Castle be defended."

"That he can trust to you, mine husband," said the Lady of Braqueville.

"He hath no other choice," said her husband. "And, verily, it would take a fiercer beast than this Louis, though they call him Lion, to get into this Castle, even were there none save thou and Bertrade to defend it!"

"Shall we stay, then, husband, and aid thee to defend it?" asked the lady, with little hope of any reply save that which she received, though Bertrade looked up in bitter dismay.

"Nay, sweet spouse, that may not be. It were not comely for our young lady here to go forth without her attendants. She may need thy care; and, moreover, a man has the better heart to stand a siege when his women folk are safe from ram, mangonel, or hunger, that worse foe! So, dames and damsels, make you ready; for it is the Lord Constable's will that you should start betimes on the morrow."

They could only obey, the elder lady sorrowfully, but her daughter with rapture.

"Anyhow," she said, "it is better to ride forth in this fair summer-time, instead of being cooped up here between these walls forever. 'Tis bad enough at all times, but what would it be with all the enemy outside, and no chance of hawking or fishing, or a traveller on his way to break the dulness."

"Nay, child, thou art young enough to heed such things," said her mother. "For my part, I could be thankful enow to have no change, but to spin in peace and quiet by thy father's side. Only my poor lamb here, who is as my other daughter to me, is like to need me. Wait on the Queen, quotha! Methought the Queen had been chased into a convent."

"She was with the King again at Savernake when the messenger came away," said Sir Bernard.

"That is better," said his wife. "Poor dame, she knows what it is to have a betrothal broke; but she is as helpless as one of her own babes. And who can tell what this King will do next? Would that the Lord Constable had cast in his lot with the barons rather than with such an evil-doer."

"Hold thy peace, dame. The Lord Constable's faith is bound to the King, and mine to the Lord Constable. Our part is to obey, not to question."

"And how far is that obedience to go?" sighed the lady, not, however, daring to speak aloud; for husbands in those days, even though affectionate, might be formidable.

The Constable was far too busy to exchange a word with his daughter till supper-time, when she sat next to him; and even then, as she watched his stern countenance, her heart fainted with the alarm of pleading her cause with that man of iron whose short, sharp orders and chidings to his men continued to ring out over the board.

Only when they rose, and Mayotte was about to kneel as usual for his blessing, did he say: "Thou hast heard, daughter. At break of day!"

"Yea, sir father. But oh! sir, is it true that it is for marriage that I am called for?"

"So say my letters."

"Oh, sir, sir! my betrothal!"

"'Tis no betrothal, silly maid. Call it not by a wrong name. There! what dost weep for? Canst not trust thy father's word?"

"Then, sir," said she, choking back the sob

which angered him, "you will not give me to any other?"

"A year and a day! That was my word to Pencester," said Hubert.

He was too entirely a man of his word to add asseverations. And he was hurried, perplexed, and perhaps angered; but he had a tender spot in his heart for his little daughter, and as he saw that she was putting a force on herself not to weep, he blessed her, then raised and kissed her, saying, "Fear not, little one! There are things that kings may not meddle with."

And Mayotte could not but be content, soothed by his rare caress, and absolutely confident in his power and will.

"And that my mother should want to stay here!" cried Bertrade, as the two maidens undressed. "My heart was in my mouth when she did but speak of it."

"I would that we might," sighed Mayotte.

"What! shut up here, with naught to look at but sea and sky and down, when we might be looking at gay doings, the fair Queen, and dances, and have hosts of knights at our feet?"

"That is what I fear," said Mayotte.

"You used to long for a change as much as I did."

"That was before Stephen went! They will try to take me from him, and what the King bids is law to my father. Ah! I know what he said. But that only lasts till Martinmas, I fear me!"

"Well! an' it be so, they will find you an earl or a viscount — a far finer husband than that dull Stephen, who is but a knight's son at the best."

"Fie for shame, Bertrade! As though I could bear with any other."

"Any one, any one who would take us to court and give us a stirring life among kings and princes and earls and barons!" cried Bertrade. "What matters it who the man is, so that he gives us fair new robes and jewels in plenty, makes us great ladies, and takes us to see the world and show our own good looks. One might as well be as frightful as the loathly lady, if one is to be mewed up here forever. I wonder where we can get some newer, comelier raiment. In London, perhaps."

"No, London is in the hands of the French. I heard the messenger say so."

"We must do our best at Canterbury." And Bertrade was still examining and sighing over her wardrobe when the curfew gave warning to extinguish all lights and repair to bed.

CHAPTER VIII.

ST. SEPULCHRE'S PRIORY.

EARLY in the long light morning, after the brief ceremony called a hunting mass, the Constable of Dover was in the saddle surrounded by his knights, squires, and pages. For his own protection he had not taken large numbers, knowing them to be needed for the defence of the Castle, and he had authorized Sir Bernard Braqueville to collect men and stores in case of an attack from the French, calling in at once all the eight knights with five and twenty men each, bound by tenure to the defence of the key of England. Ten, however, of the very stoutest and most trusty of his men, were told off for the immediate guard of the Lady Mayotte, with orders never to be absent from her rein as she rode, and to protect her lodging at night, and they were placed under the command of Sir Roger of Preston, the most esteemed and experienced of the Earl's Kentish squires. More-

over, to Mayotte's disgust and dismay, a great closed horse-litter, which had been her mother's, more like a wild-beast caravan than anything else, was made to lumber along behind.

"What is that cumbrous thing coming after us for?" demanded she, as she perched upon her palfrey.

"We may be glad enough of it in the spring showers," replied the Lady Braqueville, who was mounting pillion fashion.

"You may, lady, but for my part I had rather be drenched than boxed up in that dungeon."

"There may be worse perils than even the heaviest torrents of rain," sighed the Lady Braqueville.

"It is to mew us up in whenever any sport or pleasure is in the way," muttered Bertrade.

"Never fear, fair one," said the gay young squire, Piers Mandeville. "Eyes, however sharp, cannot be everywhere."

"Daughter," called the lady, "come to my rein! If you lag thus I shall set you on a pillion behind Hob."

There was a sharp wind, but Mayotte rode on gayly, confident in her father's promise, and charmed like a bird let loose at every novelty, and

exchanging delighted exclamations with Bertrade whenever they saw castle or cottage, peasant or pilgrim, or even a crow or a rabbit by the wayside.

The Knight of Braqueville meantime rode beside Sir Hubert, accompanying him on his first day's journey so as to obtain his directions in full, and also to be able to add to his stores all that might be needed from the city of Canterbury.

At that city the party arrived at the first stage of their journey. They were received by the knight whom the King had put in charge of the place, for he had laid hands upon it, with all the estates and revenues of the archbishopric, as soon as Langton had left England.

The knight would have lodged the whole train in the castle, but the Constable thought his company not desirable for Mayotte, and so escorted her to the nunnery of St. Sepulchre, where he requested the hospitality of the prioress for his daughter and her attendants. It was willingly granted as soon as it was understood that it was the Earl of Kent himself who requested it, for he was universally looked up to and trusted, though, as the prioress said, as she led Mayotte across the

cloister, there were few of the King's friends whom she could welcome. And all the evening Mayotte and her ladies had to listen to the melancholy story of the exactions King John inflicted on them. All through the time of the Interdict, the revenues of the convent were seized because they obeyed the Pope, and what the poor nuns had lived upon they could hardly tell, and they could obtain no restitution for the past. And now, though their lands were given back to them, their tenants were so impoverished that their steward could hardly wring out enough for their daily support, and they were deeply in debt; while all the city round was suffering terribly at the hands of the knight whom King John had set to administer the Archbishop's estates, and who cruelly ground them down. The poor nuns had been obliged to put all their plate in pawn to the Jews. Supper, such as it was, was served in earthen bowls, with wooden platters, and though daintily prepared by the nuns' fingers, was only of preparations of eggs, milk, and barley, and was eaten by those who had not brought their own spoons with wooden ones. Even the plate of the chapel, saving one chalice, had been parted with, and the serge of the garments of the sis-

ters had been mended till it would hardly hold together.

Mayotte eagerly consoled them. "Never fear, dear mother. My father has the King's ear, and will persuade him to make restitution. And, besides, the Lord Archbishop is laying all before his Holiness the Pope, and will see you righted."

"Alack!" said the prioress, "he hath been gone a weary while, and his going hath but made things worse."

There was more tangible comfort in the gifts with which the next morning the Earl requited the convent for the hospitality towards his daughter, before going to mass at the cathedral, where the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury was duly visited, and the ring presented by the King of France was exhibited to the admiring eyes of the ladies.

Bertrade, too, had her wish, so far as it was not insatiable, for there were booths along the street, where her mother requested that there might be a halt. There was a consultation with the tire-woman, and the young ladies were fitted out for their journey with hoods, kerchiefs, robes, and mantles — the last of fur though it was summer, but protection was needed when shelter was often

hard to come by. Mayotte had a white ermine mantle, as befitted her rank; Bertrade a yellow one of the wild cat; and Lady Braqueville was presented by Sir Hubert with a cloak of sable. Bertrade would have carried off half the contents of the booths if she had been alone, and Mayotte scarcely less enjoyed the novelty of the chaffering and possession of new clothes.

On they went, sometimes halting at a castle, but more often at a convent, and wherever they went they heard contradictory reports as to where to find the King and Queen.

Earl Hubert groaned and sighed, and was sorely minded to turn back for the guardianship of Dover, all the more because the rumors of a French invasion followed him, and surely his place was there. Yet his strict sense of duty and obedience forced him to follow his sovereign's call rather than his own judgment. He chafed and fumed so much under his perplexities that his daughter could not but rejoice that he chose rather to ride with his knights than with herself, and that she generally was bestowed at night in a convent, whither he could not obtain admittance, though he always stationed a strong guard outside the gates.

Thus they reached Windsor, then a strong, severe-looking castle on a hill, with no round tower, merely a square keep. No royal banner floated from it — so Hubert came to a halt among the trees of the forest, in a beautiful broad glade amid the fern, whence he sent a party forward under Sir Roland de St. Quentin, his master of the horse, to reconnoitre, and learn whether the King and Queen were there.

Meantime he bade the servants spread out what provisions they had upon the grass, "for," said he, "I doubt me that we shall have to go farther ere night."

CHAPTER IX.

WINDSOR FOREST.

MAYOTTE hardly knew whether she most enjoyed the simple meal of bread and wine upon the grass, under the noble oaks in summer glory, and the glimpses of startled deer in the distance, or felt disappointed at the deferring of her introduction to Queen Isabel.

She wanted to walk about and look down the glades with Bertrade, gathering flowers and strawberries, and in hopes of discovering a fawn, or perchance a squirrel's nest; but young Piers Mandeville came up, and Bertrade attended to nothing else till Sir Hubert, her father, who was walking up and down in anxiety, sharply bade all keep close, and not go out of sight.

Presently five or six horsemen rode through the trees as if to speak to the Constable. Mayotte was eager to hear, but he moved her back, and she stood with Bertrade, in front of the lady, out of ear-shot, but eager to guess.

"See, Bertrade! 'Tis no pleasing answer. I see it by the frown on my father's brow, and the way he holds the hilt of his sword in both his hands, as though one were keeping back the other from drawing it."

"No pleasing messenger either, to judge by my lord's face," added Bertrade.

For Sir Hubert's face became more and more stern in proportion to the evident courtesy of the seneschal of the castle, who was conversing with him, and evidently inviting him to the castle.

By and by the Earl turned away, and gave orders to his suite, which resulted in preparations for a hasty move — horses that had been grazing being brought back, and the remains of the provisions packed up. The seneschal detained him again, but Sir Roland came before the ladies in explanation, and the Lady of Braqueville stood up to meet him. He addressed himself to her, for mere girls like Mayotte and Bertrade were treated as children not worthy of notice.

"So the King is gone to the Isle of Wight," he said, "and the Queen to Savernake."

"And what are we to do?" demanded the dame, disconsolately. "Shall we not lodge at least a

night at the castle?" and she looked up wearily after her ride.

"Nay, truly," returned Sir Roland. "Wot you who is seneschal there — and had the face to come down and invite the Lord Constable? No other than Pierre de Mauluc! The same that went with the King and the young Duke of Brittany in the barge at Falaise — ay, and had the key of the vaults where died the Lady de Braose."

The Lady of Braqueville shuddered, and Mayotte began to understand that there might be more against her admired King than she had yet believed.

"What said my lord?" was the question.

"My lord replied, with lowered brow and the set lip his foes know so well, that he thanked Sir Pierre, but he would not sleep in any castle unless he knew the keeper either better or less well than him of Windsor.

"Mauluc said something about the ladies, but the Lord Constable made answer, —

"'We are well aware how the Seneschal of Windsor entertains ladies,' — and sure his eye must have pierced the fellow to the backbone. He persisted again that the forest swarmed with

outlaws, and the Constable said he would rather meet a wolf in the wood than in a den. I looked to see swords drawn, but the fellow is a craven, and only cowered under my lord's look. Nay, by his look I should guess that some evil was intended if our young damsel had once been got within his walls. She — or rather the half of my lord's heritage — is a morsel to attract the like of Mauluc."

"He would dare nothing where my lord is!"

"Who knows? My lord may be able to deal with King John when in his presence, but I doubt if the dungeon at Windsor had its secrets, and Mauluc told his own story, whether the Lackland would not feel as though quit of a school-master."

By this time all were under way again — the horses caught and led up, and Mayotte was assisted into her saddle, while the Lady of Braqueville was so weary as to prefer to occupy the litter, where, if she was jolted, she could still lie at what was supposed to be ease.

Sir Roland went back to the Constable, who presently waited for his daughter to come up, and then addressed her, —

"Maiden, thou lookest weary, but we must ride

somewhat farther to-night, so as to be free from these trees."

"I am quite willing, sir," returned Mayotte, too much pleased to be noticed by her father and to ride beside him, to have any objections to make.

"The keeping of the King's castles has to be left to free-lances who cannot be trusted," proceeded Hubert. "Woe to those who have driven him to such fellows, instead of his own knights and barons."

"Whither are we going, sir?" Mayotte ventured to ask.

"There was a village hostel a few leagues beyond the forest," Sir Roland ventured to say.

Sir Hubert bent his head, as though in acquiescence, and they rode on while the twilight began to darken. Mayotte was content to ride in silence beside her father, who, in low tones that she could not follow, for they were muttered under his beard, discussed the situation with Sir Roland; but Bertrade fell behind, and Piers Mandeville, Sir Roland's squire, began to amuse her with accounts of the rude disarray of the hall at Windsor, where hawks, hounds, spears, black-jacks and armor all seemed to be in mixed disorder, most unlike well-ordered Dover Castle.

Suddenly there was a clamor in the rear, a clash of arms, a shrieking and a shouting. The Constable, with a hasty word to Sir Roland to keep a guard round Mayotte and Bertrade, turned his rein, and galloped back, guided by the sounds. The great lumbering litter stood still, the horses grazing, and no one near it save the wagoner, who came creeping and sobbing out from beneath it, crying out in English for mercy.

"Peace, knave," called out Sir Hubert, with angry words that, however, so far reassured the man as they showed that he was not one of the enemy; but he exclaimed in broken words: "They are following! The miscreants! They broke out on us! The lady! the lady!"

"The lady!" cried Sir Hubert, hastening to the door of the litter, which stood open. "Madame, are you here? Answer me, I conjure you! 'Tis I — the Constable!"

There was no answer, and the squire, who had been interrogating the wagoner with more success than his awe-inspiring master, was able to explain, not quite without a laugh, that the rogues had broken out of an ambush and fallen on the litter which was slowly proceeding in the rear, dragging out of it the poor Lady of Braqueville, whom they

must have taken for the young heiress, and carrying her off through the wood.

The nearest of the rear-guard had dashed off in pursuit, and to rescue, if possible, the lady, and Sir Hubert, with about ten men, rode in the direction in which the wagoner pointed; but before long he heard the clatter of hoofs, and the shout "Who's there?" was in a familiar tone; then, on the inquiry, "Aye, she's here!"

And a squire might be seen with something large and whitish on the horse before him.

"Are you hurt, madame?" anxiously asked Sir Hubert.

"Oh, bruised sorely, my lord! But thanks be to the Saints that it was I, not our blessed child," cried the poor lady panting, as she was set on her feet and shook herself, but suddenly screaming with pain.

"We found the lady on the ground under a tree," explained the squire.

"Aye, the recreants, no better than pagans. Oh!" And supported by Mayotte, who had sprung down to her aid, she went on gasping out: "I had been trying to call into their ears from the first that I was not the damsel De Burgh, when the villains had snatched me up

out of my sleep, and set me on horseback. French and English I tried, but all in vain; they seemed to speak a gibberish of their own."

"Many of these free-lances are Flemings," observed Hubert. "But what was your deliverance, lady?"

"One came up who spake French, and began, the ruffian, with a soft speech meant for our poor child's ears, about love and daring for fame of her beauty, and such-like lying fooleries. So I told him in brief that he need not waste fine words on the wife of an honorable knight; and, having missed his quarry, he had better let me go ere he brought more of the Lord de Braqueville's wrath on him and his crew."

"'His ransom you mean, dame,' quoth the fellow; and my heart failed me when I thought of the castle dungeons, though I was still glad that Mayotte and Bertrade were beyond his clutches; but then we heard the trampling behind us, and my weight, as you may guess, was sorer on the horse than the child's would have been. So, finding himself falling behind, the heathenish rogue let me fall, as if he were throwing a sack off a miller's ass, and 'tis by special favor of Heaven that I stand here such as I am," she groaned,

"looking for vengeance on the rascaille rogues, which you, my lord, will not fail to take instantly."

"All in good time, dame; but Windsor Castle is not to be stormed in a single night. The matter now is to bestow you all in safety."

The Constable was not a man with whom his suite ventured on debate, but the dame, quivering with fright and passion, could not help muttering wishes that her lord were there. The poor lady, much against her will, was replaced in the litter, while the two maidens rode on; Bertrade giggling at the mistake that had been made and the discomfiture of the thief.

Sir Hubert, though showing no sign of alarm, evidently wished to be beyond the forest, since it was possible that the fugitives might bring down a stronger party to the attack; and though the Constable might declare his perfect confidence in the King, he certainly did not extend it to Pierre de Mauluc.

Indeed, as on coming out into an open glade the party looked back and beheld, by the light of the rising moon, the keep of the castle rising up into the deep blue sky, he could not help groaning to himself, —

"Alas! that such a royal castle should be no

better than a den of robbers! What a pass for King Henry's son and King Richard's brother!"

At last the weary and hungry party emerged from the forest, and saw the Thames lying silvered indeed in the moonlight, with a little ferryman's hut beside it, where a small light burned, and guided them. Thither they made their way.

Two grooms who were sent forward knocked and knocked in vain, till they shouted that in another moment they would beat down the door for the Lord Constable. Then, by the time Sir Hubert had come up the door was opened, and on the threshold stood a long-bearded, long-haired old hermit.

"Your favor, most mighty lord. Have mercy on a poor old man, the servant of good St. Christopher and St. Julian," he cried in a trembling voice.

"Never fear, good father!" said Sir Hubert in English, "we only need shelter for the night for these ladies. I am the Constable of Dover."

"The good Constable! Oh, sir, my lord, I crave pardon. I feared it was the evil man up yonder."

"Sure none would hurt one like you," said Sir

Hubert, looking with some disdain at the shrinking figure.

"Ah, sir! there be men among them who would as soon slay an Englishman as a mouse for the mere lust of killing. I have seen" —

"Let that be," said the Constable, interrupting him. "My daughter is weary, and needs rest; and this lady, her attendant dame, hath had a sore fall."

The hermit was doubtful and perplexed as to admitting ladies into his cell, which was hardly according to his rule; but his heart relented at poor Lady de Braqueville's bruised state, and he compromised the matter by sleeping in his boat, and giving up the hovel to the tired ladies.

It was a mere den, with mud walls and a roof of branches covered with heather, with nothing in it but a smouldering peat fire, which nearly choked them with smoke, a kind of shelf by way of table, a stool and a log by way of seats, and a bed of heather, a horn-shielded lamp burning under a rude cross, a pitcher of water, and a few cakes of barley bread.

So close and so far from clean was it that Mayotte and Bertrade would rather have slept in the litter, but the lady declared that nothing

should induce her to trust them to it; so they supped upon the remains of their provisions, and composed themselves to sleep as best they might, after rubbing and trying to do what they could for the lady, while watch and ward was kept around them by the men-at-arms.

CHAPTER X.

SARUM.

THE poor Lady de Braqueville was too much bruised and strained for riding, and had to learn to forget her fright, and feel herself beholden to the litter. It was decided by Hubert de Burgh not to cross the Thames, but to make his way along the southern bank, and join the Queen at Gloucester. He had no great dependence on Queen Isabel of Angoulême; but, at any rate, he did not believe that Mayotte would be in danger while under her keeping, and the summons had been to attend upon her. So the maidens rode without her. Mayotte always with her father or Sir Roland; but Bertrade preferred younger comrades, and her laugh could often be heard among the party of squires.

But when the cavalcade had come within a day's march of Gloucester, an express arrived from John summoning the Constable and his daughter to attend the King in the Isle of Wight, where

John had been collecting adventurers from the Continent. Of course the obedient Constable faced about to make his way south-eastwards, halting sometimes at abbeys, sometimes in towns, sometimes on the open heath, but obliged to be continually on his guard; and avoiding most of the castles on his way, for almost all the barons were in a state of insurrection against the King; and by the specimen he had already seen at Windsor, it was plain that the followers of John were even more dangerous than his avowed enemies.

Thus there was little intercourse with the nobles, and provisions for the party were obtained from franklins, who yielded them in terror, and were as much amazed as relieved when the value was paid to them, as it never was by the King's followers, and not often even by the maintainers of Magna Charta.

It was a very sore journey to the poor dame of Braqueville, growing worse at every step, and most welcome was Salisbury, or, rather Old Sarum, then a fortress and a cathedral squeezed into a narrow space on the top of a high and dry hill; and there they learned from Bishop Herbert Poore, an old friend of the Constable, but who contrived

to preserve a judicious neutrality, that it was of no use to go to the Isle of Wight; for there tidings had arrived that Sir Louis of France was actually in England, that King Alexander of Scotland had come to do homage to him in London, and that King John, in rage and fury, had dashed off to hunt Alexander back to his own dominions, while Louis was marching upon Dover.

"Upon Dover," repeated Hubert in a maze of bewilderment.

"He is not yet there," said the Bishop.

"The Frenchman on his way to my walls! What traitor let him land? Good lord and father, you will shelter my daughter in yonder nunnery. I must ride ere dawn. At the walls!" and he ground his teeth with wrath.

"Sir," entreated Mayotte, "may I not go with you at least as far as Canterbury?"

"It may not be, my maid. The Archbishop is on the side of the King's enemies."

"He has not yet returned from Rome," put in Bishop Herbert, "and he has met with no welcome there, if young Pencester say true."

"Has Pencester come back then?" demanded Hubert, while his daughter's heart gave a stifling throb.

"Alack!" replied the Bishop, "know you not, my lord, that Richard of Pencester rests in the holy earth of Rome?"

"My good old friend!" exclaimed Sir Hubert. "May he be with the saints! Never had I a difference with him till this matter of the Charter arose to set us all at variance."

"He was a good man, and acted according to his faith. Peace be with his soul!" returned the Bishop.

"His son?" asked Hubert, taking pity on the eager, wistful look in his daughter's eyes. "He was my own pupil, and I trust that he may be about to return to his allegiance since he is no longer withheld by duty to his father."

"He was charged with letters to the barons," was the Bishop's answer. "He did but halt here for a night, and he had scarcely words to tell how scurvily our Lord Archbishop was treated at Rome."

"I marvel not," returned the Constable. "Hath not his Holiness made the King's cause his own? Methought the landing of Frenchmen on our English ground would turn the minds of every true-hearted man to their lawful King — even you, my father."

"I am not against King John. Heaven forbid," said the Bishop. "Kings, nobles, churls, and serfs are all alike the children of the Church; and she is bound, not so much to take part with any, as to stand ready to bind up their wounds."

"That is a comfortable doctrine for such as own fat meadows," said the Constable.

"Nay, now, mine old friend, quarrel not with one whose sole wish is to be a good, peaceful brother, to whom each party can turn in time of need. Truly, if I shared the war in this, my cathedral fortress, I should be of little avail, for our water would be spent in a day. My kinsman Richard's mind is full of a scheme of transporting our minster and city into the vale, but I tell him that he may there perchance find too much of water."

"Nevertheless, while 'tis the French fashion to build minsters on high ground, out of the way of peril, 'tis the English custom to look for river sides," said Hubert.

Poor Mayotte! the conversation had drifted away from what was above all interesting to her; and a young maiden like herself was not supposed to interfere in the talk of grave seniors, but her mind was in a whirl. Sir Richard de Pencester

dead! She was sorry for him; he had given her some good-natured notice when she was a little child. But here was Stephen — a free man, and his own master! Surely he would return to her and to her father.

Yet the Bishop had spoken of his bringing letters to the barons. That might be, since the Archbishop would commission him; but no doubt, unless he were detained a prisoner, he would hasten to her, and then her father would let nothing stand in the way of his old promise.

She poured it all out, as she and her Bertrade lay down at night in each other's arms, whispering so as not to incur a scolding from the Lady of Braqueville, for keeping her awake.

"And oh, Bertrade, if my father leaves us here, under the Bishop's care, then Stephen might come back, and I should see him again."

"You might get the Bishop or some of his people to wed you," said Bertrade; "and then, what was once done could not be undone, however much they might storm."

"Fie, Bertrade! do you think that I would act so disloyally to my noble lord and father — or Stephen, either? No, indeed; but if I saw him, I know I could so deal with him as to bring him over."

"Piers Mandeville says" — began Bertrade.

"Maids, maids! what are you about? Your tongues go like the hissing of geese, keeping me awake, as if the pain were not enough," called out the old lady. "To sleep! or I know where to find a rod. Oh, my back, my back!"

Bertrade tittered, but was duly silenced by her mother's sudden move, for it was no uncommon thing for young ladies to be beaten, and even if the dame had spared Mayotte, she would certainly have fallen on her daughter. So the two girls could only squeeze each other tightly, and compose themselves to sleep.

Perhaps, if Bertrade had spoken all that was in her mind, she did not altogether wish to be left behind at Salisbury, out of sight of that Piers Mandeville, whom her mother did not like nearly as well as she did, thinking him a pert, idle young squire, whom Sir Roger frequently had to reprimand, and probably only distinguishing Bertrade because her only brother had been missing since the battle of Bouvines, and thus she was somewhat of an heiress. Her parents both decided against him, but it might be feared that he was trying to win her by stealth before another marriage could be arranged.

CHAPTER XI.

A CALL NORTHWARDS.

THE plans of Earl Hubert were again entirely overthrown, and with them Mayotte's hopes of waiting at Salisbury. The early mass which was to precede the journey was not yet over, when the warder on the gate blew his horn, announcing that visitors were on the way.

A party of somewhat ruffianly looking horsemen were soon at the gate, demanding admission in the name of the King. Bishop Poore, who, in spite of his profession of neutrality, was bound to be very cautious, sent back his steward, a stately person with a silver chain, to demand who they were, and what was their business.

The answer came back, it was Sir Guisbert de Garreau, who had been sent by the King to meet the Lord High Constable, and hearing that he was in Sarum, desired admittance, to speak with him.

"Is it true, think you, Simon?" asked the Bishop; "or is it a device of some of the free companions to obtain entrance and plunder?"

"Heaven forbid, my lord!" exclaimed the steward; "but methinks it is truth. The men wear the King's badge, and though that might be only to color the tale, they have plainly come a long way, and the Lord Constable's squire, who went with me, thinks he has seen the faces of some of them in the King's service."

"Moreover," added the Bishop's chaplain, "they would scarcely dare to do us a mischief in the presence of the Lord Constable, nor in the city of the good Earl of Salisbury."

"Nevertheless," said the Bishop, "we will be on the safe side. Let the knight, his squire, his page, and his groom enter, an' he will, and send good entertainment to the others without."

The steward bowed, but murmured on the way that good entertainment for such a pack of wolves meant fasting for the Bishop's train till it was safe to move to another manor. However, it was better than letting them help themselves.

Presently in clanked the knight, in full, but somewhat rusty, armor, his squire bearing behind him his helmet, wide at the top and pointed at the

chin. His tanned, harsh features were thus visible, and they were not prepossessing, though he was evidently on his good behavior, and probably respected the Constable as much as he was capable of respecting any man. The Constable returned his salutation with a curt greeting, and demanded his business.

"I bring commands from the King," he said.

"Have you a token?" next asked Hubert, looking at him suspiciously; and Sir Guisbert sullenly responded:

"Aye, my lord," and produced a couple of links of a curiously twisted gold chain. "He said you would know this by the token that it is the remnant of the gift of the long-bearded old Irish goat."

"I know it," said Hubert gravely, for he had been one of the suite of John on that expedition to Ireland when the prince's levity and insolence had given such deep offence to the Irish kings by pulling their beards. No one save John Lackland could have devised such a message.

"By this token," continued Sir Guisbert, "my Lord King bids the Lord Constable to ride forthwith northwards to join him, bringing the demoiselle his daughter with him."

"Northward? Where left you him?"

"At Stamford, sir."

"Stamford! Wots he that Dover is in danger?" demanded Hubert, barely restraining a stamp of anger and impatience.

"Wots he? Ha! ha! Saving your presence," exclaimed Sir Guisbert. "His very course is to chase back to his own starved realm the Scottish king who has been insolent enough to come and pay his homage to the Frenchman in London itself, before the traitor mayor, while the Frenchman is before the gates of Dover."

"What!" shouted Hubert in rage and dismay; "before Dover Castle, saidst thou?"

"Before — not in it," said Guisbert coolly; "nor like to be."

"I not there! And the King sends for me elsewhere?"

"Even so," returned Guisbert; "he would have me escort you and the lady to meet him, whether at York or elsewhere."

"Leaving the Frenchman before my Castle!"

It was a bitter command. Hubert could hardly brook to obey the order which was utter folly on the King's part. With Louis at his gates, what was the benefit of chasing Alexander to Scotland?

And whatever he might do himself, what madness made him deprive the very key of England of its defender? For Hubert knew that he could easily have entered the castle by the sea; and with all his trust in the knight of Braqueville, he could not but long to be at his post. Nor did he relish the command to bring his daughter with him, but when the Bishop urged him to leave her in his own safe keeping, since the outskirts of King John's camp could hardly be a safe place for her, he still answered, "I must obey my liege lord."

"In *all* matters?" demanded the Bishop.

"In all save where my God, my truth, and mine honor are concerned," replied Hubert reverently.

"And will the King never push you beyond these?" asked the Bishop.

"He knows me better," returned the Constable, drawing up his head. "I have answered him already, and I will answer him again, that mine honor forbids me until the octave of next Martinmas to dispose of my daughter in marriage, and I shall abide by my word."

"I crave your pardon, Sir Constable; I doubt not your good faith, but the King and his free

lances are said, if they be not much belied, to stick at no violence."

To which Hubert replied, "King John knows me, and his free lances know my men. My hand can keep my child. It is my Castle for which my heart sinks."

"I believe he holds his Castle dearer than his child," muttered the Bishop, as the Constable strode away to give his orders.

"Oh! good my lord, can you do nothing with him?" said the poor lady of Braqueville. "Is he still bent on carrying our poor lambs into the midst of the wolves at the camp? It is a mere tempting of the fiends!"

"He provides good watch-dogs, lady," said the Bishop in consolation.

"A watch-dog only serves for another meal for a pack of wolves," sighed the lady; "and here am I still aching worse every day since that fall at Windsor, and your reverend fatherhood's leech would have cured me, could I but have had a month's rest here with the good sister infirmarer at St. John's yonder. I should be nigher to my lord husband too, instead of going off to those strange wilds of the north, no one knows where, while he is besieged by those cruel Frenchmen."

The Bishop could offer little consolation; he could only remember the saying of one of his colleagues, that when Solomon declared the "way of going" of four things to be wonderful, he might have added that of a King of England on a journey, but he offered the poor lady, who indeed did not look fit for the journey, to remain with the Sister Hospitalier till she had recovered and had tidings of her husband, but she refused mournfully.

"Nay, my lord, I may not quit the Lady Mayotte. She hath been my charge from her birth, and to leave her in this troop of men were foul shame, nor would my lord, her father, permit it."

"Mayhap the Lord Constable would permit me to seek out some honorable knight's wife or widow to take the charge."

"Nay, nay, my lord, I may not leave the maiden to another. She is at a giddy age, and so is mine own damsel. They will give heed to me when they might not to a stranger. The Lady Mayotte — Saints bless her! — is a good and loving maid, who honors and worships her father as though he were Saint Hubert himself, stag and all; and she will do aught in the world that can ease me or

please me, the dear maid, but she is a child, and loves pleasure as all young things do; and my Bertrade is a trifle giddy and lively, and without me, who am almost as much mother to Mayotte as to Bertrade, who knows what follies they might run into?"

The good Bishop could only cease from his persuasions and bid the lady good speed, while the Sister Hospitalier provided her with all the medicaments that she could think of, and very strange ones some of them were.

There was a maid attached to the service of each of the three ladies, but these were all somewhat rough and careless women, so that the dame was chiefly dependent for care on Mayotte and Bertrade. Since the journey had begun, and young Piers Mandeville had been thrown in her way, Bertrade had been much less attentive to her mother, and seemed to be always looking out for chances of chattering with him, and these became more frequent since the poor old lady had lost vigor.

She bade the two maidens very seriously to keep close to her litter, unless the Constable called for his daughter, in which case Bertrade was to attend her closely, and not converse with any one,

unless the two grave old knights, Sir Roland or Sir Roger, should happen to do her the favor of speaking to her.

Bertrade made no answer in words, but as she parted from her mother she tossed her head ; and if any one had been watching, a wink might have been seen to pass between her and young Mandeville, as they mounted their horses to descend the hill of Old Sarum.

CHAPTER XII.

ST. KATHARINE'S PRIORY.

THE Constable kept even closer discipline in this new journey than he had done before. It was at Lincoln that he was to meet the King, and when once the route of the royal army had been reached, it was marked plainly enough, for every house where John had slept now lay in ashes. He always set fire to it ere going on his way.

At Sarum, Sir Hubert had procured a couple of tents, and these were set up every night when a convent was not near for the ladies ; but guarded most diligently by Sir Roger of Preston and his men, who watched in turn round them.

Lady Braqueville was glad enough to be quiet and free from the jolting of the litter for a few hours, though the advance of autumn brought cold winds, laden with damp, over the fens, and they sometimes had to stop short before night on account of overwhelming fogs. The cold and wet

racked her with pain, and all the wraps Mayotte could devise failed to give her much ease, whether resting or travelling. As to Bertrade, with that carelessness by which maidens so often lay up for themselves bitter remorse, she was half unbelieving, half angry at her mother's suffering, and sulked when obliged to remain in the tent.

It was so much more amusing to stand outside and talk to Piers Mandeville and hear the stories he picked up from Sir Guisbert's escort. Why should an unkind messenger always call her away?

"He is heir to a fine castle and estate in Normandy," she said, "so why should he be despised?"

"Is he despised?" asked Mayotte.

"My mother never will let me speak to him, if she can help it."

"Because a discreet maid never does stand loitering with a young squire."

"Ah, ah! Demoiselle Mayotte, what did you do when young Pencester was nigh?"

"I did nothing without the knowledge of my father and your mother," said Mayotte hotly. "Besides, Stephen is a different matter."

Bertrade laughed. "See what you say when you come to the King," she said. "Piers hears

that you are promised to the Bishop of Winchester's nephew."

"Not till a year from last Martinmas will my father even entertain the thought," returned Mayotte.

"And how near is Martinmas?" returned Bertrade. "Now Piers will take me to his castle in Normandy."

"I thought Normandy had been seized by the King of France?"

"As if it would remain with him! Or else, if this Louis makes himself King of England, it will be all one again. Or mayhap Piers will go over to him! 'Tis hungry work enough across these fens. Were it not for the fowl and the eels we should be brought to fine straits. Piers has promised me the first heron's plume he can come by."

Mayotte was tired of hearing of Piers. She did not like his face or his manners, and if he were at hand Bertrade could attend to nothing else, and when riding was always watching for him, not always successfully; for he was fonder than his knight, Sir Roland, approved of consorting with the free lances, who had come with Sir Guisbert, and who played at dice at all the halts with noise and quarrelling, quite new in Sir Hubert's orderly troop.

However, in time Lincoln's noble cathedral, almost fresh from the hand of the great Bishop St. Hugh of Avallon, rose before them.

Just outside the southern gate stood the great convent of St. Katharine, and here, in spite of the growls of Sir Guisbert de Garreau, the Constable drew his rein, saying that he must provide for his daughter's lodging. A court without a queen was no place for her.

So he dismounted and sent a request by the porter to be allowed to speak with the lady prioress. And on being admitted he courteously gave his arm to the Lady Braqueville, who really needed it, as she hobbled across the cloister, followed by the two young girls, Bertrade looking sullen and disappointed at being again consigned to a convent.

St. Katharine's belonged to the Gilbertine order, otherwise called of Sempringham, where the prioress was supreme, but which comprised not only Gilbertine nuns but lay brethren, who lived in an outer court and made themselves useful. The main body of the house was about sixty years old, beautiful in stonework, but there were a good many outbuildings incomplete, and the cloister was still only timbered, waiting till means should be found of finishing it.

The Prioress Agnes, a tall old lady, with black robe and hood, stood awaiting him in the parlor, which was still only divided by bars of wood. The mighty Constable bent low as he craved her blessing, and she signed it with her long slender hands.

"Reverend mother," he said, "the King has summoned me with my daughter to attend his court. May I crave your holy shelter for my child and her attendants?"

"With all my heart, sir. The court is scarce a place for a young maid like her."

So Mayotte was led up and kissed by the lady, whose face became very sweet and gentle as she looked at her, while the Constable went on to say: "The poor damsel is mine only child, and in these days it is ill to be heiress to lands and houses. I would fain place a guard, and, if it might be, find quarters near her."

"If your men are well ordered, sir, we could find space for them with our brethren," replied the prioress. "In truth, knowing what we do of Sir Hubert de Burgh, their protection would be welcome, for there be men in Lincoln who are daunted by no sacrilege."

"I have heard as much," said the Constable.

"My men are used to order and discipline, and woe to any who disturb your holy peace, good mother."

The prioress then added that they had a chamber in the house of the brethren where a new bishop always lodged ere his installation, and they would be infinitely honored, and feel themselves protected, if Sir Hubert would occupy it.

This he willingly accepted, and repaired thither at once, deeming it too late to present himself to the King, and being glad to arrange the matter for his men.

Very thankful was poor Lady de Braqueville for as soft a bed as the sister infirmarer could devise for her, but her daughter was sullen at being shut up in convent walls with a set of old sisters, who could do nothing but tell stories of Bishop Hugh and their desire to have him enrolled in the Canon of Saints.

"If I have heard once, I have heard fifty times already, how he worked with hod and trowel at the walls," she exclaimed.

"I wish he were here now," sighed Mayotte.

"To be more wearied with him living than dead?" demanded Bertrade.

"No; but they say he could control the King better than any other man."

For Mayotte's mind had a good deal changed about the King since she had started on her journey.

CHAPTER XIII.

KING JOHN.

THE Constable of Dover went forth early in the day to pay his devoir to the King, who, as he heard, was in better hopes than before, since the Earl of Pembroke, marshal of England, with others of the nobles who had taken alarm and offence at the proceedings of the French, had come over to his side, and were on their way to join him.

Not long after he had gone forth, while the nuns were at their meal of pease-porridge in the refectory — one of them, in a beautiful carved pulpit, reading aloud the legend of St. Barbara — a lay brother came to the door with tidings that the King was at the gates with a troop of knights.

Nuns were not at all desirous of the visits of King John, which were generally to make demands on their property, or else to take some one out of sanctuary. Presently there was the blast of

a bugle, and a knocking at the gate, and then an elderly nun, sent by the prioress, appeared to say that the King was come, together with the Lord Constable, and desired to see the Demoiselle de Burgh.

"My father! Is he there, too?" asked Mayotte.

"Yes, certainly, lady. Moreover, the lady prioress has sent you these novices' veils, in which it might be well, she says, for you young maidens to cover yourselves from the rude men."

Mayotte accepted thankfully, and muffled herself well in the thick veil, shrinking back in shyness and terror. Bertrade giggled, and wanted to know whether it could be needful for a poor little nobody like herself to be stifled and made frightful. Her mother, getting up with groans and sighs from the couch on which she was lying, bade the girl make no more ado, and the sisters adjusted the veil upon her head. But before they had reached the parlor Bertrade's fingers had arranged a peephole, whence she could not only see, but her arch-looking eyes and demurely-smiling mouth could be seen.

The parlor of the convent was a great bare hall with a stone floor, and a wooden partition

across it, in the middle of which were five perpendicular bars, only wide enough apart for a hand to be put through them. Already, before the winding stone steps had been entirely descended by Mayotte, who was helping the slow, painful movements of the Lady Braqueville, a voice was to be heard speaking loudly, far above the tones enjoined by monastic rules, in a tone of good-natured bantering authority, in the French that was the universal tongue, telling the prioress that she had no business to shut up free birds in her cage, even though they might lay golden eggs.

Emerging from the stair, Mayotte saw the outer portion of the parlor full of people, chiefly in armor, among whom towered her father's grizzled head. He stood behind the speaker, a man of middle age, once well made, but now heavy and unwieldy, and with a countenance straight featured, and well moulded, but bearing the indescribable repulsive marks left by dissipation and indulgence of evil passions, the complexion weather-stained and red. His fair hair was covered by a small pointed cap, and he wore a long gown, richly-colored, but stained with wine, girt with a thick, gold, twisted cord, in which a jewelled dagger was stuck. It needed not the

lions embroidered on his breast to show that he was no other than King John ; but there was something in his face and voice which made all the last remnant of Mayotte's visions of her King fade away in a moment.

"Here she is!" he shouted, in a jovial voice. "What! rolled up like a nun? That is too bad of you, reverend mother! Out with her face at once! Out, out, and beyond this cage! or my men-at-arms shall have it down with their axes, and set all your doves flying."

A great rude laugh of applause went up from the men-at-arms, and Mayotte would fain have retreated; but her father called out to her: "Put back the veil, my maid, at his Highness's bidding."

Trembling, Mayotte obeyed, making a deep reverence.

"Ho! a tolerable baby's chit of a face; but Fulk here will have no objection. Come here, Fulk; we will betroth you at once."

A young man came forward, gorgeously attired in purple and green embroidered with silver, and a splendid brooch over one shoulder, with a dark Gascon face, framed in black hair, set off by his yellow cap.

"Down with the bars, ungrateful woman, when

I have given you a golden chalice," continued King John. "We have the right of entrance into all your houses of wenches."

Some one murmured here that Lincoln was not so well affected as to make it safe to outrage the feelings of the inhabitants, and John might be heard to swear an oath under his breath. However, he continued, —

"Well, well; if you have to be so nice and prim in this traitor of a city, it will suffice if the damsel put her hand through the bars, like an ape in a show. He can put on the ring, and give her a kiss, saving the prioress's worshipful presence."

Mayotte shrank behind the prioress, and her father stepped forth.

"Sir," he said, "I have already told you that I have sworn that my daughter shall be bestowed on no man for a year and a week after Martinmas."

"Sworn to a traitor!" cried John. "Rebel yourself, to waste good promises upon traitors."

"My lord, the King is the only man in the kingdom who could dare to say such a word!" returned Hubert, with that gesture of both hands on his sword.

"Moreover," exclaimed the King, "the fellow is dead. What are oaths to a dead man?"

"More binding than even oaths to the living," returned the Constable, while the King and the rest of his train broke out into laughter.

"Here's the Bishop, Fulk's uncle, ready to absolve you on the spot," said the King.

"He cannot absolve me of an honorable knight's word," replied Hubert, standing resolute.

"Martinmas, quotha?" exclaimed the King again. "It is but a couple of months to Martinmas. There's not so much as a tithe of your precious oath to come, Hubert."

"I will be true to that tithe," returned Hubert, "or I should be mansworn."

"Yet," put in the Bishop, "the King asks not of you to wed your daughter to my nephew, only to let them exchange troth. The wedding may then well be after Martinmas."

"That so I may have to break two oaths instead of one," grimly responded Hubert.

"Wilt thou then, on this precious word and honor of thine, swear to give her to Fulk as soon as Martinmas is past?" demanded the King.

"Nay," replied De Burgh; "how know I that young Pencester may not by that time be in the King's peace?"

"At peace with a halter round his neck, the young rebel," muttered the King.

"You refuse, then, the King's commands to give her, or his favor in permitting you to betroth her?" said the Bishop of Winchester.

"No King hath power to make me break my word," returned Hubert.

John began to stammer with wrath.

"Insolent traitor! In league with my foes. Take him, cast him to the wolf-hounds. Give his daughter to the scullion, his lands" —

Hubert stood during this outburst quite still, with arms folded, and his impassive attitude encouraged his daughter, whose hand the prioress held tightly.

"Peace, sir!" said the dignified lady. "What would the holy Bishop Hugh say to hearing you thus rave in the house which he blessed. Take heed, or his vengeance will overtake you."

"You dare to threaten me, woman?" shouted John. "You will see whether your walls and bars will protect you."

At that moment there was a little commotion, and the murmur ran along the ranks of the men-at-arms that the Legate was coming. This seemed to startle John; he drew himself together, and his

tumultuous followers assumed a sort of order, as a dark-robed ecclesiastic, with sundry clerical attendants, was ushered in. It was the Legate Gualo, a grave and dignified man, who had begun to be shocked by John's atrocities; and when the King turned round crying, —

"Holy father, do me right on this overbold traitor, who refuses to give his daughter's hand at my bidding, and this insolent nun, who shelters her contrary to my will and that of the Bishop of Winchester."

"Hath she taken the veil?" demanded the Legate.

On the negative answer, he desired to hear the cause; and when it had been put before him, he gave his judgment that the Constable of Dover was perfectly justified in holding to his oath till Martinmas octave and a day. In fact, he saw plainly the danger of alienating one of the few honest men who still held by King John, or of further offending the English Church folk by interfering with the right of sanctuary.

John durst not resist him, but, savage and growling, drew off his party. Pierre des Roches, the Bishop of Winchester, an astute-looking Gascon, still begged permission of the Lord Con-

stable to present his nephew to the young lady; and the pale, trembling, sobbing Mayotte was ordered once more to come forward.

"Demoiselle," said young Fulk, "I hope we may be better acquainted."

Mayotte could only make a low reverence without looking up, and her whole figure shuddering a "no."

"That's the way with such young wenches," she heard the Bishop say. "All will be well when once she has him."

She could not hear her father's answer, and she sank on the floor, weeping and trembling.

The prioress lifted her up and tried to comfort her. "Child, child, pray and you will be defended. Never did I see a man more entirely to be trusted than your father."

"Oh, mother, but he obeys the King in all things. Martinmas is close at hand, and then there is naught between me and that black ruffian. And oh, poor Stephen!" sobbed Mayotte.

"Six weeks," said the prioress, consulting the wooden clog almanac carved with the emblems of the Saints. "None can tell how prayer may work in six weeks, nay, in a single night!"

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ALARM.

THE priory had felt the influence of the great St. Hugh long enough to render the sisters very strict and exact in keeping their canonical hours, and Lady Braqueville was wont to complain that their bells for matins and for lauds never failed to wake her whenever the pain in her back would allow her to drop off to sleep.

On the second night after King John's visit Mayotte had been trying to ease the poor lady by rubbing her back with some ointment given by the sisters, and at the sound of the bell, shortly after one o'clock, when her patient had dozed, she went out to join the sisters ; for, as she said, never did anyone need prayer more than she did, as she counted the days before Martinmas as if each brought her doom nearer.

The sisters, muffled in their black veils, came out of their cells, and the procession was formed

along the dark stone passage; but it had no sooner reached the chapel than a shriek was heard. For the walls were lighted up with other light than the holy candles upon the Altar or the lamps that burnt before the shrines of the Blessed Virgin and St. Katharine. Through the little windows, deep set in their bays, flames were flashing from some fire close at hand, and at the same time loud shouting voices of men were heard without.

The convent was built of stone, but with sheds and outhouses of wood, and some of these were evidently on fire.

The Mother Agnes, the prioress, was a woman of much power and authority. With uplifted hand she silenced the outcry and confusion, as she stood on the steps.

"Pray, my daughters," she said. "Kneel down, and you, Sister Lucy, begin the matins. Never fear, children. You are safer here than elsewhere. If there is need, you shall be called."

She went out, after signing the cross over them, moving with slow and dignified pace, and beckoning to old Sisters Maude and Eleanor to come with her, and the heavy bolt of the door was heard to close without, and another bolt fastened the inside.

These services did not require a priest, and Sister Lucy, obeying a signal she gave as she went out, began with a quivering voice in Latin, "O Lord, open our lips," and a few voices answered, "And my mouth shall show forth Thy praise."

Like our present matins, the service proceeded to the Invitatory Psalm. Very trembling were the voices, some sobbing, some rising into a cry of fear as the flames became visible at the window, the red light flickered over roof and wall, and angry voices, clash and tramp, could be heard outside — nay, again close to the doors.

The poor little congregation was fastened in; they knew it, and those were devout spirits which could abstract themselves and really join, though many sent up entreaties for safety in their hearts, while their lips formed the words the drift of which they more or less understood.

Smoke came in, which terrified them all the more; but the fire began to die down, while there was a louder noise near the door — shout, cry, altercation. Then all suddenly died away, nothing remained save the smell of fire.

"Mercy, mercy!" sighed a young nun, closely grasping Mayotte. "It is smouldering. The roof will fall over our heads and crush us."

"They are coming," cried another. "Hark!"

"Hark!" cried Mayotte, and once more screamed and began to beat against the door. "Is that my father's voice?"

"Warriors in our cloister! Oh!" screamed a nun.

And as, after a sharp knocking, the outer bolt was withdrawn, the nuns huddled together, with low sobs and screams.

The prioress's voice, however, came in. "Children, all is well. Thank God!"

And as the door fell back, dark within the archway, still somewhat obscured by smoke, stood the figures of the prioress and a tall man, the light glinting upon his hauberk.

"Is my daughter here?" asked the voice Mayotte knew so well.

With one bound she was in her father's arms, clasped to his breast with a fervor such as she had never felt from him before, as he cried aloud, "Thanks to our gracious God!"

"The maiden's devotion hath saved her. Thanks to Him!" said the mother.

"The lady — and Bertrade?" Mayotte managed to ask, as her father still held her close.

"Safe, though barely rescued," returned the Constable.

And then the matter was explained as far as it was understoood.

Hubert de Burgh had posted a guard outside the convent gates, and they had watched or waked or slept as best it pleased them, till they had become aware of a perilous smoke and smell and flame in the nuns' cloister. A messenger from among them had been sent off to awaken the monks, and to summon the Constable. The monks were already astir, and Sir Hubert, lightly sleeping, had been on the alert instantly; but when he arrived there was an utter confusion between his own men, who, under Sir Roger, were striving to extinguish the fire and another party who had rushed in from without.

Prior and Constable found the prioress at the door, trying to make her orders heard. She hastily told him that her nuns were safe in the chapel. "Look to your daughter, sir," she said, pointing up a steep stair. "There may be foul play. There is a postern from the outer court."

The Constable had darted up, and had encountered in the gallery an armed man with a maiden in his arms. In one instant the fellow was struck down, the damsel rescued. Alas! it was not May-

otte, but Bertrade. And when he had dashed back to the chamber there only stood, weeping and wringing her hands, the poor old lady!

There still remained the hope of Mayotte being in the chapel, and thither the knight had come with the prioress, to find the maiden safe. The man whom he had felled in the gallery was sought for, but in vain; he must have gathered himself up and made his way out, but the Constable had little doubt who it was, nor that Fulk des Roches was trying a bold stroke, not so much for a wife but for an heiress. Robberies of convents were far from uncommon among King John's lawless followers. It was not long since Fulk de Bréaute had pillaged the great Abbey of St. Albans, and a nunnery was far less likely to escape.

The Mother Agnes was by no means ungrateful for his proposal to post a guard in the ruined cloister, where the embers still smoked, though she proposed closely to lock up her doors on that side of the house.

"Father, lord father," entreated Mayotte, as he bade her farewell, "you will not give me to such a fellow as this, Martinmas or no Martinmas!"

"Certainly not, child, if it be brought home to him," replied her father.

And Mayotte felt this compensation for the terrors of the night. If only the fire could be brought home to the perpetrator, she would be free so far as her father's will was concerned, and she had no doubts of his power.

CHAPTER XV.

WHO FIRED THE CONVENT?

HUBERT DE BURGH, attended by Sir Roger of Preston and Sir Roland St. Quentin, betook himself as early as was reasonable to the castle, where the King lodged, on the morning of the October day. Nobody appeared to be well awake, except a groom or two, who were rubbing down horses, the proper work of knightly-born squires in well-regulated households like his own, but the greater number of his retainers, as he soon saw as he marched on, were lying about on the hall floor. One of the tables (boards upon trestles) had been upset, and the remnants of the evening's revelry, cups, beakers, and flagons, had fallen in a heap, with wine streaming from them.

Hubert stood and looked in great disgust. "This is what the desertion of honest Englishmen has brought upon our King!" he muttered.

"If the barons knew it and broke in!" exclaimed Sir Roland.

And Hubert, following a sudden and half-mischievous impulse, shouted aloud, "Ha! lazy lurdans! St. George to the rescue!"

The whole inert mass was in motion at once. There were broken exclamations, men sat up, grasped their weapons, rose confusedly to their feet. Some swore, others demanded in all sorts of tongues — French, northern and southern, Dutch, Flemish, and English — where and what the foe was. All, however, being so used to nightly revels that they did not awake in the morning with the dazed senses that the Constable expected. A knight and a couple of personal attendants of the King came stumbling downstairs at the same moment upon the alarm.

All looked at Sir Hubert, expecting an immediate summons to meet an attack, but he gave a short laugh, and said aloud for all to hear, "I wished to see how soon these lazy rogues would be astir in case of need. I see they can be on foot speedily, though, fellows, my men at Dover would scorn to be sleeping after sunrise."

"The worse for them," was murmured among the men in surly tones, while they stretched and yawned, and some even composed themselves to sleep again; but if there were muttered impreca-

tions, no one durst utter an open murmur against the Lord Constable. Even the knight only said, "All cannot keep such order as my lord, above all when these are not born vassals, but hired lances."

"The more shame and pity," muttered Hubert, adding, "I came to speak with the King."

"The King is in his chamber," returned the knight, and accordingly the Constable was conducted thither. People gave audience often in their bedchambers, and even in their beds, which was the more to be excused as there were very few other places in a castle in those early Plantaganet days tolerably warm or comfortable. Thus John, who, whatever his faults, was too much of a Frenchman for such intemperance as that of his Low Country lances, was sitting up in his bed with unkempt hair, and a loose mantle thrown over him, while round him stood various persons, mostly clergy, the only one accommodated with a seat being Legate Gualo. Hubert's keen eye ranged round, and at once recognized the Bishop of Winchester, but the nephew, Fulk, he failed to perceive.

"Ha!" cried John, as Hubert did his obeisance, "our trusty Constable. Are you come to advise

us of an attack of the rebels, who, we hear, are hovering about?"

Hubert explained how the sight of the sleeping men-at-arms had excited him to rouse them, at which John went into a fit of laughter at their vain awakening, and again at the disappointment of the grave Constable, who could not believe that an honest soldier could be worth his salt unless he were never allowed an instant of ease or pleasure.

"There were some who were alert enough at night, my lord," said Hubert. "My intent in coming hither this morning was to tell you that the convent where my daughter was bestowed was last night set on fire, and an attempt made to carry her off."

"Ha!" said the King, "could I not have told you what you might expect if you dangled an heiress before the noses of my brave followers, like a red herring before a pack of hounds."

"Sir," said Hubert, "I brought my daughter from her safe home in Dover Castle upon your grace's strict command to attend upon the Queen. The neighborhood of a king should be absolute safety to small and great."

"Ho, ho! the Constable is talking of the old

days, when Richard, or Rollo — or who was it? — hung bracelets dangling on trees, and no one durst meddle therewith. The men of these days are not of the same mould, Sir Hubert."

"No, indeed they be not," was the grave reply.

Here the Legate interfered. "What is it that the Lord Constable complains of?" he inquired. "Did I hear him aright, that a convent hath been profaned?"

The Constable told his history in some detail.

"How do you know," put in the King, "that it was not all the work of these foolish nuns! Women are not fit to be trusted with torches!"

"The nuns were all shut into their chapel," replied Hubert. "Moreover, it was no nun whom I met with one whom he took for my daughter in his arms, trying to carry her away."

"From the fire — from the fire, man!" put in the King. "What else could a true knight do?"

"Fire there was none in the main building," responded Hubert. "Sir Roger of Preston, you were on guard within the gates. Tell what you beheld."

Sir Roger then deposed to having made his rounds just ere the convent-bell rang for matins. He had been struck by a glare of light in the

cloister, and immediately after two men came scrambling over the low cloister roof, which was even with the street. There was an endeavor to seize them, but more men, half-armed, came up as if to extinguish the fire, and there was a struggle, during which Sir Roger and other men came up. They were driven off, and the fire subdued.

The Legate asked whether he had recognized anyone, or any coat-of-arms.

"My lord," he said, "I cannot doubt that the surcoats and badges that I saw were those of Roches" —

"Reverend Legate and your grace!" exclaimed Bishop Pierre des Roches, "this is mere slander, which my nephew, were he here, would prove upon the body of Sir Roger of Preston."

"Wherefore is he not here?" demanded Sir Hubert. "Why doth he not answer for himself?"

"He is gone forth before daylight on a mission from the King," explained the Bishop. "Is he not, my lord?"

"Aye," said John, in a somewhat hesitating manner, as if the avowal were drawn out by the Bishop's appeal, clenching the reply by an oath.

"Indeed!" said Hubert. "Naught of this was

known last night. May I ask whither he is gone?"

The King again hesitated; the Bishop suggested: "To watch the barons at Chesterfield."

"Aye, aye," said John, "to watch the rebels at Chesterfield — your brother Thomas among them, Sir Hubert," he added, with a sneer. "He went with all his fellows yesternight. So it was a mere dream of yonder knight! Much more like that it was some of that outlawed rascaille. These accursed citizens are ready enough to encourage them, and if you, Hubert, were ever fool enough to promise this wench to one of them, it would be color enough for the attempt! Ha! ha! We'll burn the place when we have done with it, and serves the rogues right."

This was all that Hubert could obtain from the King, and the Bishop followed him with assurances that it was a mere imagination that his nephew's men were concerned. The fishes which formed the cognizance of Des Roches might easily be mistaken, and Fulk was far too honorable a knight to think of such an attempt; and he proceeded with full proposals for a treaty of marriage, detailing the advantages on either side.

"Sir, I have spoken," replied Hubert briefly.

"I shall listen to no such proffers till after Martinmas. Nor do I say that I shall accept them then, but until that time I am bound by my word."

"Even to a traitor?" said the Bishop.

"It is hard to tell where the traitor is," said Hubert gravely.

And away he clanked in his armor, privately convinced, though unable to carry out his conviction.

Horrible stories of the behavior of the free companions to the unhappy northern peasants rang through the city of Lincoln, and there could be little doubt that Fulk des Roches had shared in them all. Nothing restrained them in Lincoln but the guard kept by the city bands and their menacing attitude.

The Earls of Salisbury and Pembroke had left Louis, from distrust of his intentions, but though they held with John they were as powerless as Hubert to restrain the violence of the soldiery, which the King more than sanctioned, for when his passions were once stirred he was more ungovernable than any of his terrible followers. It was bitter grief to the brave, high-minded Hubert to see the fall and the degradation of one whom he really loved. All the influence he once pos-

sessed over the King was gone. John would not listen to him, and scoffed at his representations of the folly of wandering about, making himself doubly hateful by savage violence and devastation, instead of encountering the enemy face to face in battle, and striving to drive him out of England.

The unhappy man had probably lost nerve, for he never attempted to follow any valiant counsel, but, like a bit of drift wood, let himself move about aimlessly, except where plunder attracted him.

The Sempringham community were thankful for their guards, and the ladies had a time of calm under their care. Bertrade, however, shocked Mayotte not a little by declaring that it was pity the Lord Constable had rescued her. "It would have been livelier to have been carried off!"

Mayotte cried out in horror.

"He, whoever it was — Sir Fulk or his squire — might have been glad to have me, for my father would give a good dower on our lands, even if my brother still lived."

"I thought it was Piers Mandeville you cared for."

"Piers — poor Piers — I like him well enough.

Yea, but he is out of the way now; and Fulk is the great Bishop's nephew — a match for you, lady! So what would he not be for poor Bertrade? Besides, how dull we are in these nunneries! and Dover Castle will be worse."

CHAPTER XVI.

THROUGH THE FENS.

TO remain with King John was utter misery to a man like the Constable of Dover, who could not turn his hand against his sovereign, though hating his excesses, which grieved him in proportion to his lingering love. So dangerous was the camp for his daughter, and so convinced was he that he was sorely needed at Dover Castle, that he was resolved upon returning thither as soon as possible. The Legate and Pembroke agreed with him that it was all he could do.

He had no authority over the free companions, who knew nothing of the Constable of the kingdom, and there were very few of the real native barons within reach, for although since the arrival of Louis the Lion some had fallen away from the insurgents, they had been more disposed to retire to their own castles than to seek the King's banner. Hubert could not prevent the savage plunder

that his soul loathed, and the King who had once listened to him now scoffed at him. However, all the country was in arms against King John, and, what was worse, Dover was invested by land, so that the only means of entering it was by sea. Finding, therefore, that the King, so far as he could be said to have any plans at all, meant to go to Lynn, where he had left his crown and treasure — expecting perhaps to have to embark there for the Continent — the Constable decided on going there with the army, and hiring a ship to transport himself and his daughter to Dover.

There was no choice but to take her with him, perilous as was the journey amongst John's lawless surroundings; but he could not leave her at St. Katharine's, since in these evil days convents were no safe asylum; and even the King's followers expected the barons would probably arrive on their departure. His own retinue were the best guards for her, since all loved her for her own sake as well as his. He bade Mayotte prepare for the journey home.

Her heart leapt up. "Out of reach of Fulk and his uncle," she said.

"Yes, my child! If there were not another man in the world, I would not give you and

my vassals to him, after what I have seen and heard."

Mayotte clasped her hands in thankfulness. "Far rather a nunnery!" she said.

Mayotte had, however, to rejoice alone. Bertrade had been silent and sulky ever since she found that, though the men-at-arms were encamped in the ruined cloister and Piers Mandeville in the midst of them, nobody in the house could hold any communication with them; and now to go back to Dover Castle seemed to her utter dreariness and imprisonment; while her mother, though longing to return to her husband, could not but dread, in all her aching bones, a journey and a sea voyage in this autumnal weather — for it was the month of October. Indeed, the poor lady felt so hopeless of being carried safely through with it that she made her confession to one of the monks of St. Katharine's, and prepared as if for death. It was a far worse journey than that from Salisbury had been. The days were shorter, the weather cold and wet, the roads across the fens infinitely more difficult. Moreover, the party were attached to an army, and a most disorderly one, infinitely more dangerous than the enemy, and whose devastations sometimes made it quite impossible to pro-

cure food. Sir Roger de Preston had obtained a couple of oxen to drag the litter, being quite sure that no weaker animals could drag it through the fens, and Sir Hubert, finding it vain to attempt any command over the free lances, who were the scum of the adventurers of all nations, kept his whole band, for the guard of his daughter, generally in the rear, and tracking the course of the van by the fires of the granges and farmhouses that were robbed.

It was terrible weather, too. Rain swept over the party in gusts, the ground was soaked at the halting-places, and though the men made shift to erect their tents, Mayotte and Bertrade had no choice save to sleep in the litter, where Lady Braqueville lay groaning, all her sufferings greatly aggravated by the damp through which they were moving. Indeed, Mayotte did not like to leave the poor sufferer to herself, and there were many reasons for which the Constable preferred that the maidens should both be safely concealed within the litter, the rain being the least urgent; and Bertrade always managed to make herself comfortable in the crowded litter at other people's cost.

There were times when the cumbrous vehicle

stuck fast by its clumsy wheels in the midst of bogs, and then there was no choice but to lighten it by both the young ladies alighting, while the strongest horses were fastened in front of the oxen to help to drag it out. They were great strong Flemish beasts, which gave very efficient aid.

On these occasions, Mayotte always clung to her father if he were near, as he usually was, or if not to Sir Roger of Preston, while he directed the efforts of the wagoners and grooms to extricate the litter. Very dreary looked the waste, covered with brown, withering reeds, and a few pools of water shining under the gray sky. The younger men were constantly watching, with hawks, dogs, or arrows, to bring down some of the wild-fowl that haunted the fens, and these, with the fish or eels caught at the resting-places, served for food, often very scanty.

Mayotte sometimes felt as if she had been spending her whole life on these dreary travels, and as if they would go on forever, though it was not above a fortnight since she had left Lincoln. Shut up in the dark with the elder lady, she used to join with her in telling her beads and repeating her prayers at the hours, or else she tried rubbing

and doing all that she could to relieve the constant pains that had never left the sufferer since her fall in Windsor Forest.

It was Bertrade who never failed to pick up tidings whenever she was released from the litter, which she had hated beyond measure. She would gladly have ridden, encountering all weather, and would hardly have heeded her sick mother's prohibition, but Sir Roger pronounced it unseemly for her thus to ride with Piers Mandeville, and threatened to appeal to the Constable, so that she had to yield, grumbling all the time.

However, she knew that the fires they saw on the horizon were those of the farms and granges of Peterborough Abbey, though the Legate withheld John, or perhaps he feared to attack the abbey itself. She knew when they were on the way to Lynn, and by and by they halted in sight of a pale gray sea.

It was a delightful sight to Mayotte, who stood outside the litter, stretching out her hands, and hailing it as the dear old friend of her life, ready to take her back to beloved Dover again.

Lynn Episcopi, as it was then termed, was well affected to King John. He had left his crown, treasures, and a store of corn and salt provisions,

under the charge of a goldsmith, who came out to meet him at the head of the citizens.

The King, who had perhaps expected to have to flee to Holland from this eastern town, was delighted, and ere riding up to the Red Castle, where he was to lodge, he promised to give a charter to Lynn, making it a free city, with a corporation.

Hubert de Burgh was welcomed with much respect, and his ladies were lodged in the house of the goldsmith, who was to be the first mayor. It was by far the most comfortable dwelling where they had been, for the north-folk had some of the advanced civilization of the Netherlandish woolstaplers, with whom they were in constant communication.

"See," said Bertrade, "is it not a shame that these mean burghers should have tapestry hangings better even than ours at Dover?"

"Fine Holland sheets, too," added her mother, feeling them with a practised hand. "No wonder the household are as sleek as fatted beeves."

Nevertheless, the dame could not but wish her fate would let her longer enjoy the soft warm bed of breast-feathers of northern ducks, and the delicious possets with which the goldsmith's wife

regaled her. They were a contrast to the miseries that surely awaited voyagers by sea ; but this was the way to her husband and to comparative safety to Mayotte, so that she would not hang back ; though perhaps it was a respite to hear that no vessel fit for the purpose was in the harbor — in point of fact all having set sail and gone out of reach for fear of being seized for the King's service.

Mayotte was too much afraid of an encounter with Fulk des Roches to leave the house, but Bertrade, tossing up her head as if she were fully conscious of condescending, went forth through the narrow street with their hostess and her children to behold at the Red Castle what was the last pageant of King John's life.

The portly goldsmith and his four comrades, in scarlet robes which had perhaps been waiting for the occasion, came forward, and received from John their charter on a scanty piece of parchment, after which the King kissed the mayor on both cheeks and girded him with his own sword.

A banquet was spread in the hall of the castle, of sturgeon and grampus, bustard and swan, to say nothing of beef and mutton, as well as spices, figs, currants, and other strange and wondrous fruits,

French and German wines, mead, ale and hypocras, all provided at the expense of the good town of Lynn Episcopi, but this made the burghers enjoy it doubly, as did Bertrade with Piers Mandeville attending on her.

"This is something worth the being in a king's train," he said, as she handed him over her shoulder a piece of sugar-cake. "I had even had thoughts of making off to the barons' camp. They lead a far merrier life. Wouldst come, fairest?"

"Oh, Piers, how canst thou?" and Bertrade giggled and bridled like foolish maidens of every generation, while she allowed that anything was better than being shut up in that litter, like being in one's coffin alive, with her mother always groaning!

The mayoress came home by and by, declaring that the King was the sweetest and most gracious prince in all Christendom, eating and drinking like any common householder, bless his princely heart! Why should any one rise against such a loving prince and make such a pother and turmoil passed her poor wits!

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CRUEL, CRAWLING FOAM.

N spite of good entertainment, tidings that the Earl of Norfolk was hovering near forced John to leave Lynn, and Hubert de Burgh could not but go on, hoping to find a vessel at Hull.

On the party went in the rear of King John's army, which, since leaving Lynn, had been increased by numerous wains bearing treasure, corn, and the plunder carried off from various abodes of partisans of the barons. They coasted along by the shore, the sea generally almost hidden from them by low-lying mists and fogs, or gusts of driving rain ; after which there would be a few gleams of cold light, soon passing away again.

The Constable was seldom absent from the troop which formed an escort for his daughter's litter, but there came an urgent message for him to attend the King at the Cross Keys. The Feast of St. Martin was approaching, and he could not

but apprehend that some fresh attempt might be made on the part of the Bishop of Winchester to obtain the heiress for his nephew. Sir Roland and a few more attendants accompanied him, and the others moved wearily on along the flat, Mayotte peeping through the curtain that covered the one little window, and seeing nothing but gray fog, here, there, and everywhere; and Lady Braqueville shuddered and bade her shut it up again, for there was a cold blast coming in.

They remained in the dark for a little while, and then Bertrade exclaimed, "We are going slower and slower!"

"Methinks I heard the sound of waves," added Mayotte.

Bertrade rushed across, tumbling over her mother, and pulled back the curtain, but nothing could be seen but fog; and the shouts and objurgations of the drivers to the oxen were all that could be heard. Then she made her way over Mayotte to the door, round which a crack of light could be seen, threw it open, and screamed to the forms on horseback she saw dimly in the rear.

Piers Mandeville rode up, asking what the ladies wanted.

"O! where are we? What place is this?" she cried.

"These are the sands of the Wash, they say," replied Piers. "We are getting across to the Foss Dyke, but the beasts go so slowly there is no making way."

"And where are all the rest?" demanded Bertrade.

"There was an alarm but now that Sir Philip de Albini and some of his troop were watching at Foss Dyke, and Sir Roger went forward with all the men who could be spared from the escort, leaving me in charge."

"How soon shall we be across?"

"When the Saints will."

But a cry from within warned Bertrade not to keep the door open any longer chattering.

Some time of terror was spared to the poor ladies by their ignorance of their situation, and of their being involved in the narrow bay of the Wash, crossing the sands in the rear of the army, almost the last in a confused multitude of wagons, carts, and cattle, just at the flow of the tide, when it met the current of the rivers Ouse and Welland.

Presently, however, there was a full stop, and a horrible outcry of yells and howls at the oxen. Again Bertrade sprang at the door, and she had just forced it open when the whole litter heaved

over on the side, leaving her lying against the door and her mother and Mayotte in a heap together.

That one of the oxen had fallen and dragged down the other, was all they understood, and there was an endeavor to lift them up again, seconded by Mayotte's effort to scramble out and lighten the load. In fact the advance of the tide had made the ground beneath them quicksand, in which the carts and wains in front were sticking fast, and which had caused the overthrow of the litter. There was a shriek of "The sea! the sea!" and Mayotte could see a wall of white foam surging up; but the water was already spreading before it nearly to their feet, and with howls and shouts of dread the drivers and escort were abandoning everything to rush away in despair.

Bertrade had scrambled out and was trying to rush away over the sand, but as her feet sank in she screamed, "Save me, save me! Piers, Piers!"

Piers was actually riding past her to gain the ground above; but he paused for a moment at her cry, and with a renewed shriek she caught at his mantle. "Life or death!" he cried. "Haste, haste! or you will be the death of both of us!" and he gave her his hand, so that with a violent effort she was able to get above the quicksand so

far as it had spread, when he lifted her, or, perhaps, let her spring before him on his horse and galloped away with her across the little channel of water, swelling as it met the tide, and away over the marsh, both apparently so wild with terror as to think of no one but themselves, and hardly to know what they were about.

"Come, ma demoiselle," said one of the men, preparing to lift Mayotte on his horse.

"Oh wait, wait for the lady!" cried Mayotte, as the water began to spread round her, diving into the depths of the wagon to bring out poor old Lady Braqueville, who, overthrown and bruised by the fall, and scarcely understanding what had happened, lay groaning.

There were two men who were holding their horses with difficulty; all the rest had dashed off in immediate terror of the advancing water, and the women, wherever they were, had likewise fled.

Mayotte made another effort. "Come, come, dear lady, come!"

But, crippled with rheumatism and entangled in her wraps, the poor old lady was hard to move, and screamed out as they touched her. It seemed impossible to drag her out. "Come, lady," called one of the men, "it's as much as our lives are worth! She cannot be saved!"

"I cannot leave her," replied Mayotte. "One or both."

One man tried to lift her on his horse, but she struggled away, scarcely knowing what she said, but the horses were maddened by the advancing water. One had already carried its rider out of the way, up the gradually, indeed scarcely, sloping bank; the other was becoming unmanageable, and Mayotte only heard, "On your own head!" before the man and horse were both away, the foam rising.

"Lady, dear lady, come!" she cried breathlessly, succeeding, just too late, in dragging the dame to the door of the overturned litter, when water was already around them.

Mayotte might perhaps have waded to the bank, at least have attempted it, but the old lady leant heavily on her for support, and only now comprehending their condition, wailed loudly:

"My child, my child! where is she?"

"She is safe, carried safely away," replied Mayotte, who could see dim forms riding off inland.

"Lost, lost! *In manibus Tuis*," began the lady, clasping her hands, while another rush of foam came round them up to their ankles.

"The holy ones defend us!" sighed Mayotte. "See, dear lady, if we could get to the top of the litter; we could sit there, and help may come."

"I cannot; oh, I cannot!" sighed the poor lady. "Save yourself, child; think not of me."

"'Tis not hard," entreated Mayotte. "Your foot here, on the wheel. Now!"

But let the brave girl do all she could, cold, wave, and infirmity were too much for her, and after an effort to reach the roof of the litter, she felt the lady's hand slip out of hers, the heavy weight sink from her embrace, and fall like lead, with one stifled cry of prayer, while the wave broke over her. Mayotte slid down for another attempt, holding fast by the rope of the litter, but some current in the stream seemed to be bearing her away, and the terror of choking and striving against the water left the maiden conscious of nothing but the effort of self-preservation, and in a few moments she felt herself clinging to the rope that had befriended her, and sitting utterly alone on the now sloping roof of the overturned wagon, with the water spreading around her.

The water had covered the lower part of the litter, but it was not rising very fast, and Mayotte, though utterly desolate, still had a wild hope and

confidence in her father's powers of rescuing her — quite enough, as she sat there in her drenched white ermine mantle, to make her resolve to cling as closely as she could to the last, as she mingled her prayers for herself with those for the soul of her good old mother-like friend.

Happily the current and the weight of the old lady's soaked garments had dragged her out of Mayotte's immediate view, although the evening breeze was lifting the fog a little, so that Mayotte could see the white crests of the waves, which were creeping in more sluggishly than at first, when they were battling with the current of the rivers; but, having won the victory, they were gradually filling up the estuary, each coming farther than the last. The litter was very heavy, and had sunk deeply into the sands, besides being anchored by the body of the drowned ox, so that the beat and suction of the waves did not greatly affect it; besides that, it was nearly above the usual high-water mark, for this was a spring tide.

There was a green bank rising, not looking so very far off. A few spars and bits of sacking floated past Mayotte. It crossed her mind that if she could lay hold of one, it might float her over

the space to the land. But, meantime, the water rose; one plank after another became hidden; a cold wind from the sea began to numb her limbs; the ghostlike seamews floated about, uttering shrill cries, and she could hardly gather her faculties together to cling to the rope, and croon over her prayers, hardly aware what they meant.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FRANKLIN'S HOME.

HOW long Mayotte de Burgh had thus sat she never knew. She was in a sort of trance, with barely instinct enough to draw her feet above the water which lapped over them, when, as if in a dream, she heard the words, "Mayotte, Mayotte!" in a voice that truly did seem as a part of the trance, and a form was close to her, at first as if it had arisen out of the water, for it was that of Stephen de Pencester.

She would have said, "Are you come for me?" but tongue and voice were not at command. However, it was a warm pair of hands and arms that lifted her, drew her close to a strong, substantial figure, and in a moment more had placed her in something swaying on the waves — in effect, a sort of punt woven of reeds and covered with hide. Another figure, equally dim and shadowy, stood at the end of the frail vessel, while her rescuer put some drops of ale into her mouth, and

entreated her to take it and look at him. He continued to put soaked morsels of barley-cake between her lips, and presently she opened her eyes and gazed at him with more consciousness; but still she did not attempt to speak till the light boat had touched the ground, and he gathered her up in his arms and was carrying her over the still remaining water. Then she murmured:

"Stephen, is it you indeed?"

"My sweet! my Mayotte! it is indeed. We will soon have you warmed."

"My father? The lady?" she asked again.

"We will find them," hastily answered Stephen, reassuringly.

It was quite dark by this time, and he was following directions shouted to him by some one close in front with a dim light, as he went along a dyke over the salt marshes, as they really were, though to himself, and still more to Mayotte, it was like a dull dream of the dark, desolate waste supposed to be the entrance to the other world.

At last, amid exclamations of pity and wonder, in an English tongue which sounded strange to her, Mayotte found herself in the midst of a warm but smoky atmosphere, and was laid down near a

wood fire, in the centre of a great room only thus lighted, while womanly hands were busied over the clasp of her heavy drenched cloak, and a motherly voice was speaking to her with caressing compassion ; but she kept her eyes upon Stephen, who hovered over her as she revived.

"My father, my father!" again she asked.

"Have no fear for him," said Stephen ; "if, as I trow, he was with the King, I will find him, and let him know where you are."

Mayotte was still bewildered enough to be satisfied with the simple assurance, and hardly to wonder how Stephen had come thither.

The good woman of the house insisted on carrying her off to bed, and she did not resist. The house was of the old northern fashion, for this part of the coast was chiefly peopled by descendants of the Danes, and the building was one large hall, with the sides divided into stalls, like horse-boxes, each containing a box-bed. Into one of these divisions the hostess took Mayotte, and turning out her own two girls, whom she had put in to warm the bed, she deposited therein the exhausted maiden, divested of her soaked garments, and then brought a bowl of some broth from the fire and fed her therewith. Quite worn out, and only half

understanding her situation, comprehending only a little of the dialect, which was different from the Kentish, Mayotte dropped asleep, and the good woman came out with a good report of her to Stephen, who was waiting with several men-at-arms, as well as her husband and his sons, partaking of hot ale beside the great fire on the hearth in the centre of the hall, in the midst of a cloud of peat smoke — but everyone was used to that.

It may be here explained that these good people were franklins — partly fishers, partly agricultural vassals of the Rulos family, lords of Bourne, which they had inherited from the great Hereward-le-Wake. Sir Walter de Rulos had joined the barons from the first, and when John was ravaging the fen country, he, with other knights and squires, of whom Stephen de Pencester was one, had been in the saddle, and sometimes in the boat, to guard their lands and those of Croyland Abbey from his free lances, who had done fearful damage to Peterborough's farmsteads. Thus it had been that from their banks they had watched King John's main body safely arrive at the Foss Dyke, and the huge tide swell up and dash over the baggage carts. Soon

after over the marsh came the fugitives, falling and struggling, some sinking in the bog and stranded in the pools. Among those who were gaining *terra firma* with the utmost difficulty, Stephen de Pencester heard a shout of his own name, "Help, help! have pity!" and he beheld, to his amazement, drenched and wretched, Bertrade de Braqueville and Piers Mandeville, who had been forced to abandon their horse in the treacherous marsh.

"Where was their demoiselle," Stephen demanded, with hot eagerness.

"Lost, lost! And my poor mother!" cried Bertrade, wringing her hands. "We could not help it."

"She would not come," explained Piers. "Maurice did his best, but the dame could not be moved, and nothing could persuade the demoiselle to leave her!"

"And you — you left her, cowards!" shouted Stephen, his hand on his sword, with such a fierce gesture that Bertrade screamed out:

"Oh! pity, pity, it was not my doing; I could not help it."

And Piers explained that he and others had done their best, and then pointed across the marsh to where he believed the litter was lying, adding

that it was so far up the bank that perhaps it would remain above water.

Stephen was about to dash headway towards it, but Sir Walter de Rulos caught hold of him and told him that to attempt thus to reach the lady would be certain destruction, and that, if she lived, she could only be reached from the water. He then sent his squire with Stephen to the franklin Herwald to bid him take the young gentleman in his boat in search of the litter. And thus it was that over the expanse of water filling up the bay, and encumbered with floating fragments of the wretched convoy, something white had been described looming above the water, which had proved to be Mayotte's ermine mantle.

As soon as Stephen heard from kind Goodwife Ingborg that the lady was warm and asleep and would do well, he insisted on mounting and going in search of her father.

However, the men-at-arms who acted as his guides insisted that this was impossible in the dark on such perilous ground, and he was forced to do like them, sleeping on the floor round the hearth, until some time before sunrise, when the cocks who roosted on beams above the cows at the farther end of the big barn-like building began to

give the alarm, and the whole place was soon astir.

The fire had smouldered all night, and was soon stirred into giving light by the sturdy Herwald, who came forth from his stall; his daughters ran to milk the cows; his wife visited her patient and reported well of her; and before long, Mayotte made her appearance, dressed in the good woman's holiday garb — a straight blue kirtle, with white edgings — her long, auburn hair, still damp, hanging on her shoulders.

Stephen and she met with both hands clasped. They were high-bred beings of Norman blood, and she was in a manner his prisoner; so that they had a reticence about them which amazed their hearty English hosts.

Mayotte was placed in the only chair the place possessed, and Stephen, standing by her, with none of the familiarity of the Dover days, explained to her what has been told above. She shed many tears as she told how the poor Lady Braqueville had been washed out of her grasp. "Oh, if I could only have kept her! Dear, dear lady! Mother that she has been to us! How could I let her go?"

Yet Mayotte owned that the poor lady could

hardly have held on as she herself had done with her youthful strength, and that perhaps the speedier close to her sufferings might have spared her much. At least, she liked to hear Stephen tell her so.

"I can believe now it is you, Stephen," she said. "I thought before that your wraith had risen out of the sea to take me to the other world. Heaven's own care must have sent you! But my father?"

"He is safe," said Stephen. "The King and his train were well over the shore before the flood came. I am about to seek Sir Hubert out, and let him know of your safety."

"Take me with you," entreated she.

Stephen demurred. He was not at all certain what sort of reception he might meet with from the royal forces before he could make his way to the Constable; and he had too small numbers with him to be able to protect Mayotte, in case the lawless mob of men should close upon him. Moreover, to make her known might be the most dangerous thing of all, since an heiress was only a prey.

Mayotte knew this only too well, and shuddered,

"Ah!" she said, "I had forgotten that you were one of the enemy," and she smiled sweetly and sadly. "But surely my father will forget it now! What you have done for me, after the way we have been treated!"

Stephen only replied by kissing her hand.

"And what shall I do?" she asked. "Where can I be safe?"

"Here," replied Stephen. "These good people know not who you are; but they will shelter you for the sake of Sir Walter de Rulos until I have either found your father — or if I fail," he added, hesitatingly, "the Lady de Rulos will send for you and take you into her kind and honorable keeping."

This he had secured by a message and token through his own trustworthy groom, in case he should be unable to reach the Constable.

So Mayotte had to see him ride off, and to remain in the keeping of the good wife Ingborg, who treated her with great respect, and set the best in the house before her. They understood one another with difficulty, for Mayotte could scarcely speak the Kentish form of Saxon, and this Danish tongue did not closely resemble it. Motherly intuition and gentle courtesy, however,

did much. And the young lady was soon interested in the swaddled baby, and still more in the flaxen-haired little one, who stared at her solemnly, and then actually commenced what became a game of bo-peep, while the mother and the elder girls bustled about over their work.

CHAPTER XIX.

STEPHEN'S OATH.

TEPHEN DE PENCESTER was advised by his hosts to take the way along the coast which had been followed by the royal army on the previous day, since there was no fear of his being caught by the tide at that hour, and it would be a shorter way, which would involve him in fewer difficulties than going round the marshes.

His host, Herwald, undertook to guide him, riding on a little sturdy pony, and taking his sons with him, not without a hope of some flotsam and jetsam from the waves.

The October morning had scarcely dawned when they set forth, and by the time they had reached the shore there was red and yellow light spreading up over the sky, and reflected in the sea, lying smooth as a lake before them, far distant, as though incapable of such advance, or of such fatal mischief. A large expanse of mud, glistening

more and more as the sky brightened, lay between it and the party who were advancing, already hearing shouts and cries; for the country folk were gathering to the spoil of the wrecked carts, sacks, barrels, bags, and remains of all sorts that the water had now left uncovered — rushing down with the more haste lest the troops of the King should return and drive them from their plunder.

These, however, were at a distance, where the chief of the overthrow had taken place. Nearer there was a smaller party, apparently not of peasants, but men-at-arms. Some were holding horses, others around what Stephen speedily divined to be the litter, and a tall figure on horseback sat directing operations, very straight and rigid. Somehow, even from a distance, Stephen felt as if in that troop was his natural place, even before he was near enough to distinguish persons or cognizances, and he pressed on when Herwald would have paused to reconnoitre.

In a very brief space the chief of the party was known to him by form, arms, horse, and all that had been most familiar and most honored by him through the greater part of his life. Putting spurs to his horse, he sprang forward with a joyful cry: "My lord, my Lord Constable."

It seemed to ring strangely on the ears of Sir Hubert, who turned on him a face so altered by grief that it would hardly have been recognized, answering, however, "Ah! Stephen, my boy!" and then, with contracted lip, as though a sob choked him, he pointed to two men who were composing the limbs of the Lady Braqueville, saying, "We have not found *her* yet."

"No, no, no!" said Stephen, with vehement eagerness. "She is not here! She is safe! I came to guide you to her!"

"Safe, my child safe!" repeated Sir Hubert, as one confused by incredible hope. "Do not deceive me, young man."

"Safe, safe!" repeated Stephen; "in this good man's house, who aided me to take her from the litter in his boat."

The revulsion of feeling was too much for the strong, stern man. He covered his face with his hands and wept.

"Safe, safe! my child, my hope!" he sobbed; then clasping his hands and holding them up to the heavens, now shining with the rising sun which glittered upon the level sea, he cried out, "Thanks be to the good God who preserved the hope of my heart!" And then, "And thanks and blessings

without number on you, my Stephen, and on this good man!"

He then held out his hand, and Stephen riding up to him, not only felt his ardent clasp of gratitude, but was drawn close enough for a kiss, a true kiss of peace.

The tidings that their young lady was saved spread among the troops, and there was a joyous cheer, while old Sir Roger came up from the search that had been so dismal to wring Stephen's hand, and declare that his heart would have almost been broken had the maiden been lost while he had been called with his master to the front and had found it impossible to return through the water.

"And where was Bertrade? Was she with her lady?"

Stephen had to explain how he had met her and Piers Mandeville, and how their information had sent him to Mayotte's rescue.

Herwald undertook to guide Sir Roland with some of the men who were to bear the corpse of the Lady Braqueville to the church of Cross Keys, commit it to the charge of the priest, and provide that all due honor and respect was paid thereto. So it was laid on the door of the litter where the poor old lady had suffered so much, and reverently

borne along, while Stephen rode beside his old master, his heart beating high with renewed hope as he told the story of the rescue more minutely, and showed how Mayotte had refused to be saved without her good old friend, while Bertrade had only listened to her terror.

"My brave maid!" exclaimed her father. "And you have bestowed her safely and honorably ere coming to me?"

"Aye, sir; I knew not how soon I should meet you, nor whether I could bring her safely through the camp."

"You did well," said Hubert; "you showed yourself more trustworthy than many who would fain have had her; you are my old friend's worthy son, Stephen. Alas, that he should have died in that distant land, far from us all!"

By this time they were near the franklin's farmstead, a long low chimneyless building, without glass in its little windows, and the smoke ascending from a hole in the thatched roof; but still there was something friendly and homelike about it, enclosed as it was by barns and stacks, and with cows, hogs, sheep, fowls, and geese around the little green in front, and the door stood hospitably open. A moment more and Mayotte was clinging

to her father's neck, their thankfulness and joy going even beyond that meeting at Lincoln, after the fire.

Goodwife Ingborg looked on, her broad face all one smile, though a tear was in her eye, and she hastened to show her sympathy by setting out her table with plentiful fare, for the franklins lived in plenty, if rude plenty, and scorned to let anyone go hungry away; and Earl Hubert was hungry when relieved from his grief and sorrow of heart, and so was Stephen, who had started on his quest on merely a barley cake, to say nothing of the men-at-arms, who devoured various of the large cheeses and much of the hogs and sheep that had been slain for winter salting. There was ale and mead to wash them down, but franklins did not deal in wine, and Hubert owned himself well satisfied with his fare.

By this time Herwald returned, and with him the parish priest of Cross Keys—a hearty, bluff, rosy East Anglian, and evidently a good man, who held out his hands with the blessing that all the household bent to receive. He undertook for the honorable burial of the Lady Braqueville, in such manner that her remains might be removed in case of her husband's desire in quieter times.

Earl Hubert bade sir Roland, who was his treasurer, to hand over to the priest, Father Ebba, all that could be spared for the expenses. Then, while the priest and Herwald took their meal, there was a consultation between the two, the Constable and Stephen, as to what was to come next.

"I should be at Dover!" said the former. "To the King I am of no service, and I had already told him that I should return to Dover at once. I should have sailed from Lynn, but that I could find no vessel there."

"I suspect that may be remedied," said Stephen. "We will consult Father Ebba, but methinks I heard that the shipping had put off from the harbor on the King's approach."

"And you, Stephen lad," said Hubert, "you will go with us? You have deserved more of me than words will say. Come home with me."

"Not unless I am your prisoner, my lord," replied Stephen, though with a wistful look; for it was as natural to him to follow the Constable as it was to De Burgh to lead; and, besides, there stood Mayotte.

"Ah! I had forgotten," said Hubert. "You are on the rebel side."

"Alas, sir, so I must be while I see the right on their side, the wrong on yours."

"Even though these friends of yours bring in the Frenchman—and when the Viscount de Melun, dying in London, told the knights about him that he pitied them, for the King of France would put a yoke of iron about their necks? There's your freedom and your charter!"

"I cannot help it, sir; I have given my word, and none can be such a foe as King John. We follow his tracks over burnt homesteads and peasants hanging, or worse, breathing their last in tortures."

"Speak not of it, boy," said Hubert, his face contracting. "'Tis the work of the thrice-accursed crew of free lances, whom his people's rebellion has driven him to employ. I ask you not to take part with them, but to aid me to defend Dover against the Frenchmen. Nay, Stephen, listen. Twice has my child there been almost made the prey of these fellows. I have lost those who were her guardians. If you will come with me to save England from the Frenchmen, our King's worst foe, then will I fulfil at once my old promise to your father, and yonder priest shall give her to thee in wedlock!"

Who can estimate the force of the temptation?

The love of a lifetime, besides the influence of the man most honored and respected, and the prospect of a rich and mighty inheritance, all were set before him!

Stephen could not brook the piercing gaze that seemed to go through him. He clasped his hands over his face, and gathered himself together to resist the agony of desire and longing. Then he looked up, and with a voice that he strove to render clear and raise above the sobs that were heaving within him, he said: "Sir, sir, try me not farther. Know that my father on his deathbed made me swear that not for love of woman, nor of man, nor lusts of lands, would I swerve from the cause of the Charter."

Hubert de Burgh was a man of his word, and respected the oaths of others. All he said was: "Then has your father thrown away your chance of being one of the first barons of England."

"Of more—of more than that!" said Stephen, turning away. "Forgive me, oh, forgive me, sir."

"I have naught to forgive," said Hubert, somewhat coldly; but then more kindly, "Far be it from me to tempt a man from his plighted word, above all to the dead. I love and honor you, friend Stephen. I would" —

But by a strong effort he withheld himself from saying any more.

And Stephen knew that he must bring the struggle to an end. "I must away," he said. "I must to Bourne, to the Lord of Rulos. The name of Hubert de Burgh is so much honored among us that none will molest you on the road to Lynn, if I meet any troop on its way hither and warn them."

He could scarcely speak. He durst not look up at Mayotte as he knelt and kissed her hand. "Oh! must you go?" she sighed, startled at the sudden farewell.

"He must go," repeated the Constable, who had recovered himself. "Aye, and the double blessing of a father goes with the man of his word."

For it might almost be said that Hubert's perfect example of honor and truth was turned against himself.

Then the perception struck the maiden, but she was as true and high-spirited as her father. "Ah, Stephen," she said, "I know now all that you are! Better — yes, better — good faith than joy. I shall hear of you and honor you yet!"

Once more he kissed and wrung her hands; but

her father took her in his arms, saying, "There's my brave maid, not to persuade him."

And so the rescued and the rescuer parted, the perfect loyalty of each standing as a barrier between them.

CHAPTER XX.

A SORROWFUL RETURN.

HERWALD THE FRANKLIN had dealings with the shipmasters of Lynn, whom he supplied with beeves, pork and corn, and through him Sir Hubert was able to hire a ship to take himself and his suite to the harbor at Dover, where he had no doubt of being able to effect an entrance into the Castle, in spite of the besiegers.

A voyage was a miserable affair in those days, but Mayotte was too sad at heart to care much for personal discomfort; nor was she a bad sailor. Moreover, her father was more tender to her than he had ever been before, partly because she had shown herself so brave and true-hearted, partly to make up for her lack of female attendants. He even forbore to deny her when she entreated to be allowed to enter a convent, though he made no promises, and he was so gentle that she felt she had never known what the father was whom she had thought so formidable.

The wind after the first was not favorable, so that much tacking was needful, and the little vessel was more than a week on the way, passing the mouth of the Thames, where London had admitted the French prince, and making their way to the Kentish coast, where at length the towers of Dover Castle rose before their eyes as old familiar friends, and every eye was strained to discover what was the banner flying on the keep.

A loud cry of hurrah from the masthead announced that it was red — the English standard with its golden lioncels. The blue and gold of France was still outside among the numerous tents that crowded the slopes of down in the rear.

The Constable raised his hands and gave thanks aloud. But there still remained the difficulty of entering, and then there was sinking of heart at the thought of the tidings that had to be given to the brave Bernard de Braqueville of his wife and daughter.

Some small fishing-boats were visible. One of these was hailed, and presently came alongside. The fisherman came from the neighborhood, and rejoiced greatly at the sight of the well-known men of the Castle.

He said that, though the enemy held the town,

and now and then made plundering expeditions into the country, it was almost always possible to get up to the Castle cliff in the twilight of evening or of dawn in the fishing-boats bringing provisions, and that at a signal given at the foot of the cliff the warder there stationed would receive the freight, give payment, and have it carried up the stairs and gallery cut out within the cliff, which the enemy had never been able to discover.

The man was full of gladness at the honor of conveying the Constable and his daughter, with as many more as the boat would hold, to the entrance. The others were to follow in due course, and the master of the Lynn vessel to receive his reward on the return of the boat. There was a young moon, just enough to help the well-practised steersman to creep with muffled oars to the shelter of the projecting chalk cliff that veiled the path up to the entrance of what looked like a natural cave. Here he landed, while his one mate pushed back, and as soon as the Constable and the lady were ashore, and had reached the cave, he imitated the wild cry of the seamew, and was answered from above.

There were rude steps cut in the chalk, down

which feet were heard descending, and presently a gleam of light spread over the roof.

The fisherman repeated his cry, and then a brown rugged face appeared, a smoky torch in one hand, a halbert in the other. "Ha! Shrimp Luff—" he began, then stopped short as his light fell on the armor which Hubert wore. "Who—" he began.

"Dost not know me, Robin?" said the deep voice. And in one moment, with a cry of "My lord, my lord! Now, heavens be blest, all will be well!" the warder was at his feet kissing his hand.

Trembling with gladness, Robin handed the torch to the fisherman, and sped up the stairs in the dark with the agility of well-accustomed steps, while the other three had to go more slowly, as the place was entirely strange to Mayotte, and even her father scarcely knew it. Thus, by the time they emerged into the courtyard of the Castle, Sir Bernard Braqueville, and all who were not needed on the watch, were assembled in the court.

There was much more demonstration in the days when Saxon stolidness had not prevailed over Norman vehemence, and in an access of delight and welcome Sir Hubert and his faithful seneschal were locked in one another's arms.

"All will now be well," seemed to be the one thought of Sir Bernard. He hardly looked at any one else, and for those few moments of leading the Constable to the Castle hall had evidently not missed his wife and daughter; nor, indeed, did Sir Hubert enter on that matter till he had asked what gold or silver was still in store to pay the Lynn shipmaster with, and the chaplain, who acted as treasurer, had been despatched to fetch it.

"Have you made your way in alone, my lord?" demanded the seneschal, who had indeed bowed to the young lady, but had not perceived that she was looking at him with tearful eyes.

"Roland and the men-at-arms — most of them, that is to say, are coming in the boats. But, Bernard, I have ill tidings for you. We have had a great disaster."

"Defeated?" he asked.

"Nay; we have not even fought a knightly battle. Our defeat has been by the waters."

"I see," said Sir Bernard. "You have been wrecked, and have only saved the damsel there. Well that she was saved."

Though he tried to speak firmly, his lips twitched and his brow contracted, while Mayotte,

starting forward, assured him that Bertrade lived, and had been saved by Piers Mandeville. No doubt they would hear of her soon.

It did not give him much comfort; nor could they feel that it should. But the warrior was not one to give way to his feelings; or rather, he could put them aside till there was time to attend to his sorrow. He called for the most available women in the Castle to attend the young lady to her chamber — a desolate place to her without those who had been as a mother and sister to her — and he gave a terse, soldierly description of the condition of the siege to the Constable before he asked another question about wife or daughter. Indeed he did not hear the entire history till the rest of the travellers had arrived, the guards had been visited, the strength of the French and the situation of their prince's tent pointed out, as well as it could be from the roof of the Constable's Tower by the light of the setting crescent moon, and, lastly, supper had been eaten, though the heedful eyes of Mayotte observed that he took no morsel himself.

Then around the hearth (for castles had chimneys, though farmhouses had not) the Constable and Sir Roland told their story to Sir Bernard

and the others of the knights of the Castle guard who were present with the chaplain. The seneschal listened in silence with his head on his hand and tears dropping silently, as he heard how his wife had suffered; and at last, when he understood how Mayotte had refused to leave her, he fell on his knees before the maiden, clasped both her hands, and sobbed, "Oh, most noble lady, I am forever bound to thee."

"Ah! sir, could I only have saved her! I dream every night of feeling her slip from my grasp," said Mayotte, weeping.

The chaplain sighed that she had died without the rights of the Church, but was relieved to hear how she had prepared for the voyage.

Suddenly there was the sound of a horn without — the call of the enemy to a parley. Sir Bernard dashed away his tears and started to the door.

Presently he returned with the warder from the gate. There was a herald without who said he was the bearer of great tidings. Should he be admitted?

This of course was done at once, for though the strict laws of heraldry had not yet been formed, still such men, learned in all the blazonry

and cognizances, were accredited messengers and sacred personages.

The man, with the tabard of blue scattered with gold fleurs-de-lys, came forward, and manifestly started with amazement at the sight of the erect figure of the Constable, an unmistakable person.

He bowed low, and took his part at once. "I come on behalf of the high and mighty prince, Sir Louis of France and Lord Guardian of England, to the noble Sir Hubert de Burgh, Seneschal of Poitoires and Constable of Dover Castle. He would have you know that the so-called King of England, John of Anjou, departed this life on the Feast of St. Fridiswid, at Newark."

There could not but be a general hushed exclamation among all the startled company, and Sir Hubert asked gravely, "Are the tidings sure?"

To which the herald replied, "Sure and certain, Sir Constable. They were brought by a squire riding at speed to London, and thence sent on to my lord the prince by messengers."

"How died he?" further asked Hubert. "Was there an onset from the barons?"

Mayotte could read in his constrained voice

and stiffened lip how sore it was to him not to have been present.

"Not so," replied the herald. "After that judgment of Heaven which swept away his crown and treasure into the sea, he went on to Swinshead Abbey" —

"There I left him," muttered Hubert.

"There he fell sick," continued the herald. "Whether poisoned by one of the monks, who heard him say that soon a penny loaf should be worth a shilling, or whether merely by overfeeding on peaches and new ale, as some declared, none knows. At any rate he bade plunder and burn the abbey, and was carried from thence, first to Sleaford, then to Newark, where he died, as I said, on the feast of the holy St. Fridiswid."

"God have mercy on his soul!" ejaculated Hubert.

"There is need," the herald could not help drily observing.

"There is need for all, sir herald," put in the chaplain.

"My lord prince," added the herald, "had sent these tidings to the seneschal, not knowing that the Lord Constable had returned or entered the Castle. He will not send a further message

to-night, but to-morrow morn you may hear from him."

To which Hubert replied with thanks and the proffer of a silver cup of wine — cup and all — for not only were heralds liberally treated, but it was desirable to show that the besieged were in no straits.

So John was gone, with all his dark record. And if there were many who rejoiced at release from the tyrant, Hubert de Burgh said, as he looked up from gazing intently on the fire, which seemed to dazzle his eyes, —

"I cannot choose but grieve when I think of those four brave boys — all gone now — all in their prime, and how their father loved them, above all this same John! Would that I had been there to hear whether any thoughts of better things came over him! He was often a winsome lad, when the demon of the House of Anjou did not come over him. Come, father, to the chapel, and give us a *De profundis*[1] before we rest, with thoughts of our King — ay, and of the good Lady Braqueville.

So the service took place, not in the old church, but in the little chapel of the keep.

[1] The 130th Psalm.

CHAPTER XXI.

A SUMMONS.

WITH morning the Constable was on the alert. He visited the towers and looked up the guards throughout the Castle and spoke a friendly word to each of the hundred and twenty knights, who, with their followers, were holding out the Castle with the dogged resolution of Englishmen against Frenchmen; although in point of fact almost all spoke French as their mother tongue, and their hatreds were those of Angevin, Norman, and Poitevin against the French proper, who had devoured their lands in Normandy, and evidently wanted to consume them likewise in England.

To each of them Hubert suggested that though King John was alleged to be dead, yet he had left a young son, to whom their faith was due, and who could be bred up to good and take observance of the Charter.

All this was done before all who could be

spared were mustered in the ancient church for morning mass, which for a month at least was to be in special memory for the King, Lady Braqueville, and Sir Roger de Preston, with others who might have been lost with him.

As Mayotte raised her eyes to the bowed head of Sir Bernard, she could not help believing that perhaps he had rather be thinking of his daughter as with her mother than borne away, no one knew where, by a light-minded, unscrupulous fellow like Piers Mandeville. However, Mayotte herself could pray for her as one living and in much need of prayers. Moreover, a secret hope had been growing in the maiden's brain, that the accession of a boy king, innocent of all his father's crimes, might yet bring nearer her father and her lover.

Finally, outside the church door, after blast of a trumpet, Sir Roland made proclamation of Henry, King of England, Lord of Ireland and Duke of Normandy, Aquitaine, Gascony, and Poitou. And then the Constable, standing on the step, called on all present to do their devoir.

Mass was over, and the morning's meal of salt fish, barley bread, and ale was being partaken of, each person standing at the board to help himself at the most convenient moment, when another

trumpet pealed before the great gate — a loud repeated call — and the knight on guard reported that Sir Louis of France demanded to speak with the Constable of Dover.

The demand had been expected, and Hubert, in the brightest armor he could assume, but with a black mantle fastened on one shoulder across his breast, and only attended by five crossbow-men, with bent bows, went out over the lowered draw-bridge to the outer gate, where he stood under the deep archway overlooking the sea, his dark face becoming constantly more set in grave, stern resolution.

A trampling could be heard, and clanking of steel, and presently there came up the winding road a figure on horseback, in blue and gold, attended by a troop of knights. He was a handsome, fair-haired young man, in early manhood, with rich, tawny locks, such as perhaps gave him surname of the Lion, for, though fairly brave, he was never distinguished in war.

Courteous salutations were exchanged on either side, and then Louis said: "Do I see before me the noble and valiant Constable of Dover Castle?"

"Even so, sir; pending the pleasure of my lord, King Henry."

"To that child you have never sworn allegiance, nor paid homage?"

"It has not yet been possible, sir; but we have proclaimed him within the Castle, and we hold ourselves bound to him."

"That may not be, fair sir. You cannot be bound to the son of the man who was adjudged by his peers to have forfeited Normandy. Speak with him, my good friends."

Upon this there came forward from the knights the Earl of Salisbury (William Longsword), accompanied by Thomas de Burgh, Hubert's brother, whom he had not seen since the signature of Magna Charta. Longsword was a man of noble port and bearing, with a face that recalled that of King Henry himself, and both he and Thomas de Burgh made friendly greetings to the Constable; but Hubert did not return them as he had accepted those of the prince, but in his whole bearing he made it evident that, though he regarded the prince as his noble enemy, he viewed them as traitors.

Earl William spoke: "I believe you are aware of the death of John, our former master, and likewise that Louis, the heir of France, hath been acknowledged by all the barons and knights."

"To their shame," muttered Hubert.

"Having sworn to maintain the Charter of Runnymead, as have all of us," continued the Earl, "he hath also sworn that every one who opposeth him shall be hanged."

"Is that in the Charter?" interpolated Hubert; but Longsword continued, "Consult your interest and your honor."

"Honor!" muttered the Constable.

"Dover cannot hold out long," proceeded Salisbury, "for our strength increases every moment. There is no treason in yielding when defence is no longer possible," he continued, with the authoritative tone of an elder soldier.

Then Thomas added: "Brother, you are ruining yourself and yours by refusing what all have accepted."

"Yours!" said Hubert sarcastically — "as though you had not taken care of that!"

And Salisbury proceeded: "Accept our offers, then will Louis and his lady, our lawful Queen, Blanche, grant you, as an inheritance to you and your male heirs forever, the earldoms of Norfolk and Suffolk."

This offer, and, perhaps, the eager countenance of Thomas, his only male heir, seemed to fill up

the measure, and Hubert passionately cried: "Traitors that you are! If King John is dead, hath he not left children?"

Salisbury was about to adduce further arguments and proposals, but Hubert cut him short: "Say no more," he cried; "for if you open your mouth again, I will have a thousand arrows let fly from the walls."

Thomas tried to approach him, but this seemed only to add to his anger. "No more!" he cried. "I will not spare even my own brother."

He retired within the barbican, the doors were closed, the portcullis rattled down, the drawbridge went rapidly up. The besiegers descended the steep.

But all was not yet over. On the ground beyond the moat, opposite to the Constable's Tower, there were sounds of hammering, and those who looked over the battlements could see that a scaffold was being erected, as they supposed for casting stones or darts into the place.

"They have tried that before," said Sir Bernard grimly, "and much have they gained by it!"

However, with the next morning there was another sight. A tall gibbet had been set up on the scaffold.

"Is Louis going to do his provost-marshal's work before our eyes?" said the Constable.

There was another sound of the horn at the gates, and Sir Bernard, who had been sent to take the communication, came back, saying: "Sir, sir, the French King threatens that if the Castle be not yielded to him before twenty-four hours are over, your noble brother, Sir Thomas, shall be hanged on yonder gibbet."

"That is the way he treats such as have been fools enough to cast in their lot with him," returned Hubert, with iron countenance. "Tell him," he added, "to carry word to his master that, let him hang whom he will, it cannot change a man's duty! But 'tis a Frenchman's empty threat. Salisbury will not let it be carried out."

Yet all that day, Hubert de Burgh uttered no word that he could help, and scarcely touched food. Only he said to his daughter, "Pray for your uncle, child! Aye, and for your father."

They left him in the little chapel at night, and when the priest came in for early morning mass, the Constable was still kneeling, as if he were a young aspirant to knighthood, watching his armor.

At the appointed hour, a knell was heard from the church in the town below, a guard came up

the slope, and in the midst was Thomas de Burgh, with bared head and pinioned arms.

"Oh, father, father," cried Mayotte, meeting him, with his deadly pale, stern face, and unable to say more.

"To your prayers, maiden," he repeated, "for the dying, and worse than dying."

She knew that, even if she had dared, it would have been vain for her to persuade him, and she passed on to the chapel and tried to close her ears.

The horn from without rang out. Thomas de Burgh, a man perhaps of less high mould than his brother, but less stern, and certainly more lovable, stood beneath the gibbet with the halter round his neck, while the chief of his guard made proclamation, first in French, then in English, that unless there were a treaty made for yielding the Castle before noon, the knight, Sir Thomas de Burgh, should be hanged for the obstinate treason of his brother.

"Hubert! Hubert! will you see this?" the unhappy man cried. "We who have been loving brothers, are we to be thus sundered? Will you give me up to die?"

But the stern gray walls stood before him, and there was no response.

"Roland! Sir Roland! You used to love me well. Bid Hubert think what it will be to have my blood upon his head."

A voice answered at last: "Better that than broken faith."

After a few more words, Thomas seemed to give up hope and find a certain courage in despair, and he called out an entreaty that at least the priest might come and pronounce absolution over him; for Louis, with all the barons' party, were excommunicated.

In such cases, absolution at the point of death was always granted, and the chaplain, Father Raymond, was allowed to go out to him by a postern door, which would be well guarded in the meantime.

The good man entreated to be allowed to bear some message of comfort.

"Tell him," said Hubert, "to bear in mind that faith outweighs brotherhood. Bid him forgive me, as one bound hand and foot by duty."

Again the stern man turned aside, and Mayotte, still praying in the chapel, heard his long, deep-drawn sobs of agony and the low cry: "Oh, Thomas! my little brother, who used to run by my side — whom I taught to shoot — that I should be your death! Is there yet time?"

Then he stirred, but with a fresh impulse, threw himself on the pavement, crying aloud: "My God, my Saviour, strengthen me. Be with him!"

The sun was high, the knell began to sound.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE RELIEF.

THERE was a new confused sound. The knell ceased suddenly. Mayotte stood up to listen. Her father started to his feet. "An alarm!" he cried, and dashed to the door, almost knocking against a man who was hurrying in search of him.

"Is it over?" he rather gasped than said.

"No, no, sir. But there's a troop coming up from the north."

"The fresh troops Salisbury spoke of," said the Constable grimly. "No need to disturb me for that."

Another knight came hurrying up the stair to the chapel.

"Sir, sir, 'tis the banner of Pencester! Who would have thought it of the young viper?"

"It did not need this," said Hubert, turning white as death; then, as Mayotte came forward with clasped hands: "You here, child? You have

heard! I lay my ban on you if you wed with a traitor, your father's foe!"

"Oh, father, it cannot be he! Or — wait — oh, wait and see!"

They were descending the broad steps that led to the court, which was almost bare of people, since all had rushed to the walls or up the stairs leading to the top of the keep.

In another moment there was a jubilant cry within, and exulting shouts in the distance, and, farther off, "St. George for England!"

Mayotte was the first to catch this.

"Oh!" she cried, "tis for us he has come. Stephen is true! Hark, hark, father!"

"They call this Frenchman's cause English," growled Hubert, hopelessly; but, nevertheless, with his daughter he was speeding across the court to the stair to the northern battlements, which would most quickly give a view of the side whence the cries came, when another shout of delight rang out from an unexpected quarter, that of the Constable's Tower, before which Thomas de Burgh had been standing, waiting for execution.

As Hubert turned, from the postern came hurrying no other than his brother Thomas, and the priest who had been sent to shrive him.

For one moment the two brothers fell into each other's arms, but Hubert recovered his balance in a moment and all his stern gravity.

"You have had enough of treason, Thomas?" he said.

"Enough, enough! You did right, brother. I did but speak as I was compelled yesterday."

"None can *compel* a man to speak against his conscience," said Hubert. But it came as an ejaculation or protest, and in the same breath he asked how Thomas had escaped, as indeed the chaplain was already narrating.

There had been an attack somewhere on the camp; all who were watching for the intended execution had rushed off to meet it; and the chaplain had quietly cut the prisoner's bonds, and they had made their way undisturbed to the postern whence the priest had come forth.

A few minutes more and all the party had climbed to the northern battlements, whence they could see on the slope a well-armed, compact body approaching under the banner of Pencester, and riding forwards, a knight in bright armor blew his bugle and asked for entrance. "In whose name?" demanded Hubert, while Mayotte trembled all over.

"In the name of King Henry," was the answer.

Down rattled drawbridge, up went portcullis, in rode, thundering along, the whole troop. The foremost raised his visor, leapt from his horse and knelt before the Constable, who at the same moment raised him in his arms and cried, "My son, my son." And again Stephen knelt and kissed Mayotte's happy trembling hand.

There was much to be explained, but it was only now that Sir Hubert understood how King John, dying at Newark, not without tokens of contrition, had confided his nine-year-old son to the Earl of Pembroke, who had immediately started for Gloucester for the boy's coronation, sending a messenger, however, to the camp of the barons, whom he knew to be displeased with their champion, Louis, and his measures. Stephen, who had never taken any oaths to the prince thus invited, held some counsel with Sir Philip de Albini, and the other barons, and they sanctioned his going, with a chosen body, to the relief of Dover, which none could willingly see in French hands.

"Not without due defiance, I trust," said the Constable.

"Had I not been your pupil, sir?" said Stephen. "Oh, yes; there had been a herald duly despatched from the nobles to declare to the French

prince that our lord, King John, being dead, and the young King Henry swearing to the Charter, we owned the child alone as our lawful King, and defied Louis as a French invader of English lands."

"That was hard when you brought him over," said Sir Hubert, smiling.

"Neither I nor my blessed father had a hand in inviting him," said Stephen. "The tidings cut my father to the heart. Nor had I ever done homage to him, though I gave my name as one of those who renounced him when we sent off the herald yesternight."

"I am satisfied. All is honorably done," said Sir Hubert. "This explains the Frenchmen's haste to have the Castle surrendered at once. You are doing a true knight's work, Stephen, and behaving in true knightly, nay, true Christian sort."

Hubert de Burgh's rare commendation was given with such a radiantly sweet and benign look of moistened eye and trembling smile, as made it almost as precious as his daughter's love, and there is no saying how happy Stephen and Mayotte were.

There was little time for more, for Sir Roland

hurried down with tidings that the French camp was evidently in confusion.

"Let us rush out on them," was the murmur, rising to a cry.

Sir Hubert, ever grave, and bent on enforcing discipline, raised his hand, as he stood aloft on the steps, and by the look and gesture all obeyed silenced the cry. Then his command rang out short and sharp, "A cup of wine or ale to each new comer!"

There was no time for food, even if there were enough within.

Then he called for his own helmet and shield, gave other commands, and the troop, hastily drawn up and in full array, passed the gate, crossed the drawbridge, and burst on the French camp.

From the battlements Mayotte could see the *mêlée* through a hail of arrows and bolts, and heard the cries of "St. George!" and "Montjoie St. Denys!" Tents fell, swords flashed, shouts and cries came up. At last there was a rush down the hill; the French were some riding, some running, some rolling headlong over the slopes. There were frightful cries. But at last came her father's horn wound in triumph at the gate, and as it opened wide he rode in, with Stephen de Pences-

ter at his side with a furled banner, which he laid at Mayotte's feet, showing the lilies of France.

That was the supreme moment of their lives.

"I will give my daughter to you with all my heart on the day the Frenchman is driven from England," said the Constable. But this was not done in a day, though Louis, expecting probably a larger force to follow the Pencester troop, raised the siege of Dover, and went off to Hertford Castle, which was an easy conquest.

There was an interval in the winter while Louis returned to France to obtain fresh forces, but he soon brought those back with him, and a battle was fought near Lincoln, in which Stephen won his spurs. He likewise discovered that Bertrade, who had not been heard of all this time, had married Piers Mandeville, and that they had joined the barons' party, in the expectation, no doubt, that it would continue the gaining side.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SEA-FIGHT OFF DOVER.

URGENTLY after this defeat did Louis send for succor to his father, Philip Augustus, and his wife, that brave lady, Blanch of Castile. With the utmost effort she equipped a fleet of eighty large vessels, filled with knights and adventurers, who were to sail to London and assist Louis, and complete the conquest. It was under a runaway monk named Eustace, a noted pirate much dreaded.

Hubert de Burgh and the garrison of Dover heard of the assembly of these ships in the French ports. He made the utmost effort to collect ships to meet them, but barely forty had been got together, when one August day tidings were brought him that the huge fleet was in motion. Mayotte knew his mood to well to strive to detain him by her entreaties from so unequal a battle; but she could not keep back her tears as she knelt between her father and her betrothed when they, as well as

all who were to engage in the desperate conflict, received the Holy Communion, to prepare for death or life. Indeed, orders had been given that if he were taken Dover should not be surrendered, even as the price of his life. Then, taking leave of her with embraces and blessings, they went down to where their ships awaited them. Some were merchant-ships, used in trade with France and Spain; others had been furnished by inland towns and villages, or by nobles who had heartily accepted their young King. All were very small, according to our notions, and only half-decked, but they were crowded with eager warriors, whose armor flashed in the August sunshine.

But as Mayotte stood on the roof of the Tower, looking across to Boulogne, the French armament was like a moving wood of gay blossom, with the brilliant banners and pennons, the unfurled white sails, the sparkling armor of the knights, the shields hung along the bulwarks. It was large enough, she thought, to enclose and overwhelm her father's little fleet, which was putting out to meet it in mid-seas. Both had to trust to oars managed by the serfs and villeins, not far removed from slaves, but the English fleet moved with more precision. For a moment it seemed as if it were

allowing the French to pass it by, but suddenly, as the large glittering ships began to bear down on it in mid-channel, a great white cloud seemed to rise.

It was quicklime which the English had prepared to cast at their enemies before the onset. When Mayotte looked again all was utter confusion. The English ships seemed absolutely lost, and over the sea wild shouts and shrieks reached her ears. She fell on her knees with outstretched hands, and the chaplain repeated prayers.

How long it was she knew not, before vessels were to be seen steering for Dover, with some one, some two, apparently towed behind them. Others seemed to be floating helplessly about, with torn sails. Others were trying to escape from the thick of the conflict, with lesser ones pursuing them. Oh! whose were they? To whom had the victory been granted?

Mayotte and Father Raymond strained their eyes to see the bearings of the flag on the mast-head of the approaching vessel.

At last Mayotte gave a cry of joy: "It is — it is St. George's Cross! See, see! it is the French that are broken and wrecked and flying. Oh! now I see the Pencester cross beneath! Don't

you see it, father? And there is Stephen waving to me. Let us go down and meet him!"

How soon Mayotte could really have distinguished Stephen's figure and countenance may be a question — for it was really himself, sent home to bring the tidings of the complete victory, while the Constable stayed to watch over the pursuit and prevent the enemy from trying to collect again or pass the Straits.

The crowded state of the French transports had been a great disadvantage to them. And when, blinded by the quicklime, they had been grappled by the English ships and boarded by the stout sailors of the Cinque Ports, many a brave knight, squire, and man-at-arms, only used to fighting on dry land, had been pushed overboard, to perish by the weight of his own armor.

Not a man in that armament reached England, save as a captive. There ended the hopes of Louis the Lion. He allowed a treaty to be made in his name and that of young Henry III., gave up the places still in his possession, was absolved by the Legate, and finally left England in the autumn of 1217.

The last Frenchman was gone, and Archbishop Stephen Langton, who, on the death of Innocent

III., was released from his Roman exile, wedded Stephen de Pencester and Mayotte de Burgh at Canterbury on Martinmas-day.

Loyalty to the law and loyalty to the King were at last for the time in accordance.

On that same day, in the midst of the banquet, Sir Bernard Braqueville was called to the other end of the hall.

A worn and weary, though still young, knight and lady fell on their knees before him.

"Father, father, forgive!" cried Bertrade.

"Forgive," he said sternly, "her who left her mother to the waves?"

"Sir, I was so frightened that I could not help it."

"Of a different mould from our young lady! And what am I to say to you?" added Sir Bernard, turning to Piers.

"That I loved your daughter, sir."

"Loved her supposed inheritance, you mean, sir, and sought to force it from me by joining the Frenchman, who seemed like to gain the victory."

"Sir, what will become of us if you forgive us not?" cried Bertrade. "The French Sir Louis mocks when my lord craves his uncle's lands in Normandy, and we have nothing."

"Nor will have," said Sir Bernard; "for know, your brother was a captive in France — not slain, as we supposed. His ransom is on its way, and he will be at home anon! You chose your part unwisely, Sir Piers."

"Yet Pencester there changed," growled Piers.

"There is a difference between an honorable change to the side where duty lies and one for one's own profit alone," said the knight sternly.

But there was a hand laid on his arm, and the bride, with flowing hair and veil beneath her crown, stood by him.

"Good Sir Bernard, let me embrace my Bertrade! Let this be a day of pardon! Ah! she has suffered much. Poor, bright Bertrade, how changed you are! For my sake, sir, forgive, and let me take her to me again."

"Ah, lady, you cannot be refused on such a day as this!"

Stern Sir Hubert declared that the selfish traitor should never be of his troop again, and it was the Archbishop who offered of his grace to the penniless Piers to become one of his knights, leaving Bertrade, sick and wretched, to Mayotte's care.

Finally, finding the Archbishop's service too

dull and decorous, Piers fled to join the free companions, and was never heard of more; while his wife remained as one of the attendants of the Lady of Pencester, not unkindly treated, but with a sense that her selfishness and unfaithfulness were never forgotten.

Stephen lived to be Constable of Dover after his great master, to be equal to him in unflinching honor and loyalty, and to leave his name to the Pencester Tower.

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