A Tale of London in 1384

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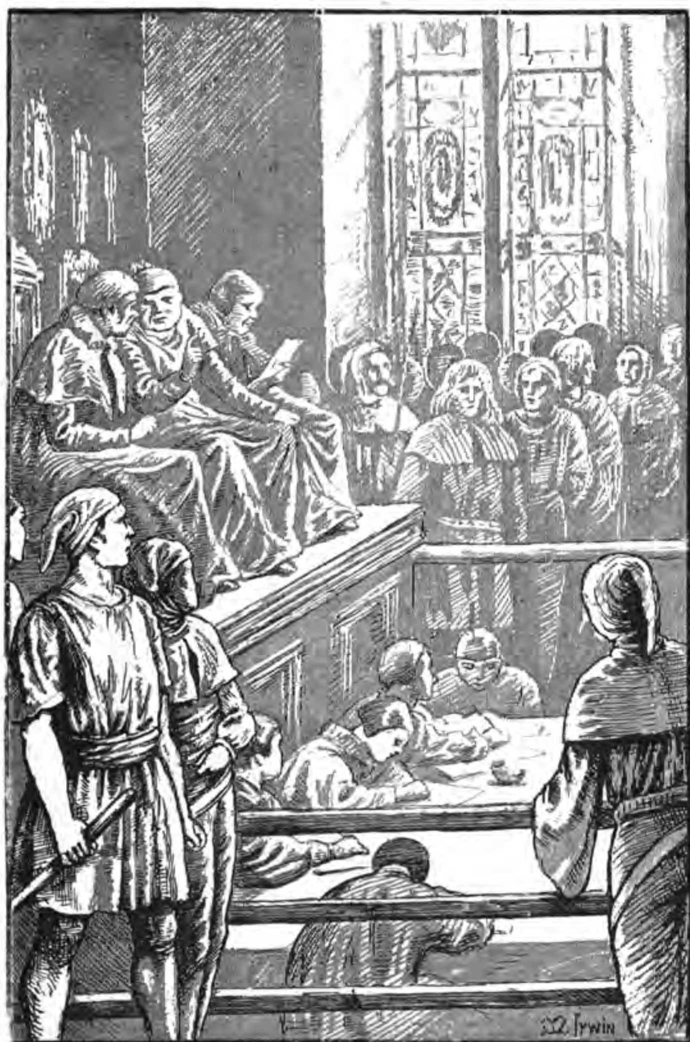

" When the charge was read out, after the simple answer of ' Not Guilty. John de Northampton was silent." *p.* 225

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THE LORD MAYOR:

A Tale of London in 1384.

BY

EMILY SARAH HOLT,

AUTHOR OF "MISTRESS MARGERY," "JOHN DE WYCLIFFE,"
"IMOGEN," ETC.

"He's a slave who dare not be
In the right with two or three."

LONDON:
JOHN F. SHAW AND CO.
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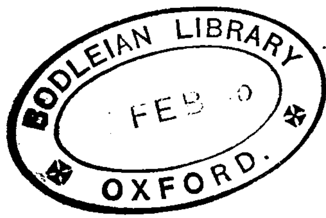

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To

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORD MAYOR

(MR. ALDERMAN FOWLER, M.P.),

This Tale,

Founded on the labours and sufferings of his

great predecessor,

JOHN DE NORTHAMPTON,

sometime Lord Mayor of London,

is, with his kind permission,

Respectfully Dedicated.

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PREFACE.

THE reader of this tale will find himself in a very different state of society from that to which he is accustomed in the nineteenth century. We of the present day can easily discern the great distance to which we have advanced beyond our forefathers in scientific learning and in material comforts. Perhaps we are apt rather to overrate this than otherwise; for while our ancestors were without many advantages which we enjoy, they also possessed many which we have lost. But the rate of moral progress has really been much greater. They lived in a far more Ishmaelitic state of society, when every man's hand was against every other, and sufferings such as we can barely imagine, so far are we removed from them, were or might always be the daily portion of many persons. The more good a man tried to do, the more sure was his lot to be an adverse one. Every thing went by favour or by purchase; vice stalked abroad in the light of day, and many sins now frowned on by society never even attempted to hide their heads in public. Violence, glaring injustice, open bribery, were common every-day occurrences.

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It was this state of things, no less than religious abuses, which that little band of brave men known as the Lollards set forth as spiritual knights-errant to destroy. Perhaps they sometimes attacked the windmill in mistake for the enemy, and undoubtedly at times they acted unwisely. That revolution, like others, "was not made with rose-water." But are we of this nineteenth century so far-seeing and infallible that we can afford to throw stones at them? They failed to attain their object: but may it not reasonably be added that they did much to make it possible for the Reformers of the sixteenth century to attain theirs? The hewer of wood in the primeval forest is as necessary as the mason and carpenter to the building of the city. Their work may show the more; but his is the harder toil.

The names of William Walworth and of Richard Whittington will go, as they have gone, down the stream of history with honour. Ought not posterity to add to them the greater name of John de Northampton, who did more to deserve honour than either of them, and suffered so cruelly, without meriting it, in the attempt to serve his generation according to the will of God? Surely, in that day when the first shall be last, and the last first, he will have a higher place than many whose names now stand before his on the world's roll of honour.

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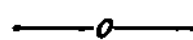
THE LORD MAYOR.



CHAPTER I.

ALL SAINTS IN THE ROPERY.

> "A square-set man and honest: and his eyes,
> An out-door sign of all the warmth within,
> Smiled with his lips—a smile beneath a cloud,
> But Heaven had meant it for a sunny one."
>
> —TENNYSON.

"CLING, clang! cling, clang! cling, clang!" went the great hammer upon the ponderous anvil, wielded by the powerful arm of Roger Astelyn, one of the finest specimens of the *genus homo* to be found within the liberties of the City. The smithy was situated in Old Change, on the western side; and when the sun drew near its setting, the great shadow of old St. Paul's fell on the little smithy to its east, while just where it ended, the golden rays darted in at the small back window, and bathed the head of

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the blacksmith in rosy light. He threw down his hammer and critically examined his work. Perhaps it was not to his satisfaction; for the moment after, a huge sigh broke from the big blacksmith, and he rubbed his hand across his forehead. At the same moment a door on his left opened about an inch, and a voice came through it which—to put it mildly—was not so sweet as a blackbird's.

"Roger Astelyn, thou big lazy loon, art never a-coming to thy supper?"

"Coming, Mildred, coming!" answered the smith hastily. "I will but finish this key and take off my napron, and——"

"And leave the eyren[1] be as cold as stones, I reckon. Finish a key, forsooth! Thou shalt finish no keys afore supper, nor begin 'em neither,—not if it were for the King's Grace to lock up all his enemies. Come away this minute, or those eyren 'll not be fit to eat."

"Gently, honey-sweet Mildred! The key's for my Lord Mayor, for the cellar of his house next the Stillwharf."

"Then my Lord Mayor may go down into the cellar and sit on the barrels his self, for no key shall he have this even, as my name is Mildred. I'll key

[1] Eggs.

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thee, and lock thee too, if thou dost not come to thy supper!"

The door opened wider, and in came a woman who was not up to Roger's shoulder—a small, spare, wiry, wizened-faced woman, with thin lips and a sharp nose,—who marched up to him and drove him in front of her without mercy. Hastily unfastening his leather apron and flinging it on a bench, the big blacksmith ambled before his little tyrant very like a powerful cart-horse driven by a small boy out of a field. His sole remaining observation was—

"Thou mightest have let me wash the blacks off, wife."

"Oh, might I so?" cynically returned his amiable spouse. "Thou takest half an hour to teem the water on thy hands, and another to let th' pump-handle fall back. No, Master Roger; I've got thee, and I'll keep thee."

"Gramercy, so thou hast!" said Roger with another sigh, which might denote that he looked on the fact as less a matter for congratulation than she.

"And a pretty tale it is, if I'm to slave my fingers to the bone a-putting eyren in poche for a great lubberly oaf that willn't come and eat 'em when they are a-done! Dear heart, wherefore I wedded the like o' thee!"

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"It's done, wife," said Roger philosophically. Perhaps he wished it undone no less than herself.

"Well-a-day, the wisdom of him!" exclaimed Mrs. Astelyn, satirically. "Thou'lt never set the Thames a-fire, Hodge. Sit thee down to them eyren—that's nigh as much as thou art meet for."

Roger ate his supper, with as little quarrelling as Mildred would graciously permit; returned to the smithy and finished his key; and then, taking it in his hand, went out in the golden light of the sunset. As he quitted the smithy, his opposite neighbour came out of his house, shutting the door behind him.

"God give thee good even, smith!"

"Christ save you, Master Costantyn!"

"A merry even and a sweet, Hodge."

"Outside!" responded the smith drily. "It's blowing a gale within doors."

"Aye so?" said his neighbour with an amused look, for Master Costantyn was pretty well aware of the state of affairs across the street. "Canst not smooth her down, man?"

"Will you try?" was Roger's answer.

"Nay, bless thee, not I! I'm none so fond of meddling with strife, the rather when it is not mine own. I'm thankful to say there be no gales within

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my doors. My mistress dwelleth rather of a dead calm."

"Are you tired on't?" slily demanded Roger. "I'll drive a bargain as cheap as e'er a man in Farringdon Ward."

Mr. Costantyn laughed as if he enjoyed the joke. "Thanks, good Roger; I have no mind to chaffer to-day. Forsooth, if I had wanted one to raise the wind, I would have wed her at the first."

"Good luck! how are you to know what a woman is made of till you have wed her?" answered Roger. "I warrant you she was not thus, time gone. Dear heart, nay! As sleek as a pussy-cat, she was: and it was dear Roger, and good Roger, and might it please you, and I am for ever beholden to you—well-a-day! Folks change, Master Costantyn."

"They do, at times, Roger. Whither away, now?"

"Truly, with this key, to my Lord Mayor's."

"Hast heard the news o'er yonder?"

"What?—touching my Lord Mayor? Never a whit."

"His mother is this even come to dwell with him; the comeliest old gentlewoman ever eyes beheld: hair of silver, and eyes that smile right softly, and a voice like a thrush."

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"Bless her!" said Roger, with honest heartiness. "Whence comes she?"

"Some whither out of the shires. Mistress Alice cannot make enough of her. Good even, friend."

"Humph!" said Roger to himself, as he went on his way after returning the greeting. "I reckon she shall find it something harder to make enough of Mistress Alice."

He walked down to the end of the Old Change, and turned to the left into that portion of Knight Riders' Street then known as the Old Fish Street. This is not in the nineteenth century a particularly aristocratic neighbourhood. But in the days when Roger Astelyn walked down it to carry home his work to the Lord Mayor, it was one of the principal streets of the city. Cheapside was wider and airier; but Knight Riders' Street was emphatically the Court precinct, and in its neighbourhood or in Thames Street and on the bank, the nobility of England had their town houses. Here stood Ypres Inn, the superb house where the famous Flemish merchant, Jean de Ypres, had feasted kings and princes; and at its further end was the ancient palace of Tower Royal, then known as the Queen's Wardrobe, where the Princess of Wales resided when she visited the metropolis. Our friend the blacksmith,

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however, did not pursue Knight Riders' Street thus far, but turned to the right down Bread Street, and came out into the King's highway, then and now known as Thames Street. That these royal and noble persons dwelt within hearing of the City shambles, and that the fish market was held in front of their windows, does not seem to have struck them as either disagreeable or incongruous. The callousness of our ancestors with respect to smells, not to speak of the fevers they produced, is a remarkable instance of that second nature which sustained habits are able to become.

Roger Astelyn pursued his way along Thames Street, past the Vintry, and presently reached that portion of the street then known as the Ropery, because ropes were manufactured there. He passed the narrow lane called the Steelyard or Stillyard, which led down to the Thames, and the still narrower Cosin Lane, leaving on the right hand the house which had once belonged to the famous Richard Lyons, and was then in the occupation of a dyer, whose name we know not, but he has secured earthly immortality by giving his occupation as a title to Dyers' Hall Pier below. Four more houses were left behind, and then came Church Lane, separating the block of buildings from the

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neighbouring Church of All Hallows the More. Roger turned down Church Lane, for the length of one house, and then passed into a very narrow alley, on the right, and parallel with it. This alley was the place of his destination, and he was bound for the Hood, which was the residence of the Lord Mayor of London. The alley bore the ignoble epithet of Wantgoose Lane, and was not precisely the place where we should now look for distinguished persons. The Hood, however, was a very handsome habitation for the time. It was, of course, extremely low, and comprised but two storeys. There were a few three-storeyed houses in London, but they were not common, and were generally rendered so either by a solar chamber—the French *entresol,*—or by dormer windows. Roger passed into the little square courtyard through the large archway, sufficiently high and broad to admit a litter or whirlecote—the two carriages of that time—and using as his instrument the key in his hand, struck a clear note on the large bell which hung low in the entry for that purpose. A servant in livery answered his appeal from the porter's lodge on the left.

"Give you good even, Roger," said he.

"The like to thee, Simpkin," returned the blacksmith. "All here well and merry, trow? Have

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here the key of the dyer's cellar, which my Lord sent for; I might not have it ready no sooner."

Simpkin took the key, accompanying his answer with a twinkle in his eyes. "Good, Roger. And how doth sweet Mistress Mildred?"

"As the most of sweets do when they be turned sour," said Roger with a grimace. "Nay, I cannot do to 'bide, Simpkin."

"What, not to taste my Lord's home-brewed?"

"Nay. I shall get some home-brewed of another cask an' I do."

"I'll tell thee what, Roger—if I had thy bones and sinews, and thy wife, I'd make her sing t'other side her mouth a bit afore I'd done with her."

"Ah!" was Roger's incredulous response. "'All men can rule a shrew save he that hath her.'"

"Thou'rt too soft-hearted, lad," said Simpkin, laughing. "Pluck up thy courage, and tell her thy mind."

"Eh, Simpkin!" came with the shake of Roger's head as he turned away. "'It needeth a long spoon to eat with the Devil.' Good night."

"Good night, and good luck!" was the reply.

While this conversation was being held in the gateway, another was proceeding in the porch chamber which projected over it. The porch chamber of the Hood was a snug and pretty little room, one side

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of which was almost entirely occupied by a large oriel window looking out into the Ropery. It was hung with dark red say, or upholstering silk, and benches of walnut wood stretched along the wall, fitted with cushions of the same colour of say, while bankers of yellow baldekyn were thrown over the back. A large chair of carved walnut wood stood upon the hearth, also stocked with red say cushions; and a small leaf-table was fixed to the wall at its side. In the chair sat an old lady dressed in black, her dress cut quite plain, and gored to impart the necessary fulness, in something of what we now call the princess style. The black sleeves ended below the shoulder, and tight ones of white baldekyn came down beneath them to the wrists. Silver buttons ran down the front of the dress, and two very large pockets, one on each side, completed the accessories. No collar, cuffs, nor any kind of finishing, was worn. The old lady's silver hair was neatly plaited in two thick plaits, of which one came down on each side of her face, and they were kept in place by a black fillet bound round the head.

The only other occupant of the chamber was a girl of fifteen, who was on the rushes at the old lady's feet, resting her arms on her companion's lap, and now and then laying her head beside them. She

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wore a blue dress cut in the same fashion, but fastened round the hips with a black girdle, from which ran a long row of gold beads, almost reaching to her feet. Her hair, of a rich nut-brown, was gathered into a little yellow cap which sat jauntily on her head. Her face was rather pleasing than positively pretty; but it was decidedly pleasing, giving the idea both of good health and of good temper. She half sat, half knelt, looking up into the face of the old lady.

"Well, Alice!" said the latter after a few minutes' silence. "Hast lost thy tongue, my maid?"

"Why, Grammer, have you not had enough of my chatter?" returned Alice merrily. "I would fain hear you rather, as should be more meet. Tell me, I pray you, what were your thoughts this minute gone?"

"Not what thine were, trow," answered her grandmother with a smile. She seemed disposed to pause there, but after a minute she went on to reply to the question which lingered in Alice's eyes. "Ah, my good maid, the thoughts of the old are seldom those of the young. Six years gone, when thou didst pass from my care, a little child of nine years, thou wert but plain Alice Comberton and no more. And now that we meet again, there is no Alice Comberton, but Mistress Alice de Northampton, daughter of the

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Lord Mayor of London. And I marvel," said the old lady, softly, laying her hand on the young head, "if these Alices be one or twain."

"One, Grammer! always one, and twain never!"

"Change, doubtless, there must be in all men," continued the old lady. "Here is no longer a little child, but a maid well-nigh grown a woman. That change do mine eyes behold. And those changes that eye can see be the least of all, Alice. The sorest are the under-current that man may not see, with any save the eyes of his soul—those whereunto you wake but slowly, and when you discover the same, they be too far gone for any return back. Darling, I would not like my little Alice to change into an Orgoylosa—my sely[1] maid into a proud, self-sufficient, heartless gentlewoman, that reckons more of being my Lord Mayor's daughter than of being Christ's pledged handmaiden. The good things of this world are not good enough for me to wish thee, sweet Alice."

"I shall not alway be my Lord Mayor's daughter, Grammer. Father shall scarce be elect another year, trow."

"I trow not. I had nearly said, I trust not. But a year's grandeur is much at thy time of life. Wilt

[1] Simple, innocent.

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thou come down, thinkest, as merrily as thou wentest up?"

Alice looked up earnestly with grave grey-blue eyes.

"O Grammer, did you but know how little it recketh me![1] I mind it never a whit, in very sooth. Margaret de Champeyne and Philippa de Burnham thought it so mighty a matter,—I ween I could have laughed at them: but Amana Peche was with me, and we thought——Grammer, doth it seem to you that this world is a right small place, and all the things in it be very, very little?"

"Very, very little, Alice: and very, very great."

Alice shook her head with a laugh. "I am sicker[2] I can see the littleness; but that things be great, verily nay. It seemeth me we be but ants upon an anthill, running busily in and out. When all the life of man is but fifty years, or forsooth sixty at the most,—good lack, but it is a short space, and man a poor thing at the best. What matter if I be a queen or a cottager, if it tarry but for fifty years? Grammer, years are not so long as they were once.

"Shorter and shorter, Alice, as thou draw toward the end. Aye, what matter? 'Early pass he, as

[1] How little I care about it.
[2] Sure.

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an herb, early flourish he, and pass: in the eventide fall he down, be he hard, and wax dry. The days of our years been in those seventy years: forsooth, if fourscore years been in mighty men, and the more time of them is travail and sorrow.' "[1]

Alice listened thoughtfully. "'The more time of them is travail and sorrow,'" she repeated. "That would not seem short, trow. Grammer, comes that of a book?"

"Whether thou wouldst know,[2] Alice?"

"Methought it had the taste of one," said Alice, with a mischievous smile.

"I knowledge[3] it, Alice. It came of the English Psalter, new done into English of Master Nicholas de Hereford, a good man and a true. I would he might come to preach hither in London town. I would like thee to hear him, Alice."

"Grammer, there be some new preachers comen to the City these few months gone. Poor priests, men call them. Father is much taken up with them, and hath said divers times he would wish them God speed. Mother went with him these three Sundays past. But I have not heard one of them, and I fain would—if it were some deal unlike other

[1] Psalm XC. 6, 10. Nicholas Hereford's Version, 1381.
[2] Why wouldst thou know? [3] Acknowledge.

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sermons. I gat sore aweary of sermons some time past. But men say these new preachers be otherwise. I heard not that name, howbeit." She drew herself suddenly up on her knees. "Grammer, you are not like other folk. Mother saith maidens should be seen and not heard, and Mistress Costantyn would have me be snod as satin, and even my Lady Peche would fain cut and measure me to be right like other maids—why must maids be all alike, Grammer? I can see no reason—but you let me speak out as I would, and set me right if I go wrong. And at times I am right like to a boiling caldron—all full of thoughts and feelings; and if I may not boil over, I shall burst. None other maid seems to understand me when I say, I am weary of this manner of life, and I want to live a life worth living. They think it is worth living if they may deck them up with gewgaws, and feast, and dance: and it is all so hollow, so hollow! There be times I like it, just the while it lasteth: but when I come home and do off my goodly array, and lie down in my bed, and have nought to do but think, why, then, Grammer, something seems to speak to me that saith, 'Alice, what good cometh of all this? Is it worth doing? Thou hast but one life to live: canst thou make no

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more of it than so?' But it is no use telling other maids—only Amana. She saith the same thing talketh with her by times. Grammer, what is it?"

"It is no thing, Alice," was the solemn answer. "It is God Himself."

It was almost a frightened look that came into Alice's eyes.

"What should Amana say an' I told her that? Grammer, why think you so terrible a thing?"

"Alas, is it terrible, Alice? Aye, in good sooth, it is somewhat a terrible thing to be spoken to of a king, in especial when man knoweth not if he smile or frown at thee. But the king's child thinks no terror that her father speak to her. She knows him too well."

Alice had followed the parable, and had understood it.

"Grammer," she said, with moistened eyes, "I do not know Him! How may man know God?"

"It is the child that knows the father," answered the old lady. "The stranger, standing withoutside in the street, cannot know him. Thou must come within, Alice."

"But where is the gate, Grammer? Methought all baptized were within. How shall man go further?"

"As far as the porter's lodge, maybe. That is

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not the house. There is yet the portcullis between thee and it, and it is drawn down until thou have right to enter."

"But what mean you by the gate, Grammer?" said Alice eagerly: "and how may man have right to enter?"

"Alice," answered her grandmother, disregarding the questions, "thou shalt come with me this next Sunday morrow to hear Father Hereford preach."

"Oh, may I, Grammer? I never heard one of the poor priests yet. Father talks some deal of Father Purvey, and of Father Wycliffe, the parson of Lutterworth, but I never saw none of them."

"Aye, he it was that did send forth the poor priests. Thou shalt go with me, Alice."

So it came to pass that among the throng gathered the next Sunday morning in the Church of All Hallows the More, were an old lady with silver hair and a young girl. It was Quinquagesima Sunday, and the seventeenth of February, which would be the second of March now. The worshippers took their seats in the nave, where they were comparative spectators until it came to the reading of the Gospel. Then all stood up, men and women alike removing their head-gear while the portion of Scripture was read. Mass over, many

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went away, and many more poured into the church for the expected sermon. Into the pulpit came a tall, thin man, old, for his hair was white, yet active enough, for his motions were quick and energetic, and his eyes like those of a young eagle.

"Lack-a-day! yon is not Father Hereford!" muttered old Mistress Comberton in a disappointed tone.

"Grammer," said Alice in an excited whisper, "I hear men saying behind that it is Father Wycliffe himself."

"Well! so much the better," was the reply.

Up to that day Alice had known of only two classes of sermons—the scientific disquisition and the pouring forth of a stream of vulgar, chatty talk. The former she could never understand, and the latter had always disgusted her. Some of the older legends of the saints, with which the last class of sermon was replete, were perhaps true, and were pure, beautiful, and touching in themselves, when they came from pure lips: but there were very few of those in the pulpits of the fourteenth century. In the lips of most preachers the pure became coarse, and the romance grew into buffoonery. It was more than time that some reformer should arise to purify the pulpit. The

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poor priests, it was generally understood, preached in a very different manner, and attracted vast crowds to hear them.

Attracted them,—but how? Not by music and pageant,—they had very hard words for those who came to church for such things. They told them in the plainest terms that they were not wanted. Not by elegant diction and beautiful language,—they carefully eschewed every thing approaching to it. Those enticing words of man's wisdom, so diligently cultivated in this nineteenth century, the poor priests of the fourteenth cast behind them, as wanderers from the opposite camp. Where was the use of gilding refined gold and painting the lily? They had the grand truth: why should they conceal it by strewing gewgaws over it? They had the virgin honey: why should they present it in vessels of painted porcelain, so that men would stop to admire the jar and would *not* taste the contents? The attractions that they offered were two-fold: and they did the work, as those twin attractions always do, and as no other will ever do. They held up Jesus Christ before the multitude, and they did it with hearts on fire—with a great, passionate yearning for the souls of men, which ran from heart to heart with an electric

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thrill. The power of the Holy Ghost was with these men: and no attractions which do not include that heavenly magnet will ever draw the steeled hearts of sinful men.

This was the sermon which Alice de Northampton heard, with the text—the Epistle for the day—read first in sonorous Latin, and afterwards given in English, bit by bit, as the discourse proceeded.

The text was 1 Cor. xiii., and the sermon covered the whole chapter.[1] Most of Wycliffe's sermons were rather in an expository style than a predicatory. But to hearers in days when the Bible was little known, the text was a far more important portion of the discourse than to us, to whom it is so familiar that we are too apt to let it slip.

"Paul telleth in this epistle," rang out the powerful voice of the Evangelical Doctor, "how men should know charity, and how men should keep charity, and this lore is full needful to each member of holy Church. First, Paul telleth how needful is charity before other [virtues], and beginneth at the highest work that man hath in holy Church. Paul saith, if he speak with man's tongues and angel tongues, and

[1] The sole liberties which have been taken with this genuine sermon of John Wycliffe are to modernise the spelling and such expressions as would otherwise now be unintelligible, and to indicate a year and a place in which it is supposed to have been preached.

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he hath not charity, he is made as brass sounding and a cymbal tinkling. It is known by belief[1] that preaching and other speech is the highest deed of man, when that it is well done; but however a man speak in divers tongues of men, whether English or French, Latin or other language, his voice is like a sound of brass that destroyeth itself, unless he hath charity, by which he deserveth bliss.[2] For such men for a long time waste themselves, and enlarge their labour. And on the same manner, if man speak in angel tongue, with clear voice or flourished words, speak he never so clearly, if he want charity with this, he is as a tinkling cymbal; for he profiteth not to deserve bliss, but wasteth himself to his condemnation.

"Afterwards saith Paul, that if he have prophecy, and know all secrets, and have all manner of learning; and if he have all faith, so much that he remove hills, and he have not charity, he is nought to holy Church. These four, called powers of the understanding of man, may be without charity, and then they serve not to bliss. Many men may know much and live

[1] This is a common expression of Wycliffe. He seems to mean "it is generally considered."

[2] Wycliffe often uses this word in the sense of *salvation*. By "deserveth" he did not intend to enunciate the doctrine of human merit, since he has told us in very plain words that he totally contemned it.

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evilly, not according to knowledge, as a man may work wonders by the help of a fiend. And so it is too plainly shown to praise men for such works. And thus men may have faith unenlivened by charity, and such faith profiteth not, since the fiend hath such faith. And thus men may have prophecy, and all these capabilities in their soul, and be clever workers, with evil will of their soul. And thus saith Christ in the Gospel,—'Sir, prophesied we not in Thy name, and cast out fiends in Thy name from men?' and yet He knew them not to bliss. The third time saith God by Paul, that if he spend all his goods in food for poor men, and give his body so that he burn, as some men do for heresy, and [yet] he have not charity with this, he profiteth not to bliss.

"And since these works and these foundation [truths] seem to make men holy, and each man wishes naturally to be blessed, it follows that men should know charity, since it is so needful to men [in order] to come to the bliss of Heaven. And therefore in the second part of his epistle telleth Paul sixteen conditions by which men may know this love. The first is that 'charity is patient,' and so meek that he [who has it] conformeth his will meekly to God's will; and thus he gnaweth himself not to death for anything that happens in the world, but because

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of good things that befall [him] he hath a fervent love to God. And this is called benignity by the words that Paul speaketh here.

"The third time telleth Paul that 'charity hath no envy,' and he speaketh of charity in the person of him that holdeth it. And thus men may have no envy, and [yet] reprove men in Christ's name, because of love that they have to God, and for the profit of His Church: for thus did Christ full sharply, and He could not be wanting in this love. The fourth quality of this love is that 'it doeth not amiss;' for whatever thing he doeth, his chief intent is to do God's will, and so to profit His Church according to the law that He hath given. And thus all these four sects[1] seem to fail in charity, for they depart from God's law, and work by their feigned discoveries; and so they depart from God's worship, and travail most for their own advantage. The fifth quality of this love is, 'it is not puffed up by pride.' For he [who has it] thinketh meekly how he is a low servant of God, and so hypocrisy makes him not exalt himself above reason.

"The sixth manner of charity is, that 'it is not

[1] By these "four sects," so frequently mentioned in his sermons, the reformer meant the rich parish priests, canons, monks, and mendicant friars.

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covetous.' Each man should covet bliss, and virtuous deeds to do therefore; but Paul speaketh of covetousness that is contrary to this end, as many men languish for pride, [desiring] to have a station that God wills not. And thus all these four sects seem to fail in this point, for they desire that man's will go forth, and that God's will be put aback. And so they have always envy, and do amiss as proud men, for they covet their own honour, and neglect the honour of God. The seventh quality of this love is that 'it seeketh not its own things,' but for the honour of God and the profit of His Church, he [who has it] endeavours to do his deeds after the law that God hath given. And here it seemeth that these four sects fail foully in this point, for each one seeketh that his Order and his rule be maintained, more than the common Order of Christ, or the law that He hath given. The eighth quality of this love is that 'it is not stirred to wrath.' For since he [who has it] is patient, and knoweth that God must have His will, he holdeth him content with what befalleth [him], in that it is God's will. And in this fail these four sects, for they take their own vengeance, beside the law that God hath given, as if they were more high than Christ. The ninth quality of this love is that

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'It thinketh no evil,' for it thinks of the honour of God, and the means that lead thereto. Lord! wherefore do these four sects desire to have their own will more earnestly than the will of God? and then they are all evil. The tenth quality of this love is that 'it rejoiceth not in wickedness,' but hath sorrow that any man doth contrary to God's will. But yet of the same thing hath he both joy and sorrow. He hath sorrow for the sin, by reason that it displeaseth God, and he hath joy for the same sin, by reason that God punisheth it well. And thus it seemeth that these four sects have joy in their own inventions, and say that God forbade that Christ's ordinance were fulfilled; and thus they reverse in their deeds the will of God in many manners. The eleventh quality of this love is that 'it rejoiceth in the truth.' Truth is God and His law, and when this law is well kept, then this charity rejoiceth. And here these four orders seem much to oppose this truth, for they magnify their [own] laws, and execute them diligently; but how God's law is broken they care too little, so [long as] their [good] condition remains. The twelfth quality of this love is that 'it suffereth all things,' for it rejoices in every truth because it pleaseth God. Lord! why will not these four sects

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suffer that God's Word have full course, and that Christ's ordinance stand whole? since it were best, as they allow. But certainly then all these four sects should leave their patterns and their rules, and remove entirely to Christ's sect: and who should object to this?

"The thirteenth condition of this love is that 'it believeth all things.' For *thing* and *truth* are all one, and so all truths are believed by it. And thus it believes and assents to all manner of truth and reason. But how faileth he not here that hindereth thus Christ's ordinance, and doeth harm to many men, both to their bodies and to their souls? The fourteenth quality of this love is that 'it hopeth all things;' for it hopeth that ordained truth helpeth all good men, and this charity hopeth to have part in this help. How fail these new sects, who are afraid lest they should fall from worldly favour and worldly prosperity, and that God's law shall be perfectly kept; and thus they despair in life of the fruit of God's law. The fifteenth quality of this love is that 'it sustaineth all things;' for it helpeth to hold all truth, and awaiteth the end thereof. For after the day of judgment shall be [the] proof of all truth; and these that be impatient

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that God's law should set them right, fail in this quality, since they trust to men's laws.

"The sixteenth quality, and the last, that pertains to this charity, is that 'it falleth never away,' neither in this world nor in the other. For God's love can not fail, since God can not cease to ordain these men to come to bliss, which He will always have [to be] bliss. And this love that is in God must have such love to man.

"Look thou at these qualities, whether thou have them all in thee; and if thou hast not, take heed to have them all, and then thou wilt have without doubt this love that must bring [thee] to bliss. And by this teacheth Paul the excellence of charity; and this is the third part of this epistle, and maketh end of this glorious lore. Charity is wonderfully good, as men may see by words [which have gone] before. And charity must ever last, either in life or in half-life, for it is not perfected before men come to bliss. But 'whether prophecies shall be voided, or things shall cease, or this [world's] learning shall be destroyed,'—and all these three must needs fail—this charity shall never fail. 'For we know something' certainly, as is [the] being of our God; and 'something we prophesy,' as things of the last day; 'but when that shall come that

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is perfect, this that is imperfect shall be done away.' And so since at the day of doom, men shall have full knowledge and bliss, the degrees of learning and joy here must needs pass, and the ending must come. And thus saith Paul of himself, and so it is of all this Church:—'When I was little, I spake as young, I understood as young, I thought as young; but when I was made man, I put away these works of a young child.' And so it is of all men that shall come hereafter to bliss. 'We see now by a mirror, distantly' and imperfectly, 'but we shall see afterwards' in bliss the highest truth, 'face to face.' Paul saith he knoweth now in part, and not fully; and then he shall know in bliss, as he is known fully of God. And of these words may men gather that 'now dwell these three' virtues, 'faith, hope, and charity; but greatest of these is charity.'

"And if this epistle of Paul were fully executed as it should [be], the realm of England should be delivered from these four sects that be spoken of; and then might the realm expend many hundred thousand marks more than it expendeth now, if these sects were abolished. Mark what all these sects expend in our realm for a year, and give all this to men in

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charity.[1] For if these four fail in charity, our realm should draw from them this part. But reckon how much this cometh to, and begin thou to wit of them what thing is the sacred host,[2] with reason of God's faith: and that they tell not here to the King anything but what they will stand by, to suffer martyrdom of men, and loss of all that they have of our realm: and then let the King know how he should put out all these four [sects]. And over this, he might further expend many hundred thousand marks, and the realm would be more plenteous to bring forth men to the bliss of Heaven. And thus it falleth [to] kings to do, by the office that God hath given them."

As the congregation dispersed, Alice caught the arm of her grandmother.

"See, Grammer! Is not that Father?"

"Thy young eyes may tell that better than mine, my maid," was the reply. "I wist not he were coming. Whither goeth he?"

"I do think verily, into the sacristy, Grammer."

"Ah! then he would have speech of the priest. Mayhap he meaneth to bid him to dinner."

[1] Wycliffe evidently did not believe in monastic charity. Many a time he repeats that alms given to the monks are a defrauding of the poor.

[2] A sarcastic allusion to the theory of transubstantiation, which he perpetually condemns as an innovation set up by the religious Orders.

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The Lord Mayor did mean to bid the preacher to dinner; and the preacher accepted the invitation—very reasonably, since his situation was that he would have no dinner except what somebody gave him. Dinner was almost ready when Alice and her grandmother reached home. Two or three stout sewers had set the tables—which was then a more significant phrase than now, since it involved the literal setting up of the boards and trestles which were our forefathers' only idea of a dinner-table. Since the hall was not only the dining-room, but when occasion served, the audience-chamber, the meeting-room, or the ball-room, a permanent table in the midst would have been an encumbrance in their eyes.

At the upper end of the hall was a dais, raised by two steps from the floor; and on this was set the high table, for the family and their guests. Two other tables stood in the lower part of the hall, at right angles to the high one, and at these sat the servants and retainers. Forms, not chairs, were set for the seats at all the tables. White damask table-cloths were laid over the boards, and fresh ones every day were necessary when everybody wiped his mouth or his fingers on the table-cloth, and had no fork to assist in keeping the fingers clean. It was an essential part of the education of a gentleman that he

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should dirty his fingers as little as possible in eating, and should not convert the table-cloth into his pocket-handkerchief.

In the middle of the table stood a massive silver salt-cellar in the form of a ship, and around it were being rapidly grouped hot and cold dishes of various kinds. Though it was Lent, yet being Sunday, fasting was not required. In the primitive ages of the Christian Church, fasting had been what the word indicated—total abstinence from food: but now, for many centuries, the term had ceased to mean anything more than abstinence from certain kinds of food. The daintiest preparations were admissible on a fast-day, if only they did not include meat nor any animal product. The real object of fasting was thus lost sight of altogether. It may be well to add that in no country or communion had fasting ever been held to prohibit alcoholic liquors. Let a man eat a square inch of meat upon a fast-day, and the whole church was scandalised: but let him drink himself into a state of frenzy or unconsciousness, and the Church, while undoubtedly she disapproved it, did not reckon it nearly so heavy a sin. The stake, or at least the risk of it, was at a rather later period the reward of drinking a mouthful of milk in Lent; but no

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similar peril awaited the imbibing of a hogshead of wine.

On Sundays and saints' days, however, these embargoes were removed: and accordingly there was no fish at the Lord Mayor's table to-day, for people had so much of that on fast-days that when not obliged to consume it they were thankful to let it alone. The soups were apple soup—which was peculiar to spring—and rabbit soup. Then came in dishes of alaunder (minced mutton), kid, stewed beef, squirrel, and hedgehog: boiled capons with white sauce, chickens dressed in various ways; galantine, meat jellies, raffolys (sausages), chowettes (liver pie); and as sweets, two or three creams, apple pie, and caudle.

As soon as the first course was set on the table, the great bell at the gate was struck to intimate that dinner was ready. A course did not then, as now, include all the soups, or the joints, the entremets, or the sweets, but comprised one or more dishes of each kind. Each course, therefore, was a small dinner in itself.

As the sound of the great bell died away, the Lord Mayor entered the hall with his family and guests. There were five of the latter, for the parish priest came as well as the preacher of the

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morning, and the host had also bidden his old friend, Sir John Peche, with his wife and daughter. The master of the ceremonies marshalled each to his place, setting the preacher on the right of the Lord Mayor, the parish priest on the left of the Lady Mayoress,—husband and wife always sat together at table—Sir John and Lady Peche after the preacher, and Mistress Comberton on the left of the Vicar. Next to her sat Alice and her friend Amana Peche, with Alice's little brothers on the opposite side. They were much younger than herself, being only six and nine years old.

A glance from the Lord Mayor to the Vicar was answered by the latter rising to intone a grace, for which all the company stood. Then, resuming their seats, they proceeded to the business of washing their hands, which the reader may feel disposed to inquire why they did not perform in their respective bed-chambers, before coming to table. But in those days, and for three centuries after them, the wash-stand was non-existent. Basins were brought when wanted, whether up stairs or down, and were carried away as soon as done with. It was therefore much more convenient that a wholesale washing should be performed in the place where all were assembled together.

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One of the sewers, or waiters, came in bearing a silver basin filled with rose water, which he offered first to the priests, then to the other guests, then to the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, and so on down the board. Another sewer followed with an embroidered damask towel, which observed the same precedence as the basin. Our ancestors were exceedingly particular about the etiquette of this matter. To offer the basin to any one after his inferior—however slight the inferiority—was an offence which could only be atoned by blood.

Now came in the officer of assay, or official taster, bearing a dish on which reposed six mallards (drakes) surrounded with leeks and onions. This he set down before the Lord Mayor, and dipping a strip of bread in the gravy—if gravy it could be called, which was pure verjuice—he ate it with great solemnity. The object of this ceremony was a preservative against poison. The preparatory rites being now over, the company were ready to satisfy their hunger; and the Lady Mayoress, rising, began to carve the capons, while the Lord Mayor cut up the mallards. The lady was prepared for her work, having covered her rich crimson Sunday baldekyn with a large apron of brown holland, edged with coarse lace. When the carving

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was finished, both resumed their seats; and the sewers carried round the dishes, having the same respect as before to the order of precedence.

The Lord Mayor was a man of some thirty-five or forty years of age. His real name was John de Comberton or Cumberton, but when he came to London from Northamptonshire, the citizens of London had dubbed him John de Northampton,[1] and as most men did at that time, he had meekly accepted the exchange. His widowed mother and his two brothers, however, remained Combertons. The Lady Mayoress was a Londoner, whose maiden name had been Parnel (or Petronilla) de Cressewyk,[2] and who had brought with her considerable landed property in the City, of which the Hood was part. We shall see a good deal of both husband and wife before our story ends.

[1] This, considering the evidence, is the most likely solution of the double name.

[2] Christian name certain; surname only probable.

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CHAPTER II.

THE LORD MAYOR COMMITS HIMSELF.

> "God's work is done
> By each one doing his own part, though small,
> In his own place."
>
> —Dr. Horatius Bonar.

WHEN the business of dining grew a little slacker than before, the Lord Mayor turned to the priestly guest on his right hand.

"To speak sooth, Father, I had not looked for so much well-pleasantness as the sight of you this morrow. As rumour ran, Father Hereford should preach at All Hallows Church."

"My brother Hereford hath at this time much business on his hand," said the Rector of Lutterworth. "It was not at all to his ease to come to London as now."[1]

"Matters be metely quiet at this time, trow, as regards them of our way of thinking?"

[1] The sentiments attributed to Wycliffe in this tale are borne out by his authenticated works.

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Alice pricked up her ears. It was the first time that she had ever heard her father allude to the Lollard doctrines as "*Our* way of thinking." But the Rector smiled and shook his head. His smile was peculiarly attractive. It lighted up the features, at once strong and serene, as if a lamp had been suddenly placed in a dark window.

"Methinks your Lordship hath not talked over much of late with my Lord of Canterbury," was the reply.

"My Lord of Canterbury! What, is *he* at it again?" demanded the Lord Mayor.

"When he shoot not, then is he rubbing of his arrows," said Dr. Wycliffe, quietly.

"Well, he has rubbed them a fair while now. It is over four years, but if[1] I mistake, sith he troubled you, Father."

"Aye; but look you, matters be not now as then. All this trouble of the rebellion[2] lieth betwixt."

"Forsooth! and that knave Ball, that was hanged at St. Albans, and his busy lies against you! Heard you, Father, what he said?—that for two good years afore the rising of the commons, he had been a dis-

[1] Unless.

[2] The peasants' war of 1381, of which Jack Straw and Wat Tyler were the leaders.

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ciple of yours at Oxford, and had learned his doctrine at your lips?"

"He was the elder man of the twain!" interposed the parish priest in a tone of amazed surprise.

"And had been a-preaching his doctrine for twenty years afore he ever heard of mine," added the Reformer. "Well, my Lord Mayor, for what he said, I refer it to that tribunal whereat he hath stood already, and whereat you and I shall appear before long time. But Ball was not the only one by many that hath thus spoken. The men of Caim—wit you what I would say?—have done their utmost to fix the blame of this rising upon the doctrine of my poor priests."

"Soothly, I would ask your meaning therein."

"C, A, J, M," repeated Dr. Wycliffe, with a twinkle in his eyes. "To wit, Carmelites, Augustines, Jacobites, Minors.[1] These new religious[2] it is which be my deadly enemies."

"Come, Brother, you may as well journey something further," added the Vicar, laughing. "I warrant you the men of Caim, as you have it, carry away from Lutterworth as principal[3] goods as they bring

[1] The latter two are better known as Dominicans and Franciscans. Caim was then the usual spelling of Cain. It is, I think, a mistake to treat it as a peculiarity of Wycliffe.

[2] Monks.

[3] Of the first quality.

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thither. What think you, my Lord Mayor, if it were but a day or twain back, this man called the four Orders that he hath now named 'tatters of the Church's clouts!' A marvellous pretty name, as methinks—eh, Mistress Alice?"

Alice smiled back her answer to the old man who had patted her head and heard her confessions since she was nine years old. Her mother looked much amazed.

"Prithee, what better name do they merit?"

"Nay, nor that is not the only one," resumed the Vicar, shaking his head waggishly. "'Limbs of Antichrist' and 'live devils'—to say naught of liars, lazybones, and such small gear—these have I heard, under your Ladyship's leave."

"I trow Father Wycliffe meaneth so much as he saith," answered the Lady Mayoress, laughing.

"You may trust him for that!" replied the Vicar of All Hallows. "Soothly, I would sooner reckon he meant more than he said, than that he said more than he meant."

"I do, many times," said Dr. Wycliffe, drily.

"Lo you now! what must he mean, forsooth, when he calleth these religious fiends and devils!" laughed the Vicar.

"I said what I meant then," was the response, given

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in as dry a tone as before. "But to go back to our former matter,—I pray you, my Lord Mayor, was it truth I heard touching all the evil doings in this City by the rebellious commons? The Savoy they burned, that wis I well, for I passed the ruins but yestre'en: but what other evil damage was done?"

"Burned the Savoy! aye, did they," said the Vicar, "and cast therein all the hay in the lofts, to help it burn, and so much wax as they might find in the chandry to make a bright blaze. A fashion of game that should have suited thee, Jem!" and he nodded at the elder of the little boys, who was looking as if he quite shared that opinion.

"Prithee, good Father, set not Jem in mischief!" hastily interposed the Lady Mayoress.

"Doth he lack setting?" said the Vicar. "My Lord, I cry you mercy; I took the words out of your mouth."

The Lord Mayor's smile acknowledged the apology.

"They recked divers other houses," he answered, turning to Dr. Wycliffe, "and some religious among them: added whereto, they turned headsmen, and slew some they had better have left. My then Lord of Canterbury, you wot——"

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"Aye, that ill news fled apace," said Dr. Wycliffe, sadly.

"He was a good man, and a gentle; God rest his soul! And methinks he has scarce made way for a better than himself." The speaker's expression intimated that he meant much more than he said.

"Good: but weak," said Sir John Peche, sententiously.

"All men are weak some whither," replied the Lord Mayor. "Well, then, Richard Lyons, the sheriff, did they 'head at Chepe Cross; and others of more or less note in divers places. But, all told, they did not near so much evil as they thought."

"'My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths,'" softly quoted Mistress Comberton.

The Lord Mayor answered her by a smile; Dr. Wycliffe by a flash of sympathy from the eagle eyes.

"It was said," pursued the Lord Mayor, "that Jack Straw made confession that their design was for a time to have wrought in the King's name, till they had all men at their feet; and then to cast off the mask, and put the King to death, with all the nobility and the bishops."

"Poor young gentleman!" whispered Lady Peche: for the King was only a boy of fifteen even then.

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"Aye, nor is that all," cried the Vicar. "Every parish priest they meant to kill, and every religious in all the land. Heard man ever the like!"

"Good lack! what then should they do for priests?" demanded Sir John Peche.

"Why, they would leave but the begging friars, which, said they, should be enough priests to serve their turn."

"How doth every man think," said Sir John, reflectively, "that if *his* turn be but served, other folk may serve them as they will."

"That began in the Garden of Eden," added his wife.

"Aye, and Jack Straw was for going back yonder," put in the talkative old Vicar. "He flaunted a fair banner, as he had been a knight, with this reason [1] thereon broidered,—

"'When Adam delved and Eva span,
Where was then the gentleman?'

What sayest thou, little Jem? Where were he?"

Jem, who was working his way through a goodly helping of apple pie, looked up at this appeal with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes.

"I reckon Adam had to do for both," said he.

"James de Northampton, where be thy manners?"

[1] Motto.

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demanded his mother. "To speak to thy betters, and ne'er give them a name!"

Jem looked extinguished, and Alice shook her head at him across the table.

"Master Doctor, I took[1] you not well a while gone," observed the Lord Mayor, addressing himself to Dr. Wycliffe. "You meant for to say, trow, that evil mischief should arise further?"

"You heard not, then, that in the great Council now sitting, the churchmen had voted a tenth to the King, with a certain condition thereto attached?"

"I heard of the vote, forsooth, but not of the condition."

"Ah! The vote one might look for: but the condition, I own, was something unexpected."

"Nay, what were it?" said the Vicar. "I love a bit of news, and I hear not by the half so much as I would."

"It was," said the Rector of Lutterworth, very gravely, "that the King's Grace should put down one John de Wycliffe."

"Surely you say not so?" cried the Lord Mayor.

"And you slack not yet to preach in London town?" exclaimed the Vicar.

"What then?" was the answer to both. "The

[1] Understood.

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word hath but gone forth to me—to all of us—'That thing that thou doest, do thou swith.'[1] There is lesser time to work in than we had hoped. My Lord Mayor, if it may stand with your ease, there is a thing whereof I would fain talk with you; and this doth you to wit that no time were good to be lost."

"Surely, Father. When we have made an end of dinner, we will repair to my privy closet."

"What think you shall they do?" asked the Vicar.

"They shall do the will of God," was the firm reply, "and that whether they will it or no."

"But whether[2] my Lords shall again call you before them?"

"That wit they better than I. But I reckon I have ruffled their brave feathers more than a little, these few months past."

"Brother Wycliffe," said the Vicar, with a doubtful shake of his head, "I would fain you had one of the natural virtues, the which methinks was not born with you."

"Which is that—fortitude?"

"Good lack, nay! Prudence."

[1] Quickly. John xiii. 27, Wycliffe's version.
[2] Is it likely.

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"Dan Hamon, I have vastly more than most folk."

"Gramercy!" cried the astonished Vicar. "What will this man say next?"

"Nay, which is the more prudent man, good Brother,—he that will not aim at Heaven lest he lose earth, or he that will not win earth at the risk of losing Heaven?"

"You are a brave man, Master Doctor," said the Lord Mayor, admiringly.

"Be these days for cowards?" was the fervent answer. "You and every true man should[1] be brave men, if God called you to that office. 'Walk ye, and stand ye in the faith; do ye manly, and be ye comforted in the Lord.'[2] Soothly, I read not that Paul was over much prudent, at the least as my brother Dan Hamon reckoneth prudence."

"Paul could do miracles," suggested the Vicar.

"No more than may Dr. Wycliffe, if it please God," quietly remarked Mistress Comberton: "and if it had not pleased God, how many should Paul have done?"

The eagle eyes were turned towards the old lady with an appreciative expression.

[1] Always employed at that date where modern usage requires *would*.

[2] 1 Cor. xvi. 13.

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"Methinks, good Mistress, there is no lack of faith in your cupboard," said the Vicar.

"My cupboard were bare an' there were," was the quaint reply.

"Ah, well! Good for them that can," said the Vicar sententiously. "I think with you, Brother Wycliffe, as you do know: but in good sooth, I have no mind to be inhibited, nor yet lesser to be summoned afore my Lord of Canterbury, who loveth a Lollard as he loveth his worst enemies. I do misdoubt greatly if we see not some storms from that quarter ere long."

"You say well," answered Dr. Wycliffe. "The clouds are gathering now. To speak sooth, my Lord Mayor, I am little sorry that our brother Hereford hath kept him away at this season. You know not, maybe, that he it is, with one other, which hath much holpen me in doing of God's law into the English tongue: and one that I could name ill loveth that manner of work. I trow he shall not forgive us three with over much haste. And, but if I mistake greatly, he hath his net around us—or reckons he hath—and will ere long draw it ashore."

"Forsooth, I hope there is a good hole therein!" said the Lady Mayoress.

"Well!" was the rather amused answer, "if he

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should find he must go pipe in an ivy leaf,[1] it were not the first time, methinks."

"I warrant you, nay!" exclaimed the Lady Mayoress, laughing. "Trust me, but every woman in London town was jolly digne[2] when news came of my Lady Princess sending Sir Lewis, these four winters gone, to bid my Lord of London hold his hand, this last time you were afore him, Master Doctor. I reckon *he* scarce knew how his supper tasted."

"My Lady Princess gave him a cup of bitter herbs, trow," added the Lord Mayor. "Dan Hamon, pray you return thanks."

The Vicar did as requested, and the company rose from the table. The ladies retired to their private apartments, where Alice took her lute, and her mother went to the wardrobe to concern herself about the house linen. Perhaps there were half a dozen men—of whom Wycliffe was one—to whose minds had occurred in 1382 the idea of the Sabbath, as a day to be devoted to God after service-time. The popular view, even with the Lollards, was entirely that of a period to be opened by mass, and ended with amusements.

The Lord Mayor took his guests to his closet, or

[1] A proverbial expression of the day, signifying disappointment.

[2] Plumed herself considerably.

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study as we should now call it,—a small, pleasant room looking upon Church Lane, with a view of the Thames at the side,—a wide silvery river, untainted and uncrowded, the opposite shore presenting a few rows of houses, with the green fields and distant blue hills beyond. The Vicar did not remain long, for he had an engagement. When he was gone, the two left behind fell into graver converse than they perhaps might have done had he remained. He was a well-meaning man, and in his way a good man: amiable and kind-hearted, holding views sound in the main, and moderately desirous to advance the interests of the cause in which he personally believed. He would even have sacrificed, for that purpose, anything—which was not particularly valuable in his eyes. But the cause was not everything to him, as it was to John Wycliffe, and as it was coming to be to John de Northampton. It was only one of many things.

The world teems with such men; and it is not worth taking much trouble to secure them for any cause, except as counting one each in a list of voters, and as influencing other men of their own stamp, who are usually in much fear of going too far, and in very little fear of not going far enough. The men who do the real work are not men of this

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stamp. They are the men whom the world sneers at as narrow-minded, bigoted, enthusiasts, fanatics: the men who have one aim, and can see nothing beside it; the men who do not know how fear is spelt, and care not though the wheels of success crush themselves as they roll—or the smaller band of still greater heroes, the men who do know fear, and can feel alarm, and shrink sensitively from pain and sorrow, yet can put it all on one side and walk up to the cannon's mouth, nerved by the knowledge that they are in the way which God has prepared for them to walk in, and that when, the agony over, they shall wake up after His likeness, there will be no fear of not being satisfied with it.

The conversation between the Lord Mayor and the Rector of Lutterworth turned partly on the perils likely to assail the Lollard party, and partly on a question which was greatly troubling both—the state of morals in the City. The latter point was not officially the business of the City's chief officer, but of the Bench of Bishops. These prelates were just now so busy bringing heretics to justice or laying traps for them, that they really had no time for the consideration of such insignificant matters as public morality. Vice flaunted itself brazenly

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within the liberties, but the episcopal overseers were not able to see it. The Archbishop of Canterbury, translated to that see in the previous September, was a mere lay figure until he was vitalised by receiving his pallium from Rome; and owing to some mischance, it had not yet reached him. Ecclesiastical red tape—which is the reddest of all tape—would not permit him to act in the smallest matter until it arrived. The shepherd had no crook; how could he therefore save the flock in any species of danger? To have gone to work with his own hands, or with a stick of an unauthorised shape cut from the nearest tree, would have been worse than a sin—it would have been an irregularity!

When the proper authorities are thus lamentably and tightly tied with red tape,—than which no iron fetters can be stronger—it often happens that some very unauthorised and entirely irregular person will step forward to do the necessary work. Some passing stranger will climb over the hedge and save the drowning sheep, or give chase to the stray lambs. And whenever that does happen, the one emotion awakened in the mind of the shackled shepherd will not be gratitude. He will hate that man for ever thereafter.

Once upon a time, an Infanta of Spain was lodged

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in a house which took fire. The official persons whose duty it would have been to save her were not at hand. What was to be done?—should the poor girl be left to perish? A young working man, seeing the situation, dashed into the burning house, seized the Princess, and carried her to a place of security. In this country, he would have had honours and rewards heaped upon him for an act of such combined loyalty and humanity, done at the risk of his own life. But in Spain, red tape was too strong. He was condemned to death. To have presumed to lay hands without a drop of blue blood in them on the sacred person of royalty! That his object was to save royalty from a dreadful death was not even to be considered. The motive was nothing; the act was unendurable. The King graciously pardoned the criminal—and truly, had he done less, he would have been a strange father!—but a criminal the deliverer was, and pardon he required. I do not mean to imply that either King or Princess was to blame: it was simply the fault of red tape.

John Wycliffe was a man for whom red tape had no terrors at all—no more than it had for Florence Nightingale, when she broke open the door of the office where the mattresses lay idle

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which were needed to save the lives of her wounded patients, and red tape refused the key. Here was something which wanted doing, and the people whose duty it was did not do it. Wycliffe had come to the Hood that day with the special purpose of inoculating the Lord Mayor with his feelings on the topic: and he found the subject in an admirable state for the operation. Both of them had been feeling serious concern on the matter in question. And neither of them had any fear of man to tie his hands.

Before the friends parted, a plan was agreed upon which the Lord Mayor was to carry out during the following week. They agreed that it was desirable to lose no time, in the interests of society on the one hand, and on the other, lest some blow should fall on the Lollards which might render such actions impossible.

The word Lollard[1] was just rising into notice as the accepted name of the party. Like most party names, it was originally bestowed by their enemies. It also occurs in a letter patent from the King to the Bishop of Chichester, wherein the "Lollardos"

[1] Much discussion has arisen as to the meaning of the word Lollard, some deriving it from the Latin *lolium*, darnel, and others from the old German *lollen*, to sing. That the Lollards themselves associated it with darnel, no one who is familiar with their writings will doubt.

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are defined as persons who "publish, circulate, and preach nefarious opinions, heresies, and detestable errors, and thus sow tares among the wheat." [1]

The Lord Mayor, though he might be an enthusiastic man, was not an unwise one. He matured his plans in secret, and came down suddenly upon the unsuspecting criminals on the evening of the following Holy Thursday. Nor did he show himself any respecter of persons. Gentle and simple, high and low—to quote a proverb older than his day—all was fish that came to his net. Some dozen individuals of all ranks and both sexes, who had made themselves remarkable for vice, were seized by the sheriffs, and having had their heads shaved, were marched through the streets of the City—a style of punishment hitherto restricted to thieves, and therefore deemed especially disgraceful. The subjects of this treatment vowed vengeance on John de Northampton in tones not loud but deep. The Church had let them alone, and it was her place to punish them if they had deserved punishment. What right had he to assume her prerogative, or to interfere with them?

[1] Close Roll, 21 Ric. II. This mandate was issued during that short period when Archbishop Arundel contrived to throw dust in the King's eyes, and to make him regard the Lollards as seditious demagogues.

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Subsequent events make it pretty certain that one—perhaps more than one—of this group of persons belonged to the Company of Fishmongers, or had some connection with it, since the whole Company at once converted itself into the enemy of the Lord Mayor.

The only persons excepted were his old friends, Sir John Peche and Sir William Walworth, the former of whom, being himself a Lollard, could make allowances for the eccentricities of his co-religionists.

But the hapless chief magistrate had by his recent act purchased enmity in more directions than one. The entire hierarchy was scandalised beyond redemption. He had been poaching on their sacred preserves in the most high-handed manner. Nor were matters mended when, in answer to their loftily worded rebuke, both of the offenders, the Lord Mayor and the Rector of Lutterworth, bluntly returned answer that not only had the prélates neglected their duty in the matter, but that they had done so, influenced by "filthy avarice," and "choked with bribes" from the criminals, in order to induce them to wink at their disorderly conduct. Even this was not all: for the self-constituted judges were so bold as to repeat the offence, and declare their intention of continuing to do so, until

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the City should be purged of wicked exhibitions and objectionable persons. Archbishop Courtenay registered a vow that as soon as the blessed touch of the Papal pallium on his shoulders should make him a live prelate, he would take dire vengeance on these two irrepressible affronters of his archie-piscopal dignity. This sort of thing must be stopped at once. If the Lord Mayor began doing the duty of the bishops with impunity to-day, who should say what the politically-Lollard Duke of Lancaster, or the thoroughly Lollard Princess of Wales, might presume to do to-morrow! And Courtenay retained a painfully vivid recollection of that February morning, four years ago, when Dr. Wycliffe, almost in his very fingers, had been wrested from his grasp by that audacious woman the Princess, and when he, who considered himself the vicegerent of Heaven, had been regally commanded "not to *presume* to pronounce any sentence against the said John." They should all repent it!

Early in May the Papal pallium arrived, and the Archbishop was made happy. He lost no time. A conference of the clergy was summoned on the 17th of that month, to meet at the Black Friars' Monastery on the 21st; and the Rector of Lutterworth,

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first singled out for vengeance, was summoned to appear before them.

The Monastery of Black Friars was one of those large and sumptuous houses against which Wycliffe vehemently inveighed. It was situated just outside the City walls, and close to Ludgate, upon St. Andrew's Hill, between the modern Bridge Street and Broadway. The house had been founded by Edward I., about a hundred years earlier. In its superb hall the conference met, in the midst of a pouring rain; for that year, from April to August, there was no intermission of wet weather. The holy and "spiritual" persons who had been summoned as judges were seated in due order, the preliminary proceedings were over, and the Archbishop directed the accused person to be called to the bar, with a sensation of complacency in having obtained his object at last. Neither Duke, Princess, nor Lord Mayor, should interfere with him this time.

There was a little uneasy behaviour among the inferior officials, and the Archbishop was apologetically and humbly informed that no prisoner was forthcoming. The summons had been served in due form: but the criminal had not delivered himself to justice.

The entire purpose and meaning of the conference

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was thus set at nought. But they were determined not to be baffled. If there were no prisoner to sentence, there were plenty of propositions to condemn; and the assembled prelates and doctors set to work upon them.

Four days later, they were startled by such an earthquake as had not been known in England within human memory. The Archbishop was not alarmed by this, but he was alarmed by the white terrified faces around him, and began to fear lest his soldiers, in a panic, should fall away from their allegiance. Dexterously enough he assured them that the phenomenon, on which they were looking as a sign of heavenly displeasure, was in reality an indication of Divine approval. They resumed their work; but another shock three days later frightened them again so much, that Courtenay perceived it necessary to hasten to the end of his proceedings, and cut short the intermediate debate. He hastily prepared a Bill to put down Wycliffe's itinerant preachers, which he hurried through the House of Lords, and not suffering it to go down to the Commons at all, slipped it in craftily among a number of others to receive the royal assent. He well knew that such a measure would have no chance with the Commons; and though he can

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scarcely have imagined that they would not discover the trick played upon them, he probably thought that in the interval he could do a good deal of work. On the 26th the Clerical Statute was passed, and on the 28th the Archbishop issued a mandate against Wycliffe. Now began the persecution in good earnest. On the 12th of June, the Chancellor of Oxford was directed by the Archbishop to inhibit five men from preaching in the University, which mandate the Chancellor obeyed in abject terror, for though he personally was on the orthodox side, he well knew that the University was not. The five men thus inhibited were John Wycliffe, Nicholas Hereford, Philip Repingdon, John Ashton, and Lawrence Bedeman. Six days later, another meeting of the Conference was held at the Black Friars; when all the accused appeared at the bar with one exception. That defaulter was the arch-heretic, the Rector of Lutterworth himself. The other prisoners had attempted an appeal to the State, on the plea that their inhibition was an illegal interference with the rights of the subject; but this had been rejected by the Duke of Lancaster, who was just then overtaken by one of the periods of lassitude which alternated with sudden flashes of energy in the intermittent fever of his life. They next appealed

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to the Pope; but this had to be done through the Archbishop, and of course it went no further. He threw aside the appeal, declaring it "frivolous and insolent." The four prisoners were thus left at his mercy, and were all excommunicated without mercy. Repingdon and Bedeman crept back and made an humble abjuration. Ashton and Hereford stood firm: and one day the latter was found missing. How he succeeded in escaping there is no evidence; but at the earliest opportunity he put the streak of silver sea between himself and Archbishop Courtenay.

When Parliament was again summoned in the following October, it was found that the Commons had discovered the Archiepiscopal fraud, and were by no means satisfied with it. Their very first act on the day of opening was to present an indignant though perfectly respectful petition to the Throne, showing that the so-called Act of Parliament had never passed their House, but had been procured in a totally unconstitutional manner. They therefore prayed for immediate repeal, and it was granted. The Clerical Statute became waste paper.

Both Parliament and Convocation sat this autumn at Oxford: and the latter once more summoned Wycliffe before it. He sent up, in answer, a petition

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to the King, praying that it might be declared lawful to teach the sacramental doctrine which he was diligently preaching.

It is well to pause and inquire what this doctrine was; the rather since modern Ritualists try hard to show that Wycliffe held Luther's doctrine of consubstantiation. He assuredly did not. He has written a great deal on this point: and after all, he has left it much easier to declare what his doctrine was not, than what it was. He was careful not to define either the mode or the nature of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, further than this — that (1) it was not imaginary, (2) it was not corporeal. The bread and wine did not become Christ in any sense; they remained bread and wine to the end. The teaching of Rome, that the bread and wine are no longer in existence, but are transmuted, in a bodily and substantial manner, into the body and blood of Christ, Wycliffe denounced with all the power of language, not only as a heresy, but as a new heresy, which had never been known in the pure and primitive Church. With respect to baptism, he held the water, as he held the bread and wine, to be simply the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace.

The appeal to the Crown proved of no service.

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The Duke of Lancaster, who was the Government at that juncture, did not at all share Wycliffe's sacramental views, and simply admonished him to submit himself to Convocation. In these circumstances, Wycliffe saw no alternative but to take the advice, so far as concerned his making a personal appearance. No real harm came to him. He was once more dismissed unsentenced, even although he handed in a paper in which he repeated the condemned theses, humbly referring himself to the judgment, not of the bishops and doctors, but of the Word of God, and asserting his readiness at once to abjure any doctrine or expression which could be proved false by that one infallible standard. The fiat had apparently gone forth, before which men and fiends alike must bow—"Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophet no harm."

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CHAPTER III.

EDMUND COSTANTYN.

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

THE kitchen of the old hostelry in the Market Place at Calais was alive with travellers. The two maids and three men who served the guests had as much and more than they could do. Two boats from England had come in during the last hour, and a string of travellers on horseback had just arrived from Guisnes, journeying in the opposite direction. It was nearly dark, and outside, the lanterns were flitting about the Market-Place, and the grand belfry, then only about thirty years built, stood out dark against the sky where a little light yet lingered. At a small square table in the corner, with which alone we are at present concerned, sat two men of very different aspect.

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One was a priest of thirty years or more, who had the appearance of recent illness. He was spare in figure, with black hair and piercing dark eyes, softened by an expression of sweetness about the mouth. This was Nicholas de Hereford, Canon of Hereford Cathedral, friend and fellow-worker of John Wycliffe, the only one of the Lollard priests, except Purvey, Ashton, and Wycliffe himself, who had not fallen away during the recent storm of persecution. He had saved himself by flight, and having suffered much during six weeks' tossing about in the Channel, was obliged to rest for a few days at Calais before proceeding on his journey. Opposite to him sat a fair-haired youth who could scarcely have seen twenty years; not strictly handsome, perhaps, but with an open, kindly, pleasant face, far more attractive than mere beauty of form or colour. He had just arrived among the travellers from Guisnes.

"Give you good even, my masters! May a man make a third at your table?" said a rough but hearty voice, and a third traveller sat down on the form. Sailor was written all over his face and figure, and he was mate of one of the boats newly come in from England.

One of the overworked youths of the inn now came up and dashed hastily upon the table a dish of hot

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meat, a piece of cheese, a few fried eggs, brown bread and white, and a plate of gingerbread. He disappeared as suddenly as he had come, and the hungry travellers set to work on what he had brought them.

"Nay, now, what price be lemons hereaway?" asked the mate. "The knave might have spared us one."

"I am too hungry to want sauce," said the fair-haired youth, laughing.

Dr. Hereford had helped himself to a slice of the brown bread, and a small portion of cheese, over which he made the sign of the cross before he ate.

"What news from England, friend?" asked the young man of the mate. "I have been abroad these two years, and am as hungered for home news as for this sodden coney."

The mate glanced at him shrewdly, with a little amusement in his eyes.

"Pray you, my son, cater for us both," said Dr. Hereford, speaking for the first time, "for I would fain hear news from England likewise."

"I can purvey for you, Father, easilier than this whipper-snapper," said the mate. "Pray you, when left you home?"

Dr. Hereford answered after a moment's hesitation. "I sailed seven weeks gone as Tuesday last."

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"There's not much news for *you*," said the mate, just before shovelling a huge lump of boiled rabbit into his mouth. He disposed of it, and then added, shortly, "My Lord of Canterbury his statute is foredone,[1] and men say my Lord of Cambridge cometh back apace from Portingale. The great rain is o'er that hath been all summer, and now be come floods belike. Master Doctor Wycliffe is bidden afore Convocation this month coming, and hath set forth a supplication to the King. There's for *you*."

"A supplication! — anentis[2] what?" asked Dr. Hereford, quickly.

The mate quietly investigated the priest, while he appeared to be busy with the contents of his trencher.

"That he may be suffered to preach as he will," he replied, stopping another piece of rabbit on its way to his mouth, sufficiently long to utter the words.

"And what came thereof?" demanded the priest in the same eager tone.

"That will I tell you when I come off my boat again," was the dry answer. "Now, my young Master, for you. Two years abroad, quotha? Then I am like to begin at Christmas afore last. My Lord Henry of Lancaster and my Lady Mary Bohun be wedded, and the King himself to the Lady Anne,

[1] Done away with. [2] Concerning.

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th' Emperor's daughter. I heard three thousand pound in good red gold was paid the procurers thereof. In London,—aye, and all o'er, nigh—hath been sorry to-do in rising of the peasants, led by one Jack Straw and Wat Tyler——"

"Come, man! Ill news flieth apace. I wis all that."

"I see, you can add three and two. Go to, then —after weddings come deaths. My Lord of March and my old Lady his mother—they ne'er make old bones, that line—and Sir Alan de Buxhull, and Sir Gilbert Le Despenser, and Sir William de Montacute, slain of his father in tilting, poor young gentleman——"

"Poor father!" sighed Dr. Hereford.

"Aye, Father, you may say that. And my Lords of Ormonde and Nottingham: and of ladies, the Lady Isabel the King's aunt, and the Lady Violant that was Duchess of Clarence,—and many another man and woman that is duke and duchess of nought, nor never like to be."

"You must have conned your news o' priory cartularies," suggested the young man. "Be no matters in this world save marrying and dying?"

"Why, they be among the chief matters that hap to any man," answered the mate with a kind of grin.

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"Howbeit, ask your will of such gear as fits you. Catechise—I'll answer."

"Be it done. Who is now Lord Mayor?"

"Oho! your Paradise lieth in the City? Why, Master John de Northampton, that served last year, is elect again."

"I am fain to hear it," and the youth's looks did not belie his words. "And of the Aldermen, can you tell of any changes?" The last query came in a tone of half-concealed eagerness.

"Now, doth this fellow look to be himself an alderman, or is he o' love with an alderman's daughter?" asked the mate, of nobody in particular, his eyes twinkling with fun.

"Whether I need be either?" inquired the young man with some spirit.

"Nay, now, have your way," said the mate. "You may be Lord Mayor twelve times o'er, and wed 'em all in turn, for what I care."

"Friend," responded the youth with some dignity, "one of them is my father."

"Your serving-man at command, my worshipful master! Good sooth, I knew not to whom I spake," returned the mate, in a tone which was a mixture of earnest and raillery.

"Young man, I pray you of your name," said Dr.

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Hereford. "I might be able to give you better news of the twain."

"Edmund Costantyn, Father, at your command."

"The son of Master John Costantyn, the Alderman, of Old Change? Aye, you favour your mother in the face somewhat. Then I am happy to give you knowledge that all yours be of good health and cheer—and my Lord Mayor's likewise," he added, with a quiet smile, which sent the blood to Edmund's brow.

Edmund Costantyn had been for five years the betrothed of Alice de Northampton. The match had been made by their respective parents before the parties were well out of childhood—Alice being aged eleven, and Edmund fourteen—and the betrothed pair had rarely seen each other. In the Middle Ages, a girl no more expected to choose her husband than to choose her Christian name. The sole liberty which she could by any possibility anticipate—and this only with the kindest parents—was permission to entreat that a particular man might be refused whom she found especially disagreeable. Nor was it thought at all needful that the affianced pair should make each other's acquaintance before marriage. The general idea was that matrimony was a lottery, wherein there were a vast

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number of blanks, a great many prizes of nominal value, and a very few real treasures. If a girl drew a blank, well! she must make the best of it she could; why should she expect better fortune than other people? If the article drawn out were of a moderate description, neither very good nor exceptionally bad, then let her thank the saints that she had fared no worse. Love was a troublesome unknown quantity, to be excluded as much as possible from the whole business, except as a matter of poetry and chivalry. Before marriage it was decidedly objectionable; a thing to be joked about by frivolous persons, but which no sober and reasonable man was expected to feel. Afterwards, it was so little anticipated that people—especially the "religious"—were rather astonished and perplexed at the few cases in which they perceived its existence. For no trait of his character did the monks heap more obloquy upon Richard II. than for his loverlike devotion to his Queen. A deep, pure, genuine love was something utterly incomprehensible to them.

Shall we term it the source, or the consequence, of these ideas that the popular opinion of women stood very low? Few men in the fourteenth century thought so kindly of them as John Wycliffe. He

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considered them frail, most fallible creatures, ready to go astray, and easily led wrong; ignorant in the extreme, and capable of little cultivation: but he did believe that right principles were possible to them, and went so far as to say that while there was no worse thing on earth than a really bad woman, there was none better than a truly good one. How far, is it unreasonable to ask, was the theory of the sinlessness of the Virgin Mary to blame for this low estimate? On the surface it looks as if the contrary result should have ensued; that the reverence paid to her should have overflowed to the rest of her sex. But the real consequence of it was that, she being regarded, not as one among many good women, but as incapable of being equalled, the ideal good woman necessarily fell beneath her, and was expected to stand on a lower level than she would otherwise have been.

The excessively low tone of masculine morality no doubt helped to spread this estimate. The men who degrade women into toys or slaves are always the most ready to sneer at the existence of womanly goodness.

Edmund Costantyn had not yet been spoiled by evil communications. Brought up in a strict house-

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hold, and sent abroad under the eye of a cousin some dozen years older than himself, he had never been his own master until now, when the unexpected illness of his travelling-companion obliged him to return to England alone. The illness was of a tedious, not a serious character; and as Mr. Costantyn had laid strong injunctions on his son that he should not remain away over the two years, Edmund's cousin had desired him to return at once, leaving him to follow when he should find himself able to do so.

To say that neither Edmund nor Alice had indulged in fancy speculations concerning the other would be to say too much. Alice, however, was more given to that kind of thing than Edmund. She had an ideal and impossible hero, by whom she measured all men, and whom she fondly hoped that Edmund would prove to resemble. This gentleman was to be incomparably handsome, passionately devoted to herself, possessed of the sweetest of tempers and the utmost capacities for self-sacrifice. Edmund's ideal maiden, of whom he did not think nearly so often as Alice of her hero, was therefore a more hazy and indefinite creature. The important point about her was that she was to do something great—to be a heroine who left behind

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her "footprints on the sands of time." What she was to do was discreetly left undefined.

The passionate, undying personal devotion which was the chief characteristic of Alice's hero was scarcely taken into the account of Edmund's heroine. He had inherited his mother's quiet nerves and calm temperament. His own affections, while true and lasting where they were really engaged, were by no means violent or demonstrative. And except to his parents and sisters he had never given them yet. To Alice, as his mother's god-daughter and his destined wife, he felt a placid sort of brotherly kindness; very different from the sentiments which the incomparable hero was expected to pour forth at her feet.

It might almost be said that Edmund was more in love with the Lord Mayor than with his daughter. Upon him he looked as the best and noblest man he knew, and reverenced him accordingly. He liked, too, what little he could remember of the Lady Mayoress; though his chief recollection of her dated from a far-off day when she had taken him on her lap and fed him with perfumed sugar-plums.

So little had Edmund lived in his father's house that he was almost a stranger to many of his relations. While a child, he had dwelt with his

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grandfather in Sussex, and had come home only a few years before he went abroad. He had no brother, but three sisters, of whom two were married women older than himself, while the youngest, whose age was thirteen, had been hitherto a pet and plaything. The member of his family whom Edmund had loved and respected most was not the mother from whom he derived the surface features of his character, but the father to whom his resemblance was more occult, and only flashed forth when his heart was stirred. Mr. Costantyn was a warm-hearted impulsive man, very different from his calm sedate wife; but his children loved him the best.

A week of December had run out before Edmund found himself sailing up the Thames, and drawing near to London Bridge. The boat which conveyed him was to stop at Paul's Wharf, whence he would have but a short walk home. They sailed up the bright river, passing between St. Katherine's and the Tower on the left, and Horsely Down upon the right bank,—for at that time it was correctly called a down, only a few houses being dotted about it—then, still on the Surrey side, Battle Bridge, so called from the residence of the Abbot of Battle close beside it; the town house of the Prior of St.

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Augustine, Canterbury; and St. Olave's Church, then as now corruptly termed Tooley's. They shot the bridge without being in danger of their lives —a fact whereon passers up and down the Thames congratulated themselves for above five hundred years—and passing the superb church of St. Mary Overy, on the left hand, sailed by the stately mansion of Coldharbour on the right. Then came the Stillyard, where the Lord Mayor dwelt; Queenhithe and Broken Wharf; the houses of the Earl of Norfolk, and the Abbot of Chertsey; and then the boat anchored at Paul's Wharf, where were congregated together the hostel of the late Duke of Clarence, now belonging to the Earl of March, the house of the Lord Scrope of Bolton, and that of Sir Simon Burley, the aged tutor of the young King.

Edmund sprang ashore with considerable satisfaction. He had been tossing up and down the Channel for more than a fortnight, and was not at any time particularly fond of the sea. Leaving his servant to see about bringing up the luggage—a smaller affair then than now, at least for ordinary commoners—he came up into Thames Street, then turning for a few yards to the right, followed the narrow street on the left known as St. Peter's Hill, where the Abbot of St. Mary, York, resided, and a

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few more yards to the right brought him to the Old Change.

Reaching his father's door, he knocked loudly with his oaken stick; and as nobody came, followed up this appeal by another. Still there was perfect silence: and Edmund was about to knock a third time louder than ever, when a voice across the narrow street prevented him.

"You'll knock your fingers sore, young Master, afore the cat opens yon door; and there's none else within to do it."

Edmund turned round to look at the speaker, and in a bound was across the street, wringing the blackened hand of the astonished smith.

"Roger Astelyn! give thee good day, with all mine heart! Not an hair of thee is changed. I am right fain to see thee!"

"Well, Master," said the smith, more slowly, and with rather a bewildered air, "I reckon I should be fain to see a man that saith he is fain to see me: but an' ever I saw you afore, methinks all the hairs on you must be changed, for may my points break if I wit who you be."

This rather evil-sounding wish was more harmless than it seemed, since it only amounted to a desire

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that the speaker's stockings might prove infirm of purpose.

"Not know me!" said Edmund in surprise. "Am I so changed, then? Why, Roger, time was thou knewest well Nym Costantyn, that learned of thee to shoe an horse and turn a bar of iron on the anvil."

Before Edmund's speech was half finished, the ponderous hammer had rung to the stone floor, and the handsome face of the big blacksmith was lighted up with pleasure of no mean kind, as he took both Edmund's offered hands within his own, black as they were, and wrung them till one set of fingers at least tingled for some time after.

"Master Edmund! eh, Master Edmund, is it thou of very truth? Well, I am fain to see thee—you, I should say, and pray you mercy on mine ill manners."

"Nay, old friend, I am not grown so big that I would fain overtop thee," laughed Edmund. "And how dost, Roger, and good Mistress Mildred belike?"

"I'm well, Master Nym—didst ever see me aught beside? But as for the mistress——" and the big head was shaken, while a very doubtful and almost alarmed look came into the smith's face.

"Dear heart, so bad as that?" said Edmund sympathisingly. "What ails her, Roger?"

"If thou'lt tell *me* what ails her," said the smith,

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"I shall be the happier man. *She's* changed, Master Nym, she's sore changed. She used to think nought o' heaving one o' they hammers at me,—biggest she could lift, too: she'd ha' heaved the anvil an' she could ha' got it up. And now—she haven't heaved so much as a pebble at me this month or more. I tell you, Master Nym, when I went in yestre'en, there was she a-sitting with the cat upon her lap. I never felt so nesh[1] in all my life! That cat was as feared of her as—as——"

"As Roger Astelyn," suggested Edmund, laughing.

"Well, Master Nym!" answered the smith, deprecatingly. "Man loveth not to say, you know—not to say it—that he is feared of his own wife. But——"

"Only to be it," responded Edmund. "But what is come o'er Mistress Mildred, trow?"

"Master Nym, it's my belief the fairies has been at her," said the smith in a mysterious whisper. "Somebody's witched her, else. There's nought beyond—without she's a-going to die. And if she'd but be peaceable and kind like this, I don't see why she should—no, I don't!" said the smith, scratching his head.

"But if she were witched, Roger, she would be worser, not better, sickerly."

[1] Soft, limp, sensitive. [2] Securely, *i.e.* certainly.

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"Couldn't!" remarked the smith, sententiously.

"Well! Canst tell me, Roger, wherefore none of my father's house be within? Are all well, trow?"

"All well, Master Nym, and all hence; but not all o' one way. Thy father is with my Lord Mayor at the Stillwharf, and I rather think the mistress went with him: and Mistress Gunnora and her chamberer were bidden to my Lady Peche, as I heard tell. And as to Em'line cookmaid, she went forth, fine as a fiddler, these two hours past: and Gillian chambermaid, she was fit to turn a peacock's head,—she come about an half-hour after. At after that, Rob come across to me, with a cock's feather stuck of his hat—I'll take my oath 'twas the young cockerel they dressed o' Sunday last,—and said neither King nor Parliament should keep him yonder, with nought for company save the fire and the cat: so hence went he, and I dare reckon the cat's gone too, and much if the fire isn't."

"Cold comfort, that," said Edmund, laughing. "Well, my knave Nick shall be up amain, so he may stir the embers at his pleasure. Methinks I shall go seek my father. At the Stillyard he is, saidst thou?"

"At the Stillyard, if thou seek my Lord Mayor and Master Costantyn," said Roger, slily: "but if

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thou seek fair Mistress Alice, thy feet must carry thee tother way, toward my Lady Peche's."

"Hold thy tongue, knave!" laughed Edmund. "I shall go seek my father."

"Tarry a minute, Master." Roger's jovial face had grown suddenly grave. "There's ill news come this morrow. Thou shalt find thy father sore troubled,—aye, my Lord Mayor, too."

Edmund, who was turning away, stepped back at once.

"Why, friend, what so?"

"Master, thou mindest yon ancient priest that is thy father's friend,—him with the long silver locks, that preacheth so rare and strange words?"

"Master Doctor Wycliffe?"

"He! I could not think on's name."

"I mind him well, and have heard him to preach, to my much contentment. Truly, I hope none ill is befallen him?"

"He is dying, Master Nym."

"Dying? O Roger! God forbid it!"

And Edmund looked really grieved.

"Aye, he is dying of palsy," said Roger, in a strange, constrained tone. "At the Vicarage of All Hallows the More. Struck five days gone. And—

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and—'sonties,[1] I'd sooner ha' lost a year's earnings!"

And turning round to the anvil, Roger began violently battering a cold horse shoe, as if his object were to reduce it to fragments with as little loss of time as possible.

"Trust me, Roger, but I am wonder woe to hear this!" replied Edmund, very sorrowfully.

"Aye, and more than thou or me either," said the blacksmith, in a husky tone.

At this moment the back door was slightly pushed open, and a voice said softly—

"Roger, wilt come to thy supper!"

"Coming, good wife," answered he.

"That is ne'er Mistress Astelyn!" exclaimed Edmund in his astonishment.

"She's always like that, now!" whispered the blacksmith. "The saints know what's took her! I could as soon ha' looked to find red herrings swimming on the anvil! She's going to die, I'm rare feared. And I'd be sorry, sickerly, Master Nym—I'd be sorry, *now!*"

Edmund left his old friend with another warm shake of the hand, and made his way to the Stillyard. But instead of going down Church Lane to-

[1] Little saints.

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wards the Hood, he turned up Bush Lane to All Saints' Vicarage. This was a house which he knew well. A glance through the kitchen window was followed by a gentle rap on it, and then he stood waiting at the back door.

"Now, whichever of 'em all thou art—Black, White, Grey, or Brown,—go thy ways and be hanged for a good-for-nought!" cried a female voice within, in no dulcet tones. "If I wore not out two pair o' shoes this week, opening this door to the ill pack of ye, I'm a heathen Jew, and my name's not Ankaret Bunche! Get thee gone, thou lither loon, I say, that layest fat on thy lazy bones by spoiling the poor, and buildest——" Here the door was flung open, and the voice underwent a sudden metamorphosis. "Good Master, I do beseech you of pardon! Sickerly, this day have I been run off my feet and all mine head to-rent,[1] with those lazy loons of fat friars for ever rapping on the windows, till I scarce knew whether I was on my head or my heels! Wherein shall I pleasure you this even?"

"Forsooth, old friend, I pity thee," said Edmund in a much quieter voice than that of Ankaret. "Thou mindest me, Ankaret—Edmund Costantyn?"

"Eh, Master Nym, be you come home from seas?

[1] Torn, rent asunder.

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Come you within—the Father 'll be glad to see you, that he will!"

"Nay, Ankaret, I have no mind to trouble the Father this even. Do but tell me, how doth Father Wycliffe? I heard of his disease but now."

Ankaret's apron went up to her eyes.

"He's travelling to Heaven as fast as he can, Master Nym; and if e'er a one of them friars can give him a lift on *that* road, trust the rascals to do it. There's been sixteen of 'em at him this day, a-babbling and a-travailing[1] him, and yesterday there was o'er twenty. I'd see 'em at the bottom o' the Red Sea with every bit o' my heart—every living soul o' 'em!"

"Can't you keep them out?" asked Edmund, half indignantly.

"No, Master Nym, I can't," said Ankaret bluntly. "Nor you couldn't, if they came at you ten of a time. The fat, lazy, caitiff slowmen![2] I can't do nought but shake my fist behind their backs—that gives me a bit o' comfort. If there's many more, I shall shake it in their faces. What's the good of Mayor and Corporation, never name King nor Council, if they can't keep them wretches from travailing a saint of God in the last hours he'll have in this world?"

[1] Teasing. [2] Wretched sluggards.

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"A saint!" exclaimed Edmund, to whose mind it required an ecclesiastical process at Rome to manufacture a saint.

"Master Nym, there's a many more fish in the sea than ever came out of it, and there's a many more saints in Heaven than e'er got stuck in the Calendar. If Father Wycliffe's no saint, the twelve Apostles wasn't—there! I've not waited on him since he fell o' this trouble and don't know that. You'd know it, too, if you saw and heard him. Will you not come within?"

Edmund thanked her and took his leave. Ten minutes later he stood at the door of the Hood, inquiring of Simpkin if Alderman Costantyn were with the Lord Mayor. He was answered in the affirmative, and going forward into the hall he found his parents, as well as the father and mother in-law that were to be. A warm welcome awaited him from all but his mother. Her welcome was never warm. She knew not how either to forebode evil or to revel in good. But Edmund received from her just what he expected, and missed nothing. He was a little surprised, and more touched, by the warm tenderness of his father's greeting.

At first there was much to say on both sides. When conversation flagged, after touching on Dr.

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Wycliffe as well as on Edmund and his relatives, and Simpkin had announced supper, Alderman Costantyn introduced another subject.

"My Lord Mayor," said he, "give me leave to remind you that at home you and I have each one daughter."

"And you would fain add mine to yours, and leave me bereaved?" answered the Lord Mayor, smiling. "That were an unfriendly act, methinks."

"With your Lordship's leave, we will forsake to say whose act it were," returned the Alderman laughingly, for the original proposal for the alliance had come from the Lord Mayor himself. "Howbeit, look you around, and you shall see here a young man as tall of his hands as any in London town, that is ready to wed and settle down when you shall give him leave. What say you?"

"Forsooth, Master Costantyn," broke in the Lady Mayoress, "but I say our Alice is yet full young to wed."

"Come, now!" said her husband. "Going in eighteen, methinks, Parnel. There be a score of wives within so many yards were wed earlier than she."

"Much you know!" was his wife's jesting answer. "But men never do mind their daughters' years. They always count 'em either under or over."

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"What, is she nineteen?" said the Lord Mayor, with mock gravity. "I cry thee mercy, Parnel. If I mind aright, thou wert but sixteen at our wedding."

"Now, how you men loveth to travail a woman!" exclaimed the Lady Mayoress, laughing. "Alice is sixteen, as thou well wist. I trust she shall be wiser woman than her mother, which is not like to be, if she wed the sooner.—Master Costantyn, I would fain keep my maid a little longer."

"Ah, now cometh truth forth!" said her husband.

"That may man well guess, my Lady," answered the Alderman: "yet I trust you will pardon me to say that I would the just contrary."

"My Lord," said Simpkin, coming forward to his master, "Michael, the parson's man, would fain speak quickly with your Lordship."

"Ah!" sighed the Alderman, "he is a messenger of ill news, as mefeareth."

In truth, they had all been jesting over heavy hearts, each for another's sake rather than his own.

"Man asks not to speak quickly when he brings evil tidings," was the shrewd reply of the Lord Mayor. "Bid him hither, Simpkin."

Michael, the factotum of the Vicar, entered with a bow and a scrape to the assemblage in general.

"Please it your Lordship, the Father sent me

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down to tell you good tidings. Father Wycliffe hath the turn, and the leech[1] thinks he may do well."

Exclamations of pleasure broke from the lips of most persons present.

"How gat he it, Michael?" asked the Lady Mayoress. "Was it of a new physic, or how?"

"Please it your Ladyship, 'twas a physic that he meddled[2] himself," said Michael with a grin. "There was 'leven of they friars about his bed, that Ankaret saith she would love to drown o' th' Red Sea, and I'm sure I'd give 'em a shove in to help her, fat lack-halters as they be!—every man a-chattering and a-gabbing[3] and a-japing[4] like so many apes, and had been ever sith[5] he took sick—good lack! but my fist is sore o' doubling it at 'em, and my jaws ache o' making mowes[6]——"

"Come, Michael, those flowers of rhetoric may tarry till we have heard thy news," said the Lord Mayor.

"Anan?" inquired Michael, by which he meant that he did not understand the speaker's meaning. "Well, here was they fat pickpurses a-jabbering

[1] Physician. [2] Mixed.
[3] Telling idle tales, or falsehoods in sport.
[4] Playing foolish tricks, practical jokes, etc.
[5] Since. [6] Grimaces.

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and a-gabbing, and there lay Father Wycliffe, as still as a stone, and as white as a sheet. When——"

"But what was it all about?" said the Lady Mayoress.

"Madam, may I be called caitiff if I know! All a lot of gabber and jabber o' somewhat the Father had said, or hadn't said, that he should ha' done, to please they brown and black rascals! Browns and Blacks was worst o' th' lot—Greys wasn't so bad. Well, all at once, up he sat of his bed, like as he'd had ne'er a stroke nor a touch, and out he cries, of a voice you might ha' heard to the Still-wharf, like as he'd been making of a predication—'I shall not die but live, and again declare the works of the Lord!' I warrant ye—I was standing by with a cup of pottage, which was waxing cold, and blessing they friars from the bottom of my heart that would not let me through to give it him—I warrant you I was that took, I dropped the cup right down o' th' floor, and the pottage went o'er upon a Minor's bare toes."

"Oh, fie!" exclaimed the Lady Mayoress, laughing. "Sure, Michael, thou wert full sorry therefore?"

"I was, Madam, main troubled—that it wasn't boiling," said Michael coolly.

"Well, and what happed then?" asked the Lord

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Mayor, when the company had grown sufficiently grave for the story to be pursued.

"Why, they took to their heels," said Michael, "Blacks and Browns and all colours, as though, saving your reverence, the foul fiend was after 'em. And I see 'em out o' th' door with more pleasure than I'd ha' seen the King and Queen and all the Parliament come in: and I barred it behind 'em, and if any on 'em comes in again while I'm by, why, I'll give him leave, that's all! And then went I up again to the poor Father, thinking to find him of a swoon at the very least, and he looks up on me bright and cheery, and saith he, 'Michael, lad, methinks I could eat a rasher broiled o' th' coals, if Ankaret would dress it for me.' And quoth I, 'She shall, or I'll dress her,' and down I went. But, bless her! she didn't need no dressing; she was every bit as glad as me. And he ate the rasher, every scrap, and drank a cup of Osey wine, and when the leech looked in, an half-hour after, he saith, 'He's got the turn, and all that lacks now is but to feed him up.' 'I warrant ye, I'll feed him, Sir,' says I, 'as if he were a Christmas goose,—I will, so!' So then the Father —our parson, I mean—bade me come and tell the

[1] All graduate priests—which then included all medical men—were addressed in the style due, among laymen, only to a knight.

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good news to your Lordship, that he said would be as full rejoiced as we."

"Truly, that are we all," said the Lord Mayor, heartily.

"Come thou hither, Michael, and drink thyself," added the Lady Mayoress, holding forth to him a silver cup filled to the brim with muscadel, the richest wine then known. The silver cup was in itself a signal honour, and indicated special favour. Michael took it with another scrape of reverence, and quaffed it at a single draught.

"That's none ill!" said he. "I thank your Ladyship with all mine heart. Now will I back to wait of Father Wycliffe, and if we have him not o' th' pulpit in a month, it willn't be Michael Prendergast to blame—that's all!"

When Michael had departed, Alderman Costantyn said thoughtfully,—"How evil do the people at large love the friars! Whose fault is it, think you?"

"Their own, wholly," was the decided reply of the Lord Mayor. "Time was, they were best loved of all the clergy; and might have been yet, had they carried themselves according. Had they remained, as of old, meek and humble men, busily minding their duty, and being good to all men, man's mind should never have turned from them as now. But

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no man can love, neither worship,[1] a well-fed lazy rascal, that is proud and a bully to boot,—not to name worser things wherein the friars have won them a bad name beyond the seculars.[2] A man of evil life cannot have worship,—nay, though he were a prince."

"Be they like to change back to the old ways?" suggested the Alderman. "What think you?"

"It may be rather to the purpose that I tell you what Father Wycliffe thinks. He holdeth a fantasy that hereafter, some day, a purifying of the Church shall come forth from these same friars themselves, and that with consent of the Pope and Cardinals."

"Methinks," said Alderman Costantyn rather drily, "that shall not be to-morrow."

"Nor the morrow thereof. God grant it be at all!"

The great purification of the Church, which none of those present lived to see, did arise from the Order of Mendicant Friars. But the morrow of its coming was a hundred and thirty-five years away, and it was done not with the consent, but against all the endeavours, of the authorities at Rome. Yet it is a singular fact that even thus far, it should have been granted to John Wycliffe to foresee and prophesy of Martin Luther.

[1] Respect, honour. [2] Priests who were not monks.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE FEBRUARY THUNDERSTORM.

"'Tis hard when young heart, singing songs of to-morrow,
Is suddenly met by the old hag, Sorrow."

—LEIGH HUNT.

"AMANA!"

"Well, what wouldst?—Madam, I cry your Ladyship mercy: soothly I thought Alice called. Wherein might I serve you?"

And Amana, who was spending the day at the Hood, blushed and courtesied in much confusion. She might have made herself easy, for the Lady Mayoress was much too sensible and sweet-tempered to resent a mere mistake.

"Come hither, child," said she, good-naturedly, "into this chamber. We would know of thee touching what new gear goeth, sith thou hast been of late in the Court with my Lady thy mother. Be any new fashionings up of these days, trow?"

The *we* to whom her Ladyship referred, consisted,

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beside herself, of Mistress Costantyn and old Mistress Comberton. Generally speaking, the Lady Mayoress, as the wife of a draper, had the advantage of Amana Peche, whose father was a fishmonger: but on the present occasion this usual order was reversed, for Sir John and Lady Peche had been dining with the Princess of Wales, and Amana had accompanied them.

"Tell us what ware my Lady Princess? and what great ladies had she for guests? and how were they donned?"

Amana felt rather overwhelmed. She took the first question, as the easiest.

"Please it your Ladyship, the Lady Princess was donned of a kirtle of gold of Cyprus, broidered of little crosses in red; and her under-tunic of scarlet, flowered in grey, and a white border; and her sleeves of scarlet, with a white hood.[1] She looked right well-pleasant, but of a truth she waxeth full fat."

"Thou hast eyes in thine head," said Mistress Costantyn, approvingly.

"Good," echoed the Lady Mayoress. "And now tell us who were the guests?"

[1] The Princess wears this costume in the Golden Book of St. Albans, Cott. MS. Nero, D. vii.

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"An' it like you, Madam, the King and Queen[1] were there."

"Soothly, it liketh me well. I have not beheld the King these three years."

"And I saw not the Queen at all," added Mistress Costantyn.

"And I never saw the tone nor the tother,"[2] softly put in old Mistress Comberton, smiling.

"Now, Amana, get thee to thy work," said the Lady Mayoress, laughingly. "Paint for us first the King and then the Queen."

"Please it you, Madam, the King is a young gentleman that methought scarce looketh his full years, that be sixteen. He is something short, but rare goodly, of a fair hair, and most fair of colouring; and his eyen be grey.[3] He bare a tabard of England and France,[4] lined with white; a white frill of his neck, and red sleeves, lacking any broidery: and of his head a fillet of gold. The Queen, as I reckon, is something elder than her lord, maybe by two or three years.[5] She is a lady of good counte-

[1] Richard II. and Anna of Bohemia.

[2] The one nor the other.

[3] Blue.

[4] A loose jacket embroidered with the arms of these countries, the former on a red ground, the latter on a blue. He wears this costume in the illuminations in his own Psalter, Cott. MS. Domit. A. xvii.

[5] This is probable.

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nance, fair, having yellow hair: and she was donned of a gown of baldekyn of gold of Cyprus, the ground blue and white. Of her head she bare a full rich fillet of gold, having ever anon in the midst a great balas,[1] and around it divers pearls and sapphires in troches,[2] and in front of all one great diamond, that did flash and sparkle full seemly wheresoever she turned her head. My Lady my mother said she would lay her best chain of gold that fillet had cost an hundred marks or over. Soothly, it was a seemly thing to see!"

"A fair sight, trow," said the Lady Mayoress, evidently much interested. "And who else was there, my maid?"

"An' it please you, Madam, there were well nigh the whole Court: the Lady Queen of Spain, which was donned of blue baldekyn, and of her head a rich dove-cote,[3] and a scarf of yellow therefrom; she ware likewise a fillet, but not so goodly as our Queen. Then was the Lady of Cambridge, that ware a red baldekyn, and an hood of motley;[4] and the Lady of Buckingham,[5] that had a baldekyn of silk motley, black and red rayed.[6] The Lady de Swynford was

[1] Rose ruby. [2] Circles.
[3] Hair-net of gold and pearls. [4] Mixed colours.
[5] These three ladies were the wives of the King's uncles.
[6] Striped.

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donned of a baldekyn white and blue, guarded of vair; and the Lady Joan Salesbury, that sat by my mother, bare a skirt of black velvet, and a fair tunic of scarlet furred with miniver.[1] She ware on her head a chaplet of goldsmith's work."

"How many caps of Syrie[2] didst see, Amana?"

"Divers, Mistress Costantyn; soothly, I reckoned them not."

"And be they all the gowns thou didst note, Amana?"

"Madam, methinks, I have forgot my Lady of Derby, which ware a gown of baldekyn, of blue; and over the same a fair armilaus,[3] of blue and white satin, broidered by harebells in gold."[4]

"In good sooth, but that is the fairest gear I heard of yet," said Mistress Costantyn.

"And what hadst to thy dinner, Amana?"

"I had a trencher of roasted urchin[5] in gravy, Madam, and soup of eyren, and kid, and a leche[6] of a crane, and a flampoint,[7] and almond cream."

"Thou didst not ill. And what else were?"

"Afore the King, Madam, was a peacock in his

[1] With the exception of a few minor items, the dress described was really possessed by the lady to whom it is attributed.

[2] Steeple caps.

[3] Pelisse or polonaise.

[4] These appear in her account-book.

[5] Hedgehog.

[6] Slice.

[7] Pork pie.

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pride,[1] and afront of my Lady of Lancaster a swan displayed. I saw likewise herons, and coneys, and fillets in galantyne, and sops in fennel. My father said there was a rare dish of green zinzinger,[2] but I saw it not."

"And great store of wines, I reckon?"

"Yes, Madam: muscadel and malmsey, Rumney wine,[3] and Gascony,[4] and Alicant,[5] did I see. But my Lady Princess drank but lemon-water, as I heard say. Madam, I cry you mercy for my much forgetting—there was a goose boiled with leeks."

"And good it is," said Mistress Costantyn. "I would have had that afore urchin, had I been thou, Amana."

"Mistress, it came not my way."

"Good maid!" said the Lady Mayoress, approvingly. "Now we will keep thee on the hooks no longer. Go thou to Alice, that I see peeping in from the further chamber, and marvelling when we shall have done with thee."

Amana courtesied and retired, not sorry for her dismissal. Kind as they were, an examination of this sort before three ladies was an ordeal to a young

[1] With the tail spread out.
[2] Ginger.
[3] A Spanish wine.
[4] Claret.
[5] Distilled from mulberries.

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girl in her day. The submissive stiffness, assumed as company manners, vanished when she reached Alice.

"What would they with thee, Amy?" said Alice in a whisper; and Amana explained.

Then they sat down on the cushioned window-seat, and Amana set to work at the opposite end of the long strip of black satin which Alice was embroidering in coloured silks and gold thread. It was to form a banker, the covering which was thrown over the back of a settle or bench.

"Alice, dost know to-morrow is Lord Mayor's Day?"

"Soothly, I should so, for I have heard it this ten times since I oped mine eyes this morrow," said Alice, laughing.

"Art any wise travailed[1] thereabout? Folks say thy father shall not be elect a third time."

"Truly, I were astonied if he were. Travailed? Oh, nay! Whether I should be travailed?"[2]

"Well!" said Amana, with a gleam of fun in her eyes, "Mistress Alice de Northampton shall not be so full great a lady as my Lord Mayor's daughter."

"My Lord Mayor's daughter is full willing to sink down into Mistress Alice de Northampton. I was plain Alice Comberton once, and I know not that I

[1] Vexed, troubled. [2] Why should I be vexed?

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had less mirth then than now. Something more, perchance."

"Why, Alice, what a sigh!"

"Did I sigh, Amy? Perchance there shall be no cause. Most folks live in the present day, and thou, methinks, belike."

"I am ill at riddles, Alice."

"Master Wycliffe was hither this last evening, Amy, and he sat a while with Father in his closet. And after they had talked a while, Mother bade me to go in and fetch out her little work-basket, the which she had set down there and forgot. So I scratched on the door, and Father bidding me to enter, I went in and fetched forth the basket. But as I entered, Master Wycliffe was speaking, and quoth he,—'If so be, it shall go evil with them that have stood to the front:' and Father made answer, 'Truly, I never look but to be apaid[1] of my Lord of Canterbury for our work these two years past.' Whereto Master Wycliffe made reply, 'When he hath eaten me up, he shall bid you be served for his next dish, belike.' And I can guess what that meant, Amana."

"Dear heart, my Lord of Canterbury is not almighty."

"Thank the saints, he is not! but he comes too

[1] Rewarded.

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near it for mine ease. Grammer said a two-three days[1] gone, that Father had done ill to make an enemy of that man, no-but[2] so doing he had made a friend of God. I am afraid, Amy!" And Alice glanced round the room with an expression which gave point to her words.

Amana looked puzzled and surprised. As her friend had just said, she lived in the present, and sorrowful apprehensions of anything not immediately at hand were not in her line. Why Alice should permit her mirth to be clouded to-day because of something which might happen, next month or next year, was a mystery to Amana. But Alice had a vivid imagination, and to her the trouble which she foresaw in the future was virtually present. She had thought of little but those ominous words, ever since she heard them: and the most awful possibilities of meaning seemed to float round and round her brain, as if she could never get out of their charmed circle. Alice saw in a moment that Amana was not the confidante to suit her. She could not comprehend the trouble, far less see a way out of it. Nor would the Lady Mayoress answer; she was too easy-tempered to say anything beyond a laughing rebuke for "croaking and tra-

[1] A few days. [2] Unless.

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vailing[1] folk." Mistress Costantyn never thought anything unpleasant could possibly be going to happen; and was so calmly fixed in that conviction that it was not possible to worry her. As to Lady Peche, she had but three defined ideas in her head; how her dress became her, whether things were comfortable for her husband, and how to get Amana satisfactorily "settled." Alice gave up the hope of making herself understood with another sigh, for which she received a playful little shake from her friend, and was desired to "put by her disturbled thoughts, and come and play at tables."[2]

"Good sooth, be it done, if thou wilt," said Alice, with a grave smile: "but thy physician will tell thee, Amy, sursanures[3] be ill things."

The Lord Mayor's day came and went: and John de Northampton was not re-elected. The new Mayor was Sir Nicholas Brembre, one of the Grocer's Company. He and the ex-Mayor were not particular friends, and before long Northampton was to discover that Brembre was his enemy.

The past summer had been altogether a disturbed and uneasy season. The great Crusade against the Antipope had set out from Sandwich in April, led

[1] Worrying. [2] Backgammon.
[3] Wounds healed on the surface, but suffered to fester below.

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by Henry Le Despenser, the Bishop of Norwich, who assuredly had "run his head against a pulpit when he might have done his country excellent service"—not at the plough-tail, as Bishop South concludes his aphorism, but in the army. The Mendicant Friars had done their utmost to beat up recruits for this absurd expedition. The English bishops contributed a ton of gold; many ladies of rank and fortune flung all their jewels into the fund; while one, more fanatical or more clever than the rest, recounted wonderful visions wherein angels had been sent down to reveal to her that every man killed fighting on the side of Pope Urban should be borne straight to Heaven without any detention in Purgatory. Dr. Wycliffe, who had recovered from his stroke of paralysis so completely that no effect of it remained beyond local weakness, thundered vehemently against this Crusade as a wicked war, waged not in the cause of Christ, but purely as the result of the envy and ambition of the rival Popes. He denounced it as a cruel slaughter of innocent Christians, and utterly opposed to the Spirit of Christ. For a short time it seemed as if fortune were about to favour the Bishop of Norwich and his crusaders. In June came rumours of success. But by August it was known that the expedition was a

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failure; and by October the entire scheme had collapsed. The King and his uncle of Lancaster had disliked the Crusade from the first; and when in the House of Commons the Bishop of Norwich was impeached, no voice of authority interfered on his behalf. So far were they from doing it, that at the close of the year the Duke of Lancaster was sent at the head of an army to Flanders to oppose the crusading force.

There had been warm debates that year in Parliament on the great Schism of the West. In November there had been a proclamation against the admission of aliens to English benefices; and altogether matters were looking rather black for the Papacy, so far as England was concerned. Dr. Hereford had reached Rome, where he presented his appeal to the Pope in person; and he had occasion to discover that whatever evil might have befallen him in England, he had scarcely bettered his position by coming to Rome. The Pope, in answer to his appeal, condemned him to perpetual imprisonment, graciously informing his victim that he substituted this sentence for that of death as an especial favour, and out of respect to Archbishop Courtenay and the Church of England. Was it

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possible for sarcasm to be more withering than this?

Never had Wycliffe worked harder than during the year that was past and the one that was to follow. Nine Latin works and a stream of English ones poured forth from his undefatigable pen. He considered that as circumstances now stood, he was called rather to authorship than to parish work. His illness had made it more difficult for him to do active work, involving physical exertion, than formerly, while he was as well fitted to write as ever. He therefore took a curate, a young man named John Horn, into whose hands he committed much of the ceremonial and outdoor duty, reserving himself for desk-work.

So matters stood at the close of the year 1383. Edmund and Alice were not yet married, but it was an understood thing that they were to be so during the following year. The winter had been calm and peaceful for the Lollard party. The Archbishop, whose lead every adversary followed, seemed to have made up his mind to let them alone. They were beginning to breathe freely, and to fancy that the worst was over.

Not unfrequently, when we arrive at that conclusion, the worst is just about to begin.

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"There'll be some rain ere morrow break," said Roger Astelyn, as he closed the smithy, and prepared to repair to the kitchen where his wife had supper ready. As he entered, he repeated his prognostication. "Storm at hand, Mildred; a good heavy one too, sickerly. There be blackest clouds i' th' south ever I saw."

Mistress Astelyn looked up meekly from the dish wherein at that moment she was pouring her savoury confection from the pan.

"Aye so, Roger? Metrusteth there shall be no thunder. I'm for ever feared o' thunder."

"Thunder in February! That were thunder," laughed Roger, as he sat down on the form which served for table and chair in one.

Mistress Astelyn's mysterious change continued to exercise a spell over her. She gave no explanation of it; she did not even seem conscious that she had changed: but the difference in Roger's life was immense.

"It's a sight peaceabler and well-pleasanter, Master Costantyn," said he to his neighbour: "ever so much, I warrant you. But sometimes, when she is so awful peaceable and so shocking quiet, like as she never used,—well, it do seem mortal flat!"

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The storm broke just as the curfew rang. And whatever Roger Astelyn might presuppose, it was one of the most fearful thunderstorms that ever broke over the metropolis, even on a summer day. Mildred proved the truth of her statement that thunder frightened her. Roger, who knew not what fear was—except of Mildred Astelyn—was utterly amazed to find her clinging to him in abject terror, and sobbing out—

"It's for my sins, Hodge—it's for my sins! But oh, I wish I wist which of 'em! If I could but get at a priest to tell me! I cannot tell whether it's come for-why I was bad to thee, or for-why I went to hear the poor priests. Oh, if I might but know which of 'em it were!"

"Why, wife! *thou* wentest to hear the poor priests?" asked Roger in sincere astonishment. He had been, and had won Mistress Astelyn's severe reproaches thereby, as well as sundry cuffs and kicks, which fell upon his big person rather like pats upon an elephant, little Mistress Astelyn's bodily strength being by no means equal to her mental vehemence. "I thought thou wert as set again' the poor priests as e'er——"

"But I did, Hodge! I crept out when thy back was turned, and that many a day. I wouldn't ha'

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had thee find it out for a mark o' silver. And they spake good words, they did. They said our Lord was humble and meek of heart, and none could be graced of Him as wasn't. And I wasn't, Hodge. I was as bad to thee as e'er a woman in the ward. And I told my beads many a time a day for to be meek and humble, and I've bit my tongue well-nigh through i' twenty places for to keep the hard words in, and I thought I'd done middlin' fair, and I was a-getting in the way to be made safe,[1] and now—Oh dear! oh dear! if it's all to be done o'er again!"

And Mildred sobbed bitterly, with her head on Roger's arm, while outside the elements warred and roared and clashed, till if she had not been close to him, he could scarcely have heard this astounding piece of strictly auricular confession.

"But it's not to be done o'er again, wife. Thou hast done it," said Roger, much bewildered.

"Aye, but if it were all wrong! Men say—some men—that hearing o' they poor priests is worser than all the seven deadlies, and you'd better do murder and thieve and lie first. Oh, I would I had a priest! I'd get to know, and I'd shrive me clean, and then if I die i' th' storm——"

And Mildred broke down again in a torrent of sobs.

1 Saved.

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"They didn't make thee bad," said Roger. "But, wife, if thou wouldst have a priest, I'll seek one for thee. I can go up to Paul's in five minutes, and sure it's none so late but somebody 'll be there."

"Not i' th' storm! Eh, Hodge, man, not i' th' storm!"

"Storm!" said Roger contemptuously. "What's th' storm got to do wi' 't? I'm neither salt nor sugar, and I'm not afeard of storms. Loose me, Mildred, and I'll be back in a twink, and a priest with me."

She let him go, very reluctantly; partly because she did not want to lose the comfort of his presence and his utter recklessness of danger, and partly because she was honestly afraid of the danger for him. It was something quite new for Roger to realise that Mildred could really care what became of him. He was just stepping forth into the storm, when a blinding flash of lightning made the darkness following darker. The roar of the accompanying thunder had barely died away, and Roger was not yet able to see comfortably again, when a voice without addressed him.

"Friend, will you give a priest shelter? I was on my way to Paul's, but this storm is so heavy that I would fain find nearer refuge."

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"If you be a priest, Father, you are he whom I was going forth to seek," answered Roger, making way for the stranger to enter. "The storm hath sore affrighted my wife, and she would fain shrive her without delay. Will you come within, of your grace, and do a deed of your office at the same time that you shelter you?"

"With a full good will, my son," said the priest, accepting the invitation.

Roger preceded him into the kitchen, where Mildred was cowered down shivering on the hearth. But no sooner had the light revealed the face and costume of his unexpected guest than Roger stared in absolute horror. The light of fire and lamp fell upon a good-looking, fair-complexioned man of moderate height, whose face Roger knew. He shrank back almost in apprehension of some coming vengeance for his unpardonable audacity, when he saw that he had invited into his house, to shrive little Mildred Astelyn, the second priest in all the land, the Archbishop of York himself.

"'Pray your Grace of mercy!" were the first words that found their way to Roger's trembling tongue.

"Wherefore, my son?" was the quiet answer of the gentlest-mannered man in England. "One priest may shrive as well as another. I am full willing to

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do mine office at any time and place. Let none enter, I pray thee."

And thus gently dismissing Roger, the Archbishop took his seat in the chimney corner, and Mildred threw herself on her knees before him. She was not so struck with the discovery as her husband. The guest's face was strange to her, and she had not fully realised who he was—only that he was a priest of more exalted rank than Roger would deliberately have summoned. Her genuine grief and terror were too great to be dispelled at that moment by worldly considerations. The Pope himself would just then have been chiefly welcomed on account of his superior infallibility.

"What troubleth thee, my daughter?"

"Father," whispered Mildred, "I'm terrible feared o' this storm, and I would fain know of you which of my sins it cometh for."

"Whether it should come for any? Hast thou sins on thy conscience, of special sort, that thou art thus disturbled? Make thy confession."

Mildred accordingly mumbled hastily over the *Confiteor*, and coming to the point where individual sins were mentioned, let her confessor know that she was in particular fear of two. She had been bad to her husband, who was a main sight too good for her;

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and she had gone to hear the poor priests, who had bidden her cultivate meekness. And which of the two were the more wicked series of actions, the illogical Mildred earnestly wished to know, on the irrefragable authority of that abstraction termed the Church, which practically and in the concrete meant the first priest she could meet with. If the Archbishop were amused, he did not show it.

"Whether it should be sin to hear the poor priests, my daughter?" said he. "Sickerly, nay. The poor priests told thee truth. Christ our Lord was meek of heart, and it cannot be evil to be like Him."

"Then it's for being bad to Roger!" sobbed Mildred, with a little shriek of terror as another peal of thunder broke over her head more violently than ever.

"Ah! '*Sicut illi decem et octo, supra quos cecidit turris in Siloe!*'"[1] said the Archbishop in an undertone to himself—not to Mildred. "How prone we are to think it! It is well, when we number ourselves among them. My daughter, let us go down to the root of the matter. It is well thy conscience should be disturbed, if in truth thou hast been a shrewd and unbuxom wife.[2] God's law biddeth wives to obey and reverence their husbands."

"Then I must start fresh, and try harder than ever,

[1] "Those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell."—Luke xiii. 4.

[2] Ill-tempered and unsubmissive.

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Father. If I keep on at it, shall I be made safe?—and how long time shall it take, pray you? My tongue acheth o' keeping in, many a time a day. But I was trying, Father—I was trying, right hard, and it's main hard work. Shall them up above not take into the count that it's main hard work?"

"My daughter, I tell thee truth, for I dare not dissemble with thee. It shall take thee more than all eternity to be made safe that way. It is so hard work that thou canst never do it—nay, though thou hadst the help of all the saints in Heaven."

"What, amn't I going right way, *now?*" cried poor Mildred. "'Sonties, but I thought, if I tried ever so hard, I should sure come safe at last!"

"My daughter, if that napron[1] thou bearest were full mired all over, and thou wert to dip one string thereof into water, should it make the napron clean?"

"Sickerly, Father, nay. It couldn't, no how!" said Mildred, looking rather puzzled.

"Then how layest thou out to make thy heart white, by keeping clean thy tongue?"

This was a new idea to Mildred altogether. She paused a moment to think it over.

"Seest thou not, my daughter, that the hard words and the evil speeches only come by way of thy

[1] Apron.

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tongue? They take not beginning there, but in thine heart. If the heart be made right, trust the tongue to follow. That only which is within the pitcher can come forth of the beak thereof."

"But that'll be main harder work nor tother!" cried poor Mildred in a tone of despair. "How must I get at my heart? I can rule my tongue, and make th' words stop in, howe'er they ache to come forth: but to rule my thoughts, and make me to *feel* right—Father, show me the way, for I am all of a bicker!" [1]

"There is but one only way, and it is a new and living Way. The doors be all shut save one, and that looketh upward. Thou canst not get at thine heart to cleanse it. Only Jesu Christ can. May He cleanse thee by the washing of water in the word of life, that He may show thee to Himself a part of His glorious Church, holy and immaculate!"

"Then which o' th' saints must I get to ask for me?—our Lady, belike, should be best?" suggested Mildred.

"Strive to make thee like our Lady, that was so meek and sweet maid," answered the Archbishop. "Thou canst ask her to pray for thee. But methinks it should not be ill done to go straightway to Him that shed His blood for thee."

[1] Tumult, disturbance.

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This was quite as far in the direction of the one Mediator as any Lollard would have dared to go. Even Wycliffe himself got little further, and that only at the very end of life.

"Then how long, Father, shall it take to do?"

"Such time as our Lord sees best for thee."

"Then I must tell my beads, and tarry the coming thereof?" said Mildred, wondering if the Archbishop meant that some morning she would wake up and find herself sweet-tempered. What a new and curious sensation!

"Thou must deal with the Physician of souls as with the leech of the body. The first thing is to send for him, and tell thy need: that is prayer. The second thing is that he send thee the needful physic for thy case. And that, my daughter, may be a bitter draught. Christ's physic is oft-times crosses and losses, bitter words and cruel suffering. The third thing is to take the leech's physic—I say not to love the taste; but to swallow it, if it be well-pleasant or no. And that is to strive thy best to be like Him—to be meek, lowly, humble, and content: to think on thy mercies, and be thankful. Likewise, to attend the ordinance of the Church, and so far as thou mayest to hear good predication of God's Word. Thou canst not have better than of

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the poor priests. Order thee reverently to thine husband, and do his bidding, and strive to procure his comfort and welsoming[1] in all things. And for all else, trust thou in God, and look upward." He laid his hand upon her head as she knelt, —"'*Absolvo te.*'"

Mildred rose from her knees and went to call Roger. There were two thoughts in her mind—that "Roger's had a main deal of that physic," and that if she did not accept crosses and vexations with meekness, she would not be taking hers. "And what good were thy physic an' thou leave it o' the shelf wi' th' cork in?" thought she. She might have arrived at less profitable conclusions.

"The storm is well-nigh o'er, please it your Grace," said Roger, with a pull at his hair as he came into the kitchen. "Might your Grace's meynie[2] be any whither at hand?"

"They be gone forward to Paul's, I dread[3] not," replied the Archbishop. "The lightning did so affright mine horse, that methought I should be safer afoot; and in the dark methinks I took a wrong turn, and missed them. I meant for to reach Paul's Chain. What is this street, my son?"

"The Old Change, at your Grace's pleasure.

[1] Welfare, profit. [2] Suite. [3] Doubt.

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There is little harm done, for Paul's is close behind."

"There is no harm done," answered the Archbishop significantly. "The Lord's guiding hand is oft best seen in small matter. But if thou wouldst guide me, my son, of a lantern, so soon as the rain ceaseth, I might come at mine haven the easilier."

When the Archbishop thus spoke, Alderman Costantyn stepped forward into the light.

"My neighbour may hold the lantern," said he, "but I humbly pray your Grace to allow my fellowship withal. It is not meet that one of your Grace's rank have no better following than one man."

"Then is the servant above the Master," was the quiet answer, "for He had not so much when He went to His cross. Friend, your fellowship shall do me a pleasure. Methinks I should know your face —Alderman Costantyn, or I err?"

"Your Grace erreth not in no wise. I am John Costantyn, and your servant."

The trio set forth — Archbishop, Alderman, and blacksmith. If the future lives of those three men could have been unrolled to a spectator, it would have seemed a strange contradiction to the usual calculations of human nature. For according to that reckoning, the meanest of the three was incom-

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parably the happiest. Before one of the other two lay the breasting of a tumultuous torrent, and on its further bank a stretch of desolate wilderness. And over the head of the other only one more sunrise was to break, and then one short sharp pang of pain to come: and then the glory of the eternal Home, and the "Well done!" of the King's welcome.

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CHAPTER V.

THIS MORTAL LIFE.

> "I heard one whisper with departing breath,
> 'Suffer us not, for any pains of death,
> To fall from Thee!'
> But O the pains of life!—the pains of life!"
>
> —JEAN INGELOW.

"WE will come up! we'll not be beat back!"

"You shall ne'er come up this street! My Lord Mayor has forbid it."

"A fig for my Lord Mayor, and an addled egg for thee! we'll come our own gait."

As the Lord Mayor was a grocer, this apt reply added insult to injury. The speaker, a brawny saddler, finished it by flinging up his cap, with a cry of—"Ah Northampton! ah Northampton!" which was taken up by the crowd behind him with considerable gusto, and was met by the opposing throng with shouts of "Ah Brembre!"

"What ever is all this to-do?" asked Alderman

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Costantyn, going to his window to look out: and Roger Astelyn, on the opposite side, flung down his hammer, and caught summary and decisive hold of the first man that came in his way.

"What would ye all, fellow? Be the folks gone wood?"[1]

"We're no-but herrying[2] Master Northampton," was the answer. "He deserves it belike—he that hath cleared the streets of good-for-noughts. London town had never such a friend these forty years."

"Look out you make him no enemies," said the blacksmith shrewdly. "My Lord Mayor hath the right to rule; and if he saith you come not up this street——"

"Then we'll go up without his leave. Ah Northampton!" was the defiant answer.

And Roger, looking out, saw the ex-Mayor in the midst of the crowd, looking pale and troubled, almost borne off his feet in the throng, who were throwing up caps, and shouting his name, and generally conducting themselves like unreasonable people, as Englishmen when they become excited are too wont to do. It takes a good deal of mental stimulant to affect the calm temper and slow brain of the British lion; but when that ponderous animal does

[1] Mad. [2] Only praising.

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get off his balance, he is sometimes a rather awkward creature to deal with.

The opposing crowds met in Old Change, just above Roger Astelyn's smithy. John de Northampton, who was one of the sheriffs for this year, was doing his best to quiet his too exuberantly affectionate followers, but they were in too excitable a state for his efforts to be of much service. The other sheriff, Simon Wynchecombe, was conducting the opposing throng, and just as the hand-to-hand conflict began, the voice of Brembre, the Lord Mayor himself, was heard round the corner of Cheapside.

"Seize the sheriff, Wynchecombe!" he cried to his subordinate. "Seize Northampton! 'tis he inciteth thus the people."

No charge could be more unfair, for he was trying his utmost to quiet them. But when that was heard, three of Northampton's truest friends — Alderman Costantyn and his son Edmund, and Roger Astelyn, rushed from the shelter of their own roofs and flung themselves into the middle of the fray, the first shouting to the crowd to "stand by us!"

The next instant, John de Northampton found himself caught hold of, hurried out of the crowd, and a cloak flung over his shoulders.

"New cloak—none knoweth it," whispered in his

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ear the voice of his friend and brother alderman: "quick—fly! You may suffer for this else."

And giving him a friendly push into Maidenhead Lane, Alderman Costantyn disappeared again into Old Change: while Alderman Northampton, thinking that just then, as his friend suggested, discretion was the better part of valour, ran down Maidenhead Lane, in the hope that his followers, missing himself, would smooth down at once and peace would ensue.

This may have been also the hope of Alderman Costantyn: but it was not the intention of Sir Nicholas Brembre. At once missing Northampton, whom he hoped to ruin by means of this riot—a riot which would have been a peaceful, merry gathering but for him and his opposing crowd—Brembre cried to the sheriff to seize Costantyn. The Alderman was at once seized by a dozen hands, and borne towards Cheapside: and his son was struggling through the crowd in the hope of reaching and aiding his father, when suddenly a heavy cloak was flung over his head so as to throw him into profound darkness, and the grasp of two powerful hands on his shoulders greatly limited his ability to struggle. Edmund tried as hard as he could to free himself. He had just arrived at the conclusion that he could do nothing to wring himself out of the strong, firm grasp

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in which he was held, when all at once the hands set him at liberty, the cloak was withdrawn, and Edmund looked up, in unmitigated astonishment, not into the face of an enemy, but into that of one of the oldest friends of his childhood.

"Roger Astelyn! Thou!"

"Aye, it's me, Master Edmund," replied the blacksmith, gravely.

"What dost thou mean?" cried Edmund, hotly indignant. "I might have helped my father! Where is he? I see him not."

"You could not, Master Edmund. I knew that."

"May God pardon thee for keeping me here!"

"May He forgive us all!" was the reply, in a graver tone than ever.

"Thou shalt lack it, for thine ill deed this day! Where is my father? Tell me! If thou hast seen, and not I——"

"I have seen," said Roger in the same tone. "And the deed I have just now done I shall thank God that He let me do, when I stand before His bar."

"Where is my father?" cried Edmund. "What do they to him?"

"They have no more that they can do," was the

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solemn reply which sank into Edmund's heart like lead.

"And thou heldest me here! Knave! rascal! hound!" broke from the agonised lips of Edmund Costantyn.

"Master Nym," said the blacksmith, so sadly that further epithets died on Edmund's lips, "think you, if it could have saved *him*, I would have held my life dear,—aye, or yours either? I knew it could not. It were but to fling away your young life after his elder one. And I bid you remember you have a mother and a sister, to whom you must be as husband and father now. What should it have been to them to lose you both in one day? You could have done no more. Go home while you can. I will bring you what news I may this even."

Edmund continued to gaze intently in Roger's face, as if he had scarcely yet comprehended what had happened. The Old Change was quiet enough now. The surging crowd had rolled like a great wave into Cheapside, and the tumult they made was deadened by the distance.

"Go in, lad," said Roger, softly, patting Edmund's shoulder. "Go in, and comfort thy mother. If thou wouldst fain do somewhat for him, do that. He would have done it, if it had been thou."

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Edmund went slowly in, like one walking in a dream. Roger remained a moment in the street, looking up into the clear sky. The thunderstorm overnight had given place to a bright spring day, quite warm and summer-like for the time of year.

"Are you *there*, old friend?" he said, in a faltering whisper. "Does it take long to go? Only half-an-hour sith I saw you in health and weal, looking forth from yonder casement! Nay, it cannot take long, that journey. 'To-day—to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.' Only, good Lord! help yon poor lad, and comfort they weak womenkind. They wants a deal o' comforting, does womenkind. And we don't always give it 'em—more pity!"

Roger went back slowly to the smithy, where Mildred showed such relief and delight at seeing him in safety as surprised him, even though he was beginning to think that she was not so indifferent to his existence as he had hitherto supposed.

"But if I could have saved him," he said to himself, "she would not have seen me again!"

Late that night, Master Costantyn was told in hushed tones, in a darkened room, that Astelyn the smith desired to speak to him. Edmund obeyed the summons quickly. He knew that he should hear all details now.

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"Good even, Master Edmund. How fares the mistress?"

"She is like a woman laid prostrate on the ground, Roger. I never thought it was in her to care so much. But methinks she will soon come round, for she hath shed no tears, only moaneth by nows and thens."

"She'll be longer for that," said the wiser man, with a shake of his head. "And Mistress Gunnora, what of her?"

"Oh, she doth nought but weep. She taketh it a deal worser than my mother."

"Humph!" Perhaps the blacksmith thought otherwise.

"And now, Roger, tell me. I can bear it. What did they with—him?"

"They strake off his head at the standard in Chepe."

Edmund groaned.

"Master Nym, me and some other have been after the body. It was all we could do now. I'd ha' made safe his poor dust, an' it had been in my power. But—you know."

Aye, Edmund Costantyn and Roger Astelyn both knew full well what was the ordinary fate of one who, however unjust the epithet, had suffered as a

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traitor. There was no grave for such an one. But he was deeply touched by the act, hopeless as it might have been, of these poor and powerless friends who thus showed their regard for his dead father.

"Dear Roger!" and Edmund broke down at last. "Good, true, faithful friend! Can I ever forgive myself the hard words I spake to you!"

"Nay, nay, Master! They were but like screams for-why the pain was too bad to bear. I knew better than to take 'em any other way. Eh, don't we miscall and undername[1] God many a time, and He knows it's only screaming, and sprinkles the blood o'er it! Good night, Master."

"Good night, dear friend. God bless thee!"

"And all of you, Master. But—Master Nym!"

"Well, Roger?"

"When the mistress and your little maid shall pass out o' th' City, you take 'em another gait than by Bowyers' Row." Having said which, Roger turned hastily away.

So Edmund knew then that it was on a pinnacle of Ludgate that his father's head was set.

He was sadly puzzled how to deal with his mother, who was developing a phase of character

[1] Blame, reproach.

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entirely new to him in her. He had been used to regard her as a model of propriety, moderation, and calmness. She had invariably taught her children to avoid extremes as the most objectionable of all things. They were welcome to feel any how they liked, so long as they did not show what they felt. Self-restraint was in her eyes the queen of virtues, and any thing approaching to energy and vehemence the one state of mind to be avoided.

And now she was exhibiting to the full the very temper against which she had taught them to struggle. Hitherto, when any one had been in trouble, Mistress Costantyn had been ready with a store of neat little aphorisms to show that sorrow and pain were the common lot of man; that nobody could hope to escape them; that people ought to control themselves, and not make an exhibition of their afflictions, but bear them with exemplary patience and humility, and not allow themselves to think much about them. And now the rod touched her, and she fainted. She seemed utterly unable to rouse herself, to shake off her grief, to come back to ordinary life. She shed no tears—it would have been better for her and those around her if she had done so. She only lay on her bed with her face turned to the wall, moaning at intervals, and refusing

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to be comforted. She had lost all, she said in heart-rending tones; and she would not open her eyes and see how much was left. What did anything matter to her but the one treasure which was gone? "Now therefore, O Lord, take away my life!" was the tacit language of heart and face and attitude. Even her young daughter Gunnora, when the first burst of horror and grief was past, was more calm and reasonable, more useful and thoughtful, than she.

It puzzled Edmund the more, since he failed to realise what an utterly new and strange thing sorrow was to his mother. Tears had never been her meat night and day, as they had been at several periods of her life to old Mistress Comberton. But Alice Costantyn had never wept over one grave; she had never even sustained a serious anxiety. Her parents were alive; her brother and sisters lived and were doing well; her husband had been exceptionally kind; her children had never troubled her beyond taking the measles or exhibiting an occasional fit of very moderate naughtiness. It was a new thing which had happened to her, and she was totally unprepared to meet it.

Every day, Edmund looked and hoped to see this unnatural condition of things break up and come to an end. But the days went on, and it did not. After

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considerable perplexity and thought, the idea grew upon him that perhaps the ladies at the Hood, who were her chief friends, might prove better and wiser comforters for his mother than he had done. He was also rather anxious to ascertain beyond doubt that things had calmed down, and that no subsequent trouble had come upon Alderman Northampton. So, on the morning of the twelfth of February, which was nine days after the riot that had cost his father's life, Edmund sallied forth for the first time since that event, and took his way through the familiar streets to the Stillyard.

The thought struck him as he passed down Watling Street, as it must always strike a mourner, of how very little consequence any one is to the world. The event which had draped all his life in mourning was of no moment outside his own door. He could have groaned within himself—

> "The grave no larger than others
> For other eyes to see,
> Hath made all earth and heaven
> One vaulted grave to me!"

And then it struck coldly on his heart, as it had done before, that there was and would be no grave to weep by. That was not one of the least pangs of this pain to him. Edmund Costantyn had to the full

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that Celtic reverence for the tomb which makes it the most terrible of Highland curses to say, "May he never come to his father's grave!"

As he came up to the Hood, even his absent mind was arrested by the appearance of the house. There was about it an indescribable air of bustle followed by desolation. The usual trim and tidy, not to say elegant and stately, look of everything was strangely wanting. Nobody seemed to have swept the threshold, and chips and straws lay untidily about. And when Edmund stepped under the archway, there was no smiling Simpkin instantly appearing from the porter's lodge. Surely, thought he, the whole family must have made a sudden flight. He struck the great bell, and it echoed with a loud hollow clang through the silent archway. Everything looked asleep and forlorn.

The bell was answered, not in any haste, by a middle-aged woman whose face was strange to Edmund, and who came from the interior of the house, beyond the archway. He thought she looked very grave when he gave his name, and asked if he might speak with Mistress Northampton.

Mistress Northampton, did he say? Yes—let him come in. He could see Mistress Northampton.

Edmund followed his guide up the stairs, into a

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little sitting-room where he had never been before. The room was empty, but a piece of embroidery, with the needle stuck in it, lying on the settle, showed traces of recent female occupation. He sat down, and watched the embers of the charred wood on the hearth,—looked without seeing them—until a soft, quiet footfall from a door behind him made him spring up and look round—not at Mistress Northampton.

Alice de Northampton stood before her betrothed, white and wan, heavy-eyed and very sorrowful. Something must have happened. Surely this was not all for his father!

"My mother bade me say——" Alice got no further. She had not offered any greeting. The "good morrow" was too much a mockery for such a day. And now, to each of them, the white sad face of the other, in which sorrow and at least capacity for sympathy were written, unlocked the floodgates. To him it was almost, and to her it was quite, the first face out of the family circle whose apathy or mirth had not seemed hard and cruel in that crushing anguish. Alice sat down suddenly, buried her face in her hands, and a few uncontrollable sobs broke from her before she could quiet herself. But her self-command was not small. It struck Edmund as con-

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trasted with his mother's practical lack of it, notwithstanding her much higher professions. In a minute or two Alice looked up again, to resume her broken sentence.

"My mother bade me say she would come anon. O Master Edmund, your father—and mine!"

"Good Mistress Alice, hath ill befallen Alderman Northampton? Sickerly I were well-nigh as sorrowful to hear it as aught could make me now."

"He is arrest of Sheriff Winchecombe, and conveyed forth of the City, — last night, Master Edmund."

"To what end, pray you?"

"God knoweth!"

Alice's tone was one of despair. But the words were taken up by somebody entering behind her, and echoed with a very different sound.

"God knoweth!" said old Mistress Comberton. "Therefore let His saints be glad. The key of the House of David is upon the shoulder of Him whose hands were pierced upon the cross. Aye me, what do they with the thorns of life for whom there is no Father?—Master Edmund, I give you God's blessing—a fairer greeting than 'good morrow.' Tell me, how doth your mother my mistress?"

"Very, very evilly, good Mistress. In truth, mine

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errand here, unwitting of your trouble, was to entreat you or Mistress Northampton to visit her to her comfort. But I cannot think to ask it now."

"Nay?—and wherefore?" returned the old lady. "Lad, their hearts bear not sorrow well whom it shutteth up to other sorrowing hearts. My daughter must speak for herself; but if it suit not her to return with thee, I will, and that full willingly."

"Mistress, I am full much beholden to you."

"Make no words of it, Master Edmund. And the little maid, how goes it with her?"

"Better than with my mother: a great flood, and then a drying up thereof."

"Aye, it is mostly so with the young. But not with thee," continued the shrewd old lady. "I see: the blow that hath fallen on thee hath been the accolade that struck thee into a man. Thou wert a boy up to this day, Edmund Costantyn."

"May be so, my mistress," said Edmund with a sad smile. "I dread not but other shall perceive that ere I do."

He turned to greet Mistress Northampton. Her eyes bore marks of many tears, but her voice did not falter, and her face was calm. She was quite ready to visit her afflicted friend, but if Mistress Comberton were willing, she thought she would prove the better

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comforter. So it was the old lady whom he escorted back to the shadow of St. Paul's.

Neither Edmund nor Alice was aware, as they parted with a ceremonious reverence, that each had taken a decided step forward in the esteem of the other. In fact, they had never seen each other's hearts till now. Alice had never hitherto shown the heroism which Edmund was disposed to admire; nor had she previously beheld in him any exhibition of those warm affections which were her ideal of perfection.

Edmund took Mistress Comberton up to his mother's room, and with a few words of explanation, left them together. He went out again himself. The fresh February air and sunshine, after nine days of indoor seclusion, had given a sensible relief to his physical sensations, which were becoming a distress to him, the source whereof he had not recognised. One of the hardships of this grief was that it did not bring with it that train of outside work and business which usually, whether we will or not, helps to distract our thoughts at times of bereavement. There could be no coffin, no funeral, no monument. The body of a traitor could have no burial: and, utterly undeserved as it was, under that awful stigma had Alderman Costantyn suffered.

For mourning, it was simply a question of select-

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ing the proper articles from his mother's house-stores, and setting the tailor and the maids to work. The person in whose hands all the planning lay was the head chamberer, for his mother would not brook a question, and Gunnora was too young to act.

More than one point was troubling Edmund at this time. His mother's sudden and complete dropping of the reins was showing bad results both in her daughter and in her servants. Had she been a lady of rank, with an educated gentlewoman at the head of the household who could have taken up the dropped reins and have driven on, it would have mattered less. But the head chamberer was not fitted by character for the work thus thrown upon her. The younger maids resented being ordered about by one, as they thought, no better than themselves; and Gunnora refused to be controlled, when her first sorrow was over, and she began to come back to common life. Even to Edmund himself, whose legal right over her, as his father's substitute, was unquestionable, she had given some pert answers which annoyed and astonished him considerably. She was manifestly suffering from the want of proper control; suffering all the more because the control held over her had been hitherto so strict. Edmund took a long walk out to Moor Fields, that he might

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think undisturbed. He was tired with his now unwonted exertions, yet his thoughts had not taken any decided purpose, when he turned the corner of Wood Street on his way home. In so doing, he nearly ran into the arms of Roger Astelyn.

"Why, well met!" said that worthy, with evident satisfaction. "I was come to look forth, partly after yon knave o' mine, Luke, that cometh not home with the brushes for the which I sent him, and partly to see if I could meet wi' you, Master. There be changes sith you went forth. You shall not find the house as you left it. Nay, now, look not scared, Master Nym! Changes be not always for the worser. This is not, any how. Mistress Dyneley hath resided[1] at your house."

"Mistress Dyneley! Egeline!"

This was the name of Edmund's eldest sister.

"Mistress Dyneley, and ne'er another," repeated the smith. "Do some good, I reckon. Em'line 'll not be so like to wear the mistress' nouches,[2] with Mistress Dyneley to look after her. And Gill 'll not sell cheese to folks at back door, neither."

"Did they so?" cried Edmund in horror. This was a state of things beyond his most sanguine apprehensions.

[1] Arrived from a journey. [2] Jewels.

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"I never tell no tales," said Roger in a tone severely virtuous, but with a wink of his left eye. "Only, you wit, Master, from our chamber casement we can see your back door. And as Mildred was a-saying last night, when young maids talk out o' chamber lattices with young fellows i' th' garden that hath a fiddle slung o'er their shoulders, and the mistress' daughter behind in the chamber, why, you see——"

"Roger! Roger! for pity's sake speak plain! Who talks thus from the lattice?—not Gun——"

"Whisht, Master Edmund! You'll be sorry anon. There's not much harm done yet. But, as Mildred saith, if man gave a bye-word[1] to Mistress Dyneley to see Gill abed ere she went to her own, and turn the key of Mistress Gunnora's chamber, why, there might be less than may be. Bless you, Master Nym, maids 'll be maids, and lads lads, right to th' end o' th' chapter. And when a young maid, too young to cut her wisdom teeth, seeth another but a little elder do this and that, trust me but she thinks it grand to do the like. They don't know, poor fools—how should they? Mistress Gunnora lacks nought but a kindly eye o'er her, and a firm hand. I'll not say what yon Gill lacks: only, if she mind not her

[1] Hint.

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fiddling, she'll lack turning forth o' th' door one o' these days. Best stop her ere she gets so far. Best for her too, poor simpleton!"

Edmund's thoughts were by no means calmer than before as he went into his own door. In the parlour Gunnora was sitting at work, and as he looked at her, she lifted up her head and met his eyes fully. No, there was not much harm done there.

"O Edmund, here is Egeline come!"

"So I heard as I came in, Nora. Where is she?"

"In the wardrobe, snybbing[1] Euphemia."

"Snybbing her!—whereof?"

"Every thing she doth, and did, and shall do. Go thou but up and hearken."

Edmund went up-stairs to see what the state of affairs might be. The sound of his sister's voice reached him as he neared the door of the wardrobe, or room in which were kept all the garments not in immediate wear.

"In charge, forsooth! Thou left in charge! Prithee, who was left in charge o' thee? Why, the casements have not been cleaned this month, and I reckon the tiles were scoured t'other side of Advent. And as to my mother's chamber, the dust upon the

[1] Scolding: the origin of *snub*.

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cupboard-ledge is thick enough to put in a pounce-box. When was her linen changed, quotha?"

"I bade Gillian change it yestre'en, Mistress."

"Didst stand o'er her while it were done?"

"Truly, nay."

"Then thou shouldst, for she ne'er did it. I'll stand o'er both Gill and thee, as thou shalt find out ere thou art a three hours elder. I'll send thee down anon to see to the dinner; and if it be five minutes late o' coming to table, or there be a dish not full rightly sauced, thou wilt have to reckon with me at after. Set in charge, good sonties!—O Nym, is that thou? I am fain to see thee."

"So am I thee, Egeline. When heardest the tidings?"

He could not make himself say what tidings.

"Anentis Father? From Master Baret, that is a friend of Fulk's, o' Thursday last i' th' even. Dear heart, what a time must you have had! But, Nym, I want to talk with thee. These lazy-bones o' maids lack stirring as much as e'er a pudding. Yon Euphemia saith Mother set her in charge of matters. Why, she might as well have set the cat. Is she not coming forth to see to all things? If not so, then I must. 'Tis full shameful the way Euphemia hath let all go to rack. The linen on these shelves is

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folden all awry, and not half lapped from the dust, and never a sprig of sweet herbs therein. If Mother come not forth quickly, I shall take matters into mine own hand while I am here."

"I pray thee do so, Lena, for I was taking much thought but now on that very thing."

Mistress Dyneley looked for a moment at her brother; and it struck her also that the boy had become a man.

Edmund did not tell Egeline all that he had heard from the blacksmith. He only dropped a hint that he feared Gillian's influence was not for good over Gunnora.

"They lack more to do, the pair of 'em!" said Mistress Dyneley. "I'll see to 'em. Thou mayest lie abed an' thou list, Nym, so far as that goeth. I came not here to count my fingers, nor to stare out o' th' casement at old Roger's hammer. Nora had best mend her manners, ere she lose 'em all i' th' gutter; and as to Gill, I'll put an ape in her hood,[1] though she be as bold as blind Bayard.[2] Dear heart, but to see the fallacy and overthwartness of these young giglots![3] I'd best go in and see to Mother

[1] Equivalent to "put a spoke in her wheel."
[2] A proverb then current. Bayard means a bay horse.
[3] Giggling, foolish girls.

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now. She'll ne'er break her fast of a morrow, nor get a shred of clean linen about her, if I look not after all with mine eyes; and if every porringer in the house be mashed, it shall be no skill[1] to me. But I cannot tarry here for ever. Nym, thou must get thee a wife ere more travail be."

"Hush, Egeline!" said her brother in a troubled tone. "This is no time to talk of marriage and feasting."

"I never so much as named feasting. There'll be little enough to feast on, or feast with belike, if thou bestir not thyself, and that quickly. The quern[2] is out of gear, and that last meal sent from the mill isn't fit for volatilis[3] to eat. Deary me, but this house doth lack some seeing to! And the trenchers be all to pieces, and the silver platters battered as they might have played club-ball[4] with 'em; and well-nigh every pillow-bearer[5] all to-rent while you may thrust your hand through. Nym, thou wist not how things be going! Thou must get thee a wife, without I give Mother no peace till she come forth."

"Take thine own way, Lena: I will uphold thee," said Edmund wearily. "Only leave Mother be. As for me, it may serve thee to wit—what I thought

[1] No wonder. [2] Hand-mill. [3] Fowls.
[4] The original of cricket. [5] Pillow-case.

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thou hadst known aforetime—that I am handfasted to Mistress Alice de Northampton. The wedding should have been this spring, if——"

Edmund's voice grew husky, and he left the sentence unfinished.

"Well-a-day! that's a fair hearing!" cried his sister. "Alice de Northampton! can she do aught but play with red and yellow threads, trow? I mind her, a small shy lass that had no wit of her head, so far as I might know. But she'll be grown elder and wiser by now, I trust. Well! she'll lack some skill when she cometh to rule *this* house, without changes be from this present."

Edmund turned silently away. Mistress Dyneley, whose hands were not idle while she talked, for she was busily employed in folding the house linen in canvas wrappers to keep the dust from it, called him back before he was out of hearing. With a slight sigh he turned again.

"Nym! is there verily need wherefore thou shouldst put off thy wedding beyond a month or twain? Of course, matters must be fetise and convenable:[2] but truly, looking how things be——"

"Egeline, how canst thou!" cried Edmund, stung

[1] Betrothed.

[2] In good taste and according to propriety.

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into more demonstration of feeling than was his wont. "Think of such matters, when my father hath no grave but the pinnacles of Ludgate, and hers lies in some dungeon, in danger of death! I should be a savage to ask it of her!"

Egeline's lip curled slightly. "Poesy is all very well in its way, Nym," said she, coolly: "but I tell thee the trenchers be to bits and the pillow-bearers rags; and thou'lt not amend neither the one nor the tother by rhymes and troubadours' lays."

"Then have in tailors and turners!" said Edmund almost contemptuously. "I can afford to pay them."

"It is not them we lack, Nym, but the eyes o'er them, and the tongue at them."

"Thou supply the last, and I will see to the first!" and Edmund turned quickly away, and declined to be called back.

"I can do that!" said Mistress Dyneley with considerable veracity, addressing the submissive Euphemia, who was helping her in silence and subjection, to which she had been rapidly reduced by the article the supply of which was thus guaranteed: "but, wala wa! these men wit nought! I reckon they think holes can darn themselves, and vessels of all sorts shall last for ever. Alice de Northampton, forsooth! She has wrought some

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comely arras,[1] I dread little; and I'll aventure to say she can broider none so ill, and in likelihood play the cithern,[2] and recount the aventures of the Knight of the Swan and the brave deeds of Sir Galahad on the Quest of the Saint Graal. But, mercy me! I'd be sorry to eat a dinner she had dressed! I dare be bound she wotteth how to dress herself—if I went to see her, I'll lay a gold ouche[3] I should find her donned o' silk baldekyn guarded o' miniver, and a girdle o' gold around her: but I set no faith of her darning holes nor stitching up o' tatters. Nym's looked too high, that's what he's done. Her father was twice Lord Mayor, and if that have not stuck her up as proud as a peacock, my name's not Egeline Dyneley! He'd a deal better have matched in his own degree. There's my master's kinswoman, Stephanet Dyneley, that should have fitted him to a T, and we'd have been glad enough to get her off our hands, trust me. She maketh and meddleth till I am aweary o' my life, and I'd be thankful to help her to a good match. But no! Master Nym's not for her, nor none like her. Only my Lord Mayor's daughter (that was) shall content him, trow. I make no count of such conceits."

[1] Tapestry-work. [2] Guitar. [3] Ornament.

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The silent Euphemia was privately amused as Mistress Dyneley thus exhibited her latent intentions. She did not express either this sentiment, or its companion misgiving, how far the dependant orphan Stephanet would have endorsed her cousin's description of her actions, or have felt gratified to be handed over in this manner to the first man who would take her. But this last consideration was held of no account in the fourteenth century. Egeline did not leave her to pursue her meditations long.

"Soothly, I marvel what Nym would be at! I'm as careful to do meetly afore folk as any. I wouldn't have a wedding next day after a funeral. But when you have had a deal of doole and sorrow is just when you lack a bit o' cheer. This is but February; and why he should not be wed o' April or June—May, of course, I'd not say, for that's unlucky—why he should not, by reason of doole that's all o'er and past, I tell thee, Euphemia, it passeth *me!* I'd ha' thought he'd ha' been glad of the excuse, belike. Wala wa! but this is a weary house to come to! Mother of her bed, laid a-moaning, and will take no comfort, the saints wot wherefore! and Nym all of a heat if I do but ask him to be a bit cheerier; and Nora a piece of impudence that lacks putting down of a strong hand and keeping in her place—I'm full weary of my

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work, I can tell thee! I'll not be long ere I go home, trust me. If Nym 'll not wed, as he should, I'll send for Muriel."

Muriel Palmer was the second sister, who had married before Egeline—an affront which her sister was inclined to resent. She lived rather further away.

"I wish you would!" said Euphemia to herself. She knew that to say it to Egeline Dyneley would be the way *not* to bring it about. But if Egeline were weary of reigning, Euphemia was far more so of being reigned over.

It is hardly fair to say that Egeline was desirous of laying aside the cares of government. She liked governing and administrating, and nature had fitted her for the exercise; but she also liked bustle, cheerfulness, and excitement, and these were not to be had in her brother's house at present. Her triumphal chariot made a great deal of noise and dust as it rolled along, and the noise and dust were to her essential parts of the triumph. As circumstances stood, she was very uncomfortable. She was angry with her mother because she did not bestir herself and lay aside her sorrow, angry with Edmund because he did not either marry or insist on his mother's resuming her family cares, and angry with Gunnora because she was young and thought-

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less. So Egeline soon discovered that there were excellent reasons why she could not be absent from home any longer, and having despatched a man on horseback into Hertfordshire with a message requesting her sister to come and supply her place until one of the two desirable circumstances should happen, she prepared to depart. But one thing she was determined to do before leaving—to see and judge for herself of her brother's affianced wife. If Alice were not in her eyes the suitable helpmeet for Edmund, trust her to get the engagement set aside and Stephanet Dyneley substituted. Egeline had been sorely puzzled what to do with Stephanet: and here was a most providential opening!

How ready we all are to see providential openings of those doors which we want to open, and Divine leadings in that way which we have prepared for ourselves to walk in!

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CHAPTER VI.

EDMUND KEEPS HIS FAITH.

> "Strength is born
> In the deep silence of long-suffering hearts;
> Not amidst joy."
>
> —FELICIA HEMANS.

IT was a bright, warm day at the end of March, when Edmund Costantyn and Egeline Dyneley paid their visit at the Hood. Edmund had, in the interval, never seen Alice once—rather to his disappointment, for she was beginning to interest him. To him she was like an unexplored island, whose green waving woodlands and blue inland mountains were visible from the salt sea of which the voyager was becoming tired. But it was thought quite unnecessary in the fourteenth century that betrothed persons should have any opportunity given them of making acquaintance with each other. Not for worlds would Edmund have outraged his father's memory or scandalised his mother's feelings by even

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suggesting such an event as his marriage during the first year of mourning. Yet he was conscious of a latent sensation that if it could have taken place before the riot, there would have been some comfort in Alice's help and presence. That is, of course, supposing that Alice turned out according to his hopes.

The visitors were shown into Mistress Northampton's private boudoir, which opened out of the hall, and communicated, as was then usual, with her bedchamber. She was herself in the room, at work; and Mistress Comberton entered before they had been there many minutes.

Morning calls were not then limited to the mere glimpse of one's friends to which they have now descended. They usually lasted an hour or two; and not to invite the guests to participate in the next meal, whatever it might be, was considered a want of hospitality of which no gentlewoman would willingly be guilty. They were therefore pretty sure of seeing Alice, if she were at home.

But time passed on, and Alice put in no appearance. Egeline, who wanted to study her more closely than across half a dozen people at the dinner-table, and who was not shy of expressing her wishes, at last inquired if she were not to have the pleasure of renewing the acquaintance. To her surprise,

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Alice's mother gave a rather hesitating answer. Alice was very busy that morning; they would see her at dinner; nevertheless, if Mistress Dyneley wished it——

Mistress Dyneley decidedly wished it, and said so. Her curiosity was piqued, and she thought Alice was kept out of her way. Nor was she at all troubled by that sense of delicacy which would have hampered Edmund in like circumstances. Mistress Northampton rang her little hand-bell, and the girl who immediately appeared was desired to fetch Mistress Alice.

Edmund had just taken the opportunity, while the other ladies were conversing, to ask Mistress Comberton in a low tone if any thing had been heard of the Alderman's fate.

A look of wistful pain came into the mother's eyes.

"But this," said she, with quiet patience, "that he is taken to Corfe Castle, in Dorset, there to await the King's pleasure. A long way off, Master Edmund, —a long way!"

"A shorter than my father," said Edmund softly.

"Sickerly, nay," answered the old lady. "Methinks at times Heaven is nearer than earth. Nor dread we any coming trouble for them that God takes there."

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The thought crossed the young man's mind, whether she would say so if he were taken there. But his thoughts were diverted from the subject by the lifting of the arras, and the appearance of Alice from behind it.

Alice courtesied to her mother and grandmother, kissed Egeline, and courtesied again ceremoniously to Edmund. She brought on her arm a little basket covered with red velvet and adorned with silver cords, from which she took out a piece of embroidery, and at once occupied both her hands and her eyes. It was just what Egeline wished, for she could study her at leisure. Her thoughts ran much as follows.

"Alice has the better figure, but Stephanet the prettier face. I like the colour of Alice's hair best. She carries herself well, too. I wish she would talk: I want to see what she has in her. She is as mute as a fish, but of course she would be, with the elder ladies in the room. If I could get at her by myself! She shows no feeling, no interest of any sort. She is not idle; I like that. But I wish she would lift her eyes."

Just as Egeline arrived at that point, the grey eyes were lifted. Only for a moment:—they flashed out a response to Edmund's remark to her mother that "we love that we lose at times better than that we

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keep," and then they were dropped again with a slight blush, as if their owner were uneasy at having shown any feeling. Egeline was uneasy also. Was the feeling entirely for the sentiment, or was any of it for the speaker? She watched Edmund for a few minutes in turn. His manifest deference to the elder ladies was nothing which need alarm her. But she did not at all like the perceptible softness of his tone when he addressed Alice, and his one or two attempts to draw her into the conversation were most improper. Alice, however, was proof against his endeavours. She replied in monosyllables when spoken to, and gave all her attention to the primroses which were growing in yellow silk upon her violet satin cushion.

At last dinner was announced. Mistress Northampton marshalled her guests and family, placing Egeline on her right hand and Edmund at her left. The former was extremely annoyed that the irrevocable rules of precedence placed Mistress Comberton beside her, and set Alice next to Edmund. She watched the affianced pair during the whole meal like a lynx. And the conclusion at which she arrived was that Stephanet's chance was very poor indeed.

But why did Mistress Northampton seem so anxious to keep them apart? She could not hinder

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their proximity at dinner, the laws of etiquette being rigid as those of the Medes and Persians: but the instant they rose from table she dismissed Alice to the still-room, taking her guests back to the boudoir. Egeline was puzzled, and though she meditated deeply about it on the way home, she had come to no satisfactory conclusion when the door was reached.

Two days later, Mrs. Palmer arrived. As Egeline was to depart the next day, she wanted a long talk with her sister first. Muriel was much quieter in manner than Egeline, and of an entirely different disposition. Her interest in others was interest, while that of her sister was a compound of selfish amusement and love of meddling. She thought far worse of her mother's condition than Egeline had done. Mistress Costantyn had so far resumed her usual habits as to leave her bed and come among her children, but she scarcely spoke, and seemed disturbed and irritated if they spoke to her. She kept a piece of work at hand, into which she occasionally put a few stitches, but she had never worked long before it sank upon her lap, and she was seen gazing dreamily out of the window or into the fire. As to taking the rule of the household again, she appeared incapable of doing it, for her attention

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never stayed for two minutes together on any subject save her own sorrowful reveries. As time went on, she grew less necessary to her own children, and was more and more left out of the family calculations. It distressed Muriel and Edmund exceedingly: but Egeline was too self-absorbed, and Gunnora too thoughtless, to perceive it.

The night before her departure, Egeline took her sister into her own room, and having bolted the door, sat down for the long talk which she had promised herself. She impressed strongly upon Muriel the utter incapacity of Euphemia, the deceitfulness of Emeline, the horrible giddiness of Gillian, the pert speeches and conceit of Gunnora. Last she came to Edmund.

"And I give thee to wit, sister, my mind is sore disturbled anentis the lad. Nought I can say will win him to wed afore the year be run out——"

"Of course not!" was Muriel's answer, in so surprised a tone that Egeline, who always agreed with her company when she wished to gain a point, felt she had made a mistake and must retrieve it.

"Aye, of course!" she assented, quickly. "Yet I could wish, for his comfort, he had wed afore all this had happed."

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"Can he not be trusted to see to his comfort himself? Most men can," answered Muriel, quietly.

"Dost thou not see, Muriel, I fear he shall blunder thereanent? This Alice, to which he is handfasted, is not for him. He were better a thousand times wed Stephanet, my cousin, which is a fairer lass, and capable: and if her old uncle were to think on her"—which Egeline knew was extremely unlikely—"she might come to have a pretty pennyworth. But Alderman Northampton, look you, is under a black cloud, and not like to come forth. Sickerly, it is my belief that they be now living but of alms from Master William Comberton, her uncle; for the old gentlewoman's dower should never serve for all—not as they live. All his lands be forfeit, and how else can it be? So, see thou, Alice is like enough to have never a penny to her fortune, and therefore I say she is not for Nym. I would have him do better than so. And if, as is most like, the Alderman be attaint, do but think of the disgrace whereto we should ally!"

"What saith Nym thereabout?" was Muriel's short but significant answer.

Egeline would have thanked her to ask any other question than that. She had too strong a suspicion

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that Edmund would not see the matter as she did, to dare to broach it to him.

"Muriel, folks see not alway whither their profit lieth. And when a young man hath set his mind on a maiden, thou mayest as well talk to the peacock."

"Oh, he hath so?" said Muriel, shrewdly. "Then, Lena, I would let him be."

"Nay, I say not Nym hath; but I am feared. Seest thou not, all his profit lieth the other way?"

"Nay, I do but see that his gain lieth the other way."

"Good sonties! what is profit but gain?"

"A deal more, methinks. But I see not, Lena, that this is thy concernment, neither mine."

"Not our concernment, that we see to our only brother's profit and welsomeness? Muriel!"

"It seems to me, Lena, that his welsomeness were best secured by letting him alone. If he desire to wed thy cousin Stephanet, cannot he say so much?"

"Aye, but if he feel himself bounden!"

"I dread neither thy scissors nor mine shall cut that knot. Leave Edmund to untie it, if he will. And if he would not, why, then we only do mischieffully to meddle therewith."

"But, Muriel, there is another matter," and Egeline's voice dropped into a deeply interested tone

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"Wist thou, it is my sicker belief that Mistress Northampton would fain put a stop thereto."

"Let her put it, then, if Nym agree thereto."

"Muriel, thou shouldst cause a saint swear!"

"Sister Lena, I have many times been sorry that I did a thing, but not nigh so oft that I left it be. I will ask Nym his wish thereanent——"

"Nay, now, do be avised, and let *that* be!"

"For what reason? Whate'er I do shall be true and above-board. I will ask Nym, and according to his answer shall my doing be."

From that point Muriel declined to move. And Egeline returned to Hampstead with a painful conviction that the thing she feared had been rather helped than hindered by her conversation with her sister.

Mrs. Palmer took an early opportunity to ask her question, the first time that she could speak quietly alone with her brother. She found that he too had noticed the peculiar behaviour of Alice's mother and had been perplexed and pained. But of any intention of resigning Alice, so far as in him lay, his sister perceived that he had not the remotest idea.

The discovery that Egeline also had seen Mistress Northampton's attempt to keep Alice out of the way, distressed Edmund greatly, for it showed

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him as a patent fact that which he had been trying hard to persuade himself was his own fancy. But it was not Edmund's way to let unpleasant things drag on in a state of suspense. He would face it and have it out with her. Perhaps it was not unnatural that Alice seemed more precious and worth having as the apparent probability receded into further distance.

He walked up to the Hood the next day, and requested a private interview with Mistress Northampton. She received him in her boudoir. Any news of the Alderman? was naturally the first question. There was no change as to that. Edmund talked uneasily for a few moments about the state of trade and the weather, and then suddenly flung off the mask, and came and stood before her.

"Mistress Northampton, I came hither to ask you a question."

She looked up, and instantly saw that the question was no light one.

"It is seven full years," said Edmund, firmly but quietly, "sith my father and your husband agreed to the handfasting betwixt me and Mistress Alice. Do you desire to set it aside, and why?"

Mistress Northampton drew a deep breath. But she answered in a strategic manner.

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"What have I done that you count it so?"

"You never suffer us to meet," was the reply. "Answer me, I pray you, and delay no longer. Do you wish to undo it?—or does she?"

"She! Alice will do my bidding."

"Then tell me, what is your bidding? Beat not about the bush, old friend! Tell me what you mean."

Mistress Northampton folded up her work, laid it on the table, and clasped her hands on her knee.

"Edmund, you have guessed full justly. It is best at an end."

"Wherefore say you so?" replied Edmund in evident distress. "What have I shown you that leads you thus to spurn me?"

"Nothing, dear Nym, nothing!" was the answer with sudden warmth of kindly feeling. "But"—the tone returned to its stiffness and constraint—"it were better at an end."

Edmund took a restless turn up and down the room, and then, coming back, resumed his former position.

"Mistress Northampton, I must know why. I have a right to ask it."

She was silent.

"Have you some higher or better match in view?" he asked, a little bitterly.

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"Sickerly, nay! This were unlikely time for that."

"Doth Mistress Alice mislike me?"

A faint smile flickered about the corners of her mother's lips for a second. "She hath not said so much."

"Then what reason *can* you have?" broke out Edmund, losing all the calm surface which he inherited from his mother, and the warm under-current of his father's nature showing through it. "You *must* tell me."

Neither of them saw that the arras was slightly agitated, or heard a soft footfall at the door, as if somebody had come up to enter, and hearing the voices, had withdrawn.

"I will tell you, if you will accept my reason."

"I cannot give a for-word in the dark."

"You will have to accept it, so take your answer Edmund Costantyn, your mother was my dearest friend, from very childhood. When you were hand-fasted to Alice, you went above your station, not below it, for both her fortune and family were better than yours."

"I know it, and would not presume thereon."

"But if you wed her now, you marry into an attainted house, as all future likelihood showeth; you wed poverty and pain and shame. All the hopes of

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your life should be brought to nought. You can never hope to rise nor prosper. I will not so bring down my friend's son. The less you see one of the other the better: you have not seen enough yet to care over much. Trust me, I do for your own welsomeness; and twenty years hence, you shall be the first to say so. The world is before you now: would you have it turn its back upon you and scorn you at the very threshold of your life? If you could have borne her up, it had been other matter; for, poor child! she will have much to bear. But she would only drag you down. Now, Edmund, you have your answer."

"I have. Will you take yours?"

"I know not what you can have to say."

"That you will hear, if I have leave to speak."

"Speak, my boy. It will be the last time." And a tear dropped on the embroidery.

"Then suffer me to say, Madam"—Edmund seemed to have forgotten that he was not now addressing a Lady Mayoress—"that may God defend twenty years hence, or an hundred years if so were, should show me so evil a man as you seem to think they may. You talk of shame: is there any shame like a broken faith? You speak of poverty: can there be any worser than poverty of soul that cannot meet the

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scorn of men for a right deed? You speak of pain: which think you should be the greater of the two?—to lose my wife's fortune, or to lose my wife? Aye, and therewith to lose all my respect for mine own self, and to feel me a craven wretch ever thereafter, that set more store by the words of men than by the will of God? Madam, if there be some other reason that you have not told me—if I have unhappily done any displeasure to you or to Mistress Alice, the which you cannot pardon—though in very deed I knowledge no such a thing—then will I not say a word, but take my punishment and bear it. But if that you have spoken be all against me that you have—why, then, suffer me to repeat that I may lose my good name and my good fortune, but, God aiding me, I keep my faith."

Edmund was so engrossed with his own feelings that he had not heard the entrance of Mistress Comberton.

"There's a man for you!" said she, a little drily. "The most of 'em are waxen images."

Mistress Northampton looked up with tears in her eyes. "Edmund Costantyn, I never knew so much was in you!"

"It was in, Parnel, but it lacked bringing out," said the old lady. "Go thy ways, lad—never mind

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this woman—and if thou shouldst look into the still-room on thy way forth, and wert to find Alice there, —well, I reckon it could not be helped."

"Mother, Mother!"

"Thou hold thy peace, Parnel. Let us make one pair of folks happy in the midst of trouble, if God give us leave. There's not so much well-pleasantness in this world we need cross it unneedfully, child." Then, as Edmund left the room with a smiling good-bye, she added,—"There's the right stuff in that lad, Parnel. And I think thou shouldst have blundered, for Alice's sake."

"I thought not much harm was done, if it were stayed at once," said Mistress Northampton. "And so being, I could not think to sacrifice Nym."

"There be many kind of sacrifices," said the old lady. "But I reckon things 'll get them settled this morrow, Parnel. And I cannot say I rue sorely to put down yon Mistress Dyneley."

About an hour later, a scratch on the door preceded the re-entrance of Edmund to the boudoir. He knelt down by Mistress Northampton and kissed her hand.

"I entreat a boon of you," said he. "Let me come back on mine old footing—nay, rather on a better, as a son of the house, to do so far as may be

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in his place who methinks would give me leave to do it."

Mistress Northampton laid her hand upon his head, blessed him, and cried a little.

"Be all matters right in the still-room?" asked Mistress Comberton gravely.

"All but the water of canel,"[1] replied Edmund with equal gravity. "Mistress Alice says that is spoilt."

"Ah! It is full warm weather for this season of year," responded the old lady in the same tone.

At a later hour, Mistress Northampton ventured a remonstrance to her mother-in-law as respected this summary proceeding. She had not been prepared to go either so fast or so far, and her ideas of the absolute submission due on Alice's part were rather stronger than those of the old lady.

"Ah, Parnel, thou art not where I am," said Mistress Comberton with an answering smile. "Sixty stands of the hill-top, when five-and-thirty is labouring up the side of the mountain. And the world, child—what matter for the world? First seek man the worship[2] of God; then to make other happy then his own best welfare. And if, after that, there be a corner of the satin to spare, why, he may broider it

[1] Cinnamon. [2] Glory, honour, respect.

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with the good fame of the world if he will. I wouldn't."

"Aye, but I pray you, good Mother, is there not meetness in all things? And surely the world must think well of a man if he be to prosper therein."

"What is prosperity?" was the thoughtful answer. "Is it money in thy coffer, or gladness in thine heart? Paul reckoned him well apaid with food and raiment. And think on, Parnel, who asketh thee 'whether life is more than meat, and the body than the cloth?'[1] I would not have our Alice come short of food and raiment. But I reckon she may be as warm in serge as in silk, and maybe carry a lighter heart under it beside. Howbeit, that is beside the mark. It was Nym, methinks, not Alice, for whom thou wert busy?"[2]

"Soothly, Mother. If Nym wedded with Amana Peche or Philippa de Burnham, they should bear him well up when he had need; both two of them shall have a pretty penny to their fortunes. But Alice will have never a halfpenny to all likelihood, and shall drag him down. And you know, Alice Costantyn was mine earliest and dearest friend, and I would not have her son suffer by me or mine."

"Well, this world hath some bats therein!" drily

[1] Matt. vi. 25. [2] Concerned, interested.

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answered Mistress Comberton. "Bear *him* up, Parnel! Drag *him* down! I dare reckon they should bear up the cordwanery[1] the better, and pay for heavier store of fine shoe-buckles and gay cracowes. But that's not *him*, woman! I have nought against Amy Peche, save and except that there's little pith in her—she should lack bearing rather than bear. But Philippa should drag him down an hundred fathom deeper than our Alice. She should wear his sotlars and botews,[2] and rate him if they were not principal.[3] And that's not the way to bear a husband up, Parnel."

"Truly, nay, Mother."

"Edmund may speak for himself. If he loveth better a gay wife with store of money in her pocket, and to have an hundred marks run through his coffer in the week, rather than a sweet voice to comfort and a brave heart to endure,—why, let him take Philippa Burnham and end it. But if he would rather have food and cloth, shelter and comfort, peace at home and gladness without, then let him keep to our Alice. She is worth a fair score of Philippa. And he hath chosen, Parnel."

"Aye." But Mrs. Northampton still looked dis-

[1] Shoe-making business. [2] Low shoes and high boots. [3] The very best.

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satisfied. She was a matter-of-fact woman, and though in this instance her own daughter was to benefit by it, she thought Edmund Costantyn exceedingly quixotic. "Soothly, if we let him go, well I wis we could not get another match for Alice, as matters stand now. And without a penny of her pocket, what convent should take her? Never a one of the good houses. Surely, for Alice it is best as it is. So I'll leave it be, Mother. Edmund hath not me to fault,[1] any way. And after all said—" the voice took a softer tone—"it was Jack made the match, with Master Costantyn. And one of them's in Heaven, and——" The voice choked altogether.

"And the other in God's hands, as we are," said the old lady, in a quiet tone. "There is no sweeter place, my child, and none safer. 'No man may ravish from My Father's hand.'[2] Yea, 'the Lord made all things, whatsoever things He would, in heaven and in earth, in the sea, and in all depths of waters.'[3] We have a great King to our Father, Parnel."

"O Mother, you shame me!" said Mistress Northampton with a heavy sigh. "I cannot tell how it is, we be all so diverse. Here is Alice Costantyn laid of her bed, or as evil, moaning all the day, and

[1] Find fault with. [2] John x. 29. [3] Ps. cxxxv. 6.

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unfit for aught. Here am I, that can go about and see to matters, and smile and talk like other folk, yet at times fairly broke down when I think on my poor Jack, and what is like to come of him. And you, that are his own mother, you seem safe and sure, as though you had somewhat more to hold by than we."

The old lady was gazing out of the window with a far-away look in her eyes.

"Aye," she said in a low, dreamy tone, as if speaking to herself, "it makes a deal of difference whether man see the rainbow round about the Throne, or only the clouds round about it. Yet the colour of the smaragdin[1] runneth over upon the clouds. Somewhat to hold by—aye, well said, Parnel. And it matters not nigh so much how thou holdest, as it doth what thou hast to hold by. It must be an 'anchor sicker to the soul, going in to the inner things of hiding.'[2] And there's somewhat beyond that, too. When thou bearest about a little babe, who doth the holding, thou or he?"

"I, sickerly, Mother."

"Verily. Parnel, my child, it is easier to be held than to hold. It was good counsel that Jude Scarioth[3] gave to the princes of priests and their fellowship—

[1] Emerald. [2] Heb. vi. 19. [3] Iscariot.

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'Hold ye Him,'[1] had it been meant and taken rightly. But 'Thou, Lord, shalt keep us,'[2] is better."

"You be elder, Mother," responded Mistress Northampton a little uneasily. She realised, and did not like it, the nature of the difference between them. Yet Mistress Northampton was a good, God-fearing woman: but during the years of her husband's mayoralty, the thorns which choke the Word had been coming up fast, and the ground was not bringing forth so much fruit as it had once done.

"Aye, I am elder," said Mistress Comberton quietly. "But, Parnel, my dear daughter, is there nought else? What if I be nearer? There is such a thing as trying to wrestle thyself out of God's arms, thinking perversely that thou art no babe, but canst walk alone. Sometimes, when we do that, He'll put us down a bit to try."

"And then, Mother?" was the question asked in a softer tone.

"Then, dear heart, as it was with Ezekias[3]—that we may know what is in our hearts. The Lord knew full well what was in Ezekias' heart; it was Ezekias that did not know. And it is not a lovesome sight—man's heart isn't, Parnel. Best ask Him to

[1] Matt. xxvi. 48. [2] Ps. xii. 8. [3] Hezekiah.

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take thee up again, afore thou hast hurt thee by falling far."

"Mother, meant you to say that my sins had brought this on us all?"

"Nay, dear heart, never! Write not down evil things against thyself, dear daughter. Let us each and all have a care to get rid of our sins; but never take thou up thought of God as though He were a catchpoll,[1] watching to see thee trip, and give thee a blow there and then,—aye, well nigh pleased to find the means whereby to hit thee. The Lord's dealings fit all round, Parnel. It may be good for thee that thou have sorrow at this season, but it is not therefore evil for the rest of us. And it pleaseth not Him to hurt us, more than it pleaseth thee to whip Jem. Thou countest not that among thy pleasures, I reckon, though for Jem's good and happiness thou canst not let it be. Aye, 'what son is it whom the father chasteniseth not?'"[2]

Edmund Costantyn walked down to his counting-house one bright morning in June. That he should take upon himself his dead father's business of a shoemaker had been at first intensely distasteful to him. Had he lived at the present day, he would almost certainly have chosen the Church as his pro-

[1] Policeman. [2] Heb. xii. 7.

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fession; the only other choice which lay open to him. For in the fourteenth century, with rare exceptions, and those mostly due to the exceptional favour of some royal or noble patron, a man must be what his father had been, at least in respect to the class of business to which he was tied down. To be a priest, moreover, meant to give up all thought of marriage, and Edmund could not in honour do that, to say nothing of his own personal liking. Still, the shoemaking business was not at all to his taste. Study was his natural bent, and that of the abstruse sort: for figures he had no turn; and both taste and inexperience entirely disqualified him for judging between different leathers, or discerning what kind of goods were likely to command the best market. Under these circumstances he left much at first in the hands of his father's experienced and skilful manager, John Blyton, whom he knew he could thoroughly trust. For many weeks, now, whenever Edmund had appeared at the counting-house, which he forced himself to do nearly every day, one of his first sights had been the pleasant face of Blyton, coming to give an account to his young master of yesterday's proceedings, and his prospects and intentions for to-day. But on this June morning Edmund let himself in

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with his letter-key,[1] and found the counting-house empty. He sat down at his desk and worked in silence for half an hour, when he rose and went into the shop to look for his manager. Blyton was nowhere to be seen.

"Driver!" called Edmund to one of his shopmen, "where is gone Blyton?"

"Master, I wis not. He hath ne'er come this morrow. Mefeareth he may be sick."

"I will go round to his house and see."

And Edmund went down Lambert Hill, with a sore misgiving as to what would become of his business, if it lost Blyton's watchful and skilled eye and ready hand.

As he came up to Blyton's house he met a man whom he knew to be his manager's next neighbour.

"Ah, Master Costantyn! You be come after John Blyton?"

"Truly, that am I. Is he took sick?"

"Leave out the sick, and you have it."

"Took—took where? How?"

"The saints know, Master. The catchpolls come for him of early morrow; took him off, with never so

[1] An ancient invention in the form of a safety lock, by which letters of the alphabet were stamped on various rings of metal, and only on their being arranged to form a particular word would the key attached act upon the lock.

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much as a 'by your leave,' all as he were—scarce gave him leave to do on his cap,—ill luck take 'em!"

"For why?" demanded Edmund, in utter amazement.

"I wis no more than he doth, Master, and he said that were nought."

Edmund stared blankly at his informant.

"There's a bit more behind, too," observed Blyton's neighbour, chewing a sprig of rosemary which he had plucked from a bush that came over his garden wall. "I'm sorry, for they've got enough now."

"Whoso? For pity's sake, go on."

"Well—you know Master Robert Comberton, saddler, o' Monkeswell Street,—brother unto Alderman Northampton, the Lord Mayor that was?"

"Aye—aye," said Edmund hastily.

"Well, they ha' ta'en him too."

"Master Robert Comberton! His poor mother! She will have two sons, then, in durance?"

"It's a bad job," said the man, plucking another sprig of rosemary, which he proceeded to pull in pieces.

"But what have they *done?*" exclaimed Edmund.

"Saints knoweth,"[1] was the short answer. "Least-

[1] The use of the singular verb with the plural nominative was at this time a peculiarity of the Southern dialect.

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wise, I hope so. It 'd be a comfort to think some of them did that's above, for there does not seem much help below. Better mind your fiddling, Master Costantyn. Folks taketh note now-o'-days that you are a deal at the Hood. The clouds groweth thicker o'er yonder."

"Of course I am," was Edmund's answer. "Methought folks knew I was handfasted to Alderman Northampton's daughter."

The rosemary-puller emitted a long whistle.

"So you are going on with that?" said he, significantly. "My troth, Master, but you are either a marvellous brave man or a full foolhardy. There's not many men would dare a wedding with Alderman Northampton's daughter, now."

"The more reason I should keep my faith," said Edmund with quiet firmness. "Can you tell me, friend Kyrieshaw,[1] whither Master Comberton and John Blyton be taken?"

"Taken to join the Alderman. Whither that is, belike you wit better than I."

"To Corfe Castle? St. Mary be our aid! That is heavy news. It shall scarce go any better with the Alderman for it."

[1] The modern form of this name is Kershaw.

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"It's never been like to go well. Good-morrow, Master Costantyn."

Instead of following Kyrieshaw's advice to take care of himself, Edmund turned into Thames Street and made straight for the Hood. He wanted to break the news there, before they should hear it from less kindly lips. He found them entirely ignorant, and disposed to be rather incredulous at first—all but one. The old mother of the imprisoned brothers accepted the fact at once, and instantly took refuge in her usual shelter, under the shadow of the Almighty. Well it is in time of trouble for those who are so accustomed to run into that strong tower, that they need not weary themselves in searching for it.

"I am bounden to thee, Nym, my dear lad," said she, having long dropped all ceremony in that quarter. "Meseemeth it cometh heavy, this storm. Maybe it shall last the shorter time. And if not—'Thy way in the sea, and Thy paths in many waters, and Thy steps shall not be known.'[1] What sueth[2] after, Parnel?"

Mistress Northampton tried in vain to remember.

"'Thou leddest forth Thy people as sheep,'" resumed the old lady. "'He clepeth[3] His own

[1] Ps. lxxvii. 19. [2] Follows. [3] Calls.

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sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when He hath done out His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him.'[1] Aye, Lord, Thou wentest before us, to Gethsemane and to Calvary. Shall we slack to sue Thee thither? It is a dark night, and the storm falls heavy; but 'I heard thee in the hid place of tempest.'[2] It is a hid place, for it is in His tabernacle. 'With His shoulders He shall make shadow to thee; and thou shalt have hope under His feathers.'"[3]

"There seems to be none elsewhere," said Mistress Northampton, sorrowfully.

"There is so much there, daughter, that we may do without it."

"The Lady Mayoress desires to speak with Mistress Northampton."

The message was delivered by a liveried servant, with the badge of Sir Nicholas Brembre fastened to his left sleeve; a man who looked as if he thought himself a greater man than the King and the Lord Mayor together. It set poor Mistress Northampton's heart throbbing in terror. She thought it almost sure to mean bad news: and how bad might it not be? Not one word of the fate of her husband had reached her since his arrest on the

[1] John x. 3, 4. [2] Ps. lxxxi. 7. [3] Ps. xci. 4.

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eleventh of February, and it was now the fifth of August. She sent back a message to the effect that she would wait on the Lady Mayoress at once, and went upstairs to dress for her visit in a most unenviable frame of mind.

The message itself was of rather an arrogant kind, and its tone had not been softened by the messenger. Why should Mistress Northampton, who had herself been Lady Mayoress for the two years previous, be required to wait on the wife of Sir Nicholas Brembre? But no feeling of resentment mingled with poor Petronilla's apprehensions. There was only room in her heart for the one fear which filled every corner of it.

She was not quite ready when the door of her room opened, and her mother-in-law came softly in.

"Parnel," she said, "afore thou go to speak with the Lady Mayoress, let us, thee and me, have a word with the King."

A momentary look of surprise instantly gave way to one of comprehension, and Mistress Northampton knelt down by her bed-side, where the old lady had placed herself. There was an instant's silence, and then Mistress Comberton spoke.

"Lord, Thou art God!" she said. "Far above

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these waterfloods Thou sittest, in the eternal calm whereto no floods can reach, but whereto the faintest wail of a child that feareth Thee can win way. Full well we know, and full well Thou knowest, that it is against Thee, not us, that men be gathered together. Forsake Thou not Thy people in the day of their calamity. Give us strength to bear whatsoever Thou shalt lay upon us. For His sake that bare the cross for us, aid Thou us to bear the cross for Thee! 'God, rise up! Deem Thou Thy cause. The pride of them that hate Thee stieth[1] ever.'"

"Thou mayest go safely now, Parnel," said the old lady as she rose up. "We have put our cause into the hands of the Judge, and there is no better advocate than He. Take thine heart to thee,[2] dear daughter. He that made heaven and earth is with thee."

It did not feel to Petronilla de Northampton as if any one were with her, but rather as if Heaven and earth and all things were against her, as she went up the staircase in the house of her husband's enemy, and waited in the ante-chamber, whereto she was shown, the pleasure of the Lady Mayoress. She had to wait some time, and every minute was like a century. Hardly would it have surprised her to find

[1] Ascends. Ps. lxxiv. 22, 23. [2] Cheer up, be in good spirits.

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afterwards that in that half-hour of horrible suspense her hair had grown white.

The door stood slightly open between the ante-chamber and the boudoir beyond, and voices came through, the sound of which was like vinegar upon nitre to the poor listener's highly-strung nerves. Her personal acquaintance with the present Lady Mayoress was a thing which could just be said to exist. She thought, but could not be quite sure, that she recognised her voice among the rest.

"A gipser[1] of red velvet?" said the voice which she took to be that of Lady Brembre. "Oh fie! that should go ill with a puce-colour gown. But, good Harvey, I would have cords of silver. The Lady de Windsor had a right fair gipser, of blue, gathered in a ring of silver. I would fain have bought it when her goods were sold, but I might not come thereby."

"I heard, Madam," answered a man's voice, in a very deferential tone, "that the Lady Walworth bought the same, and paid two shillings therefor."

"Two shillings? no more!" and a fashionable oath escaped her Ladyship's lips. "Soothly, I would have given a French crown rather than lost the same.

[1] More properly *gipcière*, a bag or large purse pendant from the waist.

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And now, Harvey, the guarding of the murrey[1] gown. Hast met with the fox fur?"

In this style the conversation went on till the heart of Mistress Northampton was sick to death. At length she thought she heard signs of the tailor's departure, and active fear and hope strove together again. The ante-room door was pushed open, and she saw a familiar face.

"Dear heart, my mistress! you here?" said Roger Astelyn. "Have they knaves not took in your name to her Ladyship?" he added in a compassionate tone, seeing how very worn and white she looked.

Mistress Northampton wearily answered that she did not know.

"Then I'll know!" answered the big blacksmith, stepping to the door. "Madam, please you to know——"

"I will speak with thee anon, Astelyn, when I have made an end with Harvey," said Lady Brembre in a slightly annoyed tone. "Beside, Francis the goldsmith hath place of thee."

"There's one here that your Ladyship shall see afore either Francis or me," was the cool response.

[1] Mulberry-colour.

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"The Lady Mayoress that was is scarce she that should wait the pleasure of tradesfolk."

"You wait my pleasure, and she likewise," said Lady Brembre, loftily. "Go back, fellow, and learn thy place, or I give thee ne'er another order."

"That's as your Ladyship will," said Roger, as coolly as before. "I've work enough and to spare. Your bill comes not to so much in the year that I should be undone to lose it, and you are hardest to please of all my customers."

"Go to thy place!" said the Lady Mayoress angrily.

"In the Old Change? Sickerly, Madam. Shall I carry with me the chain that I wrought for your Ladyship?"

The Lady Mayoress looked at him with a perplexed expression. She was accustomed to oily subservience from her dependents and tradespeople, and the cool independence of the big blacksmith was something new.

"Go to thy place in the ante-chamber, and I will see thee anon," she said in a tone wherein amusement was beginning to take place of vexation.

"Aye, Madam, after Mistress Northampton," said Roger, calmly, backing out of the presence.

Mistress Northampton was not made easier in her

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mind by this episode, for she feared that the impulsive warmth of her friend might work her ill with her enemy. One good result it had, for Lady Brembre dismissed her tailor in a few moments, and sent a chamberer to request that Mistress Northampton would come forward. Perhaps she was a little ashamed of her part in the recent transaction.

The visitor, thus introduced to the awe-inspiring presence of the Lady Idonia Brembre, found a tall, handsome woman, dressed in yellow silk, standing by the table with her hand resting lightly upon it. She neither requested her guest to be seated, nor did she seat herself. Evidently she wished the visit to be short, and heartily her visitor wished it too.

"Good morrow, Mistress Northampton."

"Good morrow to your Ladyship."

"Sir Nicholas tells me that command was forth, two days gone, that Master Northampton be had up from Corfe afore the Council at Reading. You will may-be desire to know the same."

"Reading!" echoed the poor wife with a sinking heart. "Not at London?"

"Not at London. Reading," repeated the Lady Mayoress.

Then his family would have no chance of seeing him. Would they ever have it again? His wife

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noted, too, the change of Sheriff, and even Alderman, for Master. His official position was a thing of the past.

"I thank your Ladyship. Can you tell me further when it shall be?"

"The Council?" said her Ladyship, carefully smoothing down a rumpled corner of her rich lace frills. "Aye,—Wednesday after the Assumption."

Mistress Northampton perceived that any further delay would be outstaying her welcome. She repeated her thanks, and turned away. The goldsmith succeeded her, and she paused an instant to tell Roger Astelyn the news.

"Reading—eh?" said he, stroking his beard meditatively. "Well, Mistress—I reckon the sky is over Reading. 'If I shall stie into Heaven, Thou art there; if I shall go down to Hell, Thou art present.'[1] Keep a good heart, Mistress; the Lord'll be at Reading that day."

Why had Lady Brembre sent for Mistress Northampton? It was a considerable perplexity to the latter. Did she wish to do her a kindness, or to enjoy her misery? Petronilla tried to credit her with the worthier motive.

[1] Ps. cxxxix. 8.

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CHAPTER VII.

FROM BAD TO WORSE.

"And when Thy sorrows visit us,
Oh send Thy patience too!"

—Bishop Heber.

THE twentieth of August proved to be one of the hottest days of the year. At Edmund Costantyn's house, the Silver Bow, in the Old Change, the sunblinds were all closed over the windows, and the rooms within were made as cool as possible. Every house in a town had then its sign, which served the purpose of a number to the illiterate public, to whom Arabic numerals were insoluble enigmas, but who could distinguish between a golden hand and a green lion.

Mistress Costantyn had returned to ordinary life, and yet not to the life that she had led, to which she would never return. The calm, complacent, well-pleased, self-satisfied woman had become an irritable invalid, constantly complaining, and very hard to

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please. It was the more difficult, since the course of conduct which suited her one day in theory did not please her at all on the next when reduced to practice. If Edmund and Gunnora talked to her, she could not bear such a noise: did they think her head would stand that? If they were silent, they neglected her, and did not care to amuse her. If Edmund stayed at home, he was letting his business go to rack and ruin: his father never was so careless of duty. If he went to the counting-house, he was always away: he did not like to be with his poor mother now that she was not merry and glad. It was hard work living at the Silver Bow in those days.

She had been unusually irritable that morning, and Edmund had found his post anything but an easy one. He came out in the evening, with a lock in his hand which required a new key, Gillian having disposed of the old one down the garden well. Edmund had other anxieties than those connected with his mother, which were peculiarly his own, for neither she nor Gunnora appeared to take much interest in the fate of Alderman Northampton. It was the second day since that Wednesday after the Assumption on which he was to appear before the Council at Reading, and no tidings had yet reached either

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the Hood or the Silver Bow. It was with no light heart that Edmund crossed the Old Change and went into the smithy.

"Roger!" he called, finding the smithy deserted.

There was no answer, but on a second call Mrs. Astelyn trotted in from the interior of the house.

"Master," said she with a courtesy, "I am sorry your Honour had to wait. Roger's not at home yet, and yon weary Luke, that should ha' been here, is gone the deer wist whither. Can I take your Honour's order?"

Edmund explained his errand, and inquired when Roger would be there. Mrs. Astelyn, in answer, put on a rather mysterious air, and informed him that she did not know. She hoped to see him by to-morrow at the latest; but he had already been gone five days. Considerably astonished at this unusual vagary of his friend the blacksmith, Edmund turned to re-cross the street, when he saw at the end of the Old Change Roger Astelyn himself, walking not with his usual firm stride, but with the slow, unsteady step of a man totally exhausted by fatigue. More surprised than ever, Edmund stood still and watched him till he came within easy speaking distance.

"Come in, Master Nym," said the blacksmith in a

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low, weary tone. "I'm fain to have met with you."

"Why, old friend!" exclaimed Edmund, following Roger into the smithy, "where in all the world hast thou been to make thee thus dog-weary?"

The smith dropped on the corner of the nearest bench, and Mildred, seeing his condition, ran to fetch a cup of home-brewed ale.

"I've been to Reading, Master."

"To Reading!" cried Edmund.

"Aye, to Reading. I hoped to bring home good news. But I've none, Master Nym,—none at all."

"Hast heard what is come of him?" said Edmund fearfully.

"I was in court all the day. Put by, Master Nym—put by to another day: but——"

"Well, but what?"

"Lands and goods forfeit to the crown."

"Not cast at all, then?" Edmund was thinking more of his friend personally than of the question of property.

"Not yet. Put by to another day, and that not set."

"And the other, Roger? Master Robert Comberton, and poor Blyton?"

"Sent back to Corfe Castle, prisoners there."

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An exclamation of dismay broke from Edmund.

"What moved thee to take such a journey, Roger? Surely thou didst not walk all the way?"

"All the way back. Got a lift in a waggon for ten mile a-going. Moved me, Master Nym? Well, I think,—God."

Edmund was silent, looking down into the weary face.

"I couldn't abear old Mistress's face i' church this Sunday last past, nor Mistress Alice's neither. She's waxing that thin and pale, Master Nym—ha' not you seen it?"

"Have not I seen it!" said Edmund in an unsteady voice.

"And old Mistress,—she looks as if she saw angels. I didn't think she'd be long for this world, no-but she could hear some good tidings. Then there was you, Master Nym. You're not waxing fatter, nor rosier neither, these weeks gone. Life's been a-pulling hard at your heart-strings, lad."

"God bless thee, old friend!" was the whispered answer.

"I wish I'd brought better news. All forfeit, Master Nym! lands and goods and chattels. They'll have ne'er a home, the poor gentlewomen. It'll come hard, I'm feared."

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"They will have mine," was the reply.

"Aye, and Master Will Comberton's, belike," suggested Mildred.

Roger shook his head, but did not say why.

"Master Nym, will you bear the news to the Hood? I'm too spent to go a step further."

"Surely, good friend. Get thee in and rest thee, and God be thy safeguard."

Edmund grasped the hand of his humble friend, and then turned away down Thames Street, to bear the hard tidings to the hapless ladies at the Hood. But before he had gone many yards beyond the corner, he suddenly wheeled round and retraced his steps. Questions would undoubtedly be asked him which he was not prepared to answer. Women always asked questions, said the young lord of creation to himself, as if apologising to his masculine intellect for the feminine instinct of his curiosity.

"Roger, I would fain know more," said he, having penetrated into that inner sanctum behind the smithy, where Mildred was comforting her worn-out lord with what she called a mess of pottage.

"Now, Hodge, sup thee a few pottage—do! Thou wilt well nigh drop o' pieces else."

In Roger's wearied state, it was easier to drink than to eat. He lifted the great pot of broth to his

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lips, emptied it at one draught, and resigned the empty vessel into Mildred's hands.

"Now, Master Nym: what would you?"

"Didst thou see them, Hodge, thine own self?"

It was quite unnecessary to add the prelude of a nominative.

"Aye, every man of 'em, Master Nym."

"Did they bear them well?"

"Master Robert looks the worst. He's well nigh broke down—as white as a sheet, and marvellous gaunt.[1] Master Blyton was better a bit—not so white, and did not hang his head like a lily. But the Alderman had best cheer of all, and he's been in prison longest."

"Sickerly, I am right fain to hear it. Did they, any of them, see thee?"

"Master Blyton saw me first, and nodded his head at me. Then he nudged Master Rob, but he seemed to take no note of aught belike. But when he spake to the Alderman, *he* gave me such a smile as brought some'at in my eyes as had no calling there. Beshrew me, but I felt like a babby—every bit as bad!"

"We'll not fault ourselves with our graces, friend Roger, only with our sins," said Edmund. "But tell me, what charge was laid to them?"

[1] Thin.

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"Now what think you, Master Nym? But you'd not guess by Midsummer day. Same charge for all of 'em—going about the streets in a riotous fashion, sued by throngs of folk: and—get your ears out, Master Nym—compassing the death of Sir Nicholas Brembre. Do you hear?"

"I hear," said Edmund, with an emphasis on the verb which implied that understanding was not included. "'Compassing the death of Sir Nicholas!' How? when? why?"

"I'll tell you what I know. What I don't I can't."

"And what pled[1] they thereto?"

"The Alderman stood forth and spake out like a man. Denied utterly every thought of such a thing, and asked what right the Council had to deem[2] any man, my Lord of Lancaster not there, that is head thereof. Sonties! I would he had been. He's got brains in his cap, he has."

"I dread[3] no brains were wanting," said Edmund rather indignantly. "Heart and conscience were nearer the mark."

"You speak sooth, Master."

"And what said the other?"

"Master Blyton spake but a few words: said the

[1] Then the past tense of the verb to plead.
[2] Judge, sentence. [3] Fear.

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Alderman had spoken for him, and he needed but to say the same: that he was a true man and loyal, and innocent of all wrong. And Master Robert, he said nought at all, after he had pled 'Not guilty.'"

"And no day was set for the trial?"

"For the Alderman? Nay, only put by, and had back to Corfe."

Edmund sighed heavily.

"Master Nym, I heard some queer talk going of two catchpolls—I wist not if it were true."

"What so?"

"Why, as though some manner of riot had been at Corfe, of certain men that came down from London to set free the prisoners, an' they might. An some o' the Castle gaolers, quoth they, and folks in Corfe town belike, were all therein. They said there should be a rare lot o' folks arrest in London afore they were a week elder."

If Edmund Costantyn grew a shade paler, it was no reflection on his manhood.

"They'll ne'er take thee, Hodge?" cried Mildred.

"I wasn't there, Mildred. If I had been, the Alderman wouldn't ha' been at Reading last Wednesday, nor me neither."

"Have a care, Roger!"

"If you'll care *your*self, Master Nym, I'll care

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mine. But I don't melt iron by halves—*I* don't. I never was one to stick nails in half way, that they'll drop out afore you've gone ten roods. I like to clench 'em well o' tother side."

Before Edmund had gone far towards the Hood, he met his shopman Driver, and Kyrieshaw. They were hurrying along the street as if in haste. To his complete amazement, Kyrieshaw grasped him by the shoulders, and forced him out of the way into Huggins Lane.

"Back, back, Master Costantyn! what do you in the streets this even? Have you heard ne'er a whit of the news?"

"What news?" gasped Edmund very naturally.

"There's a whole throng of folks arrest, Master," said Driver, breathlessly, but in an undertone. "Master Norbury, mercer, and Master Francis, goldsmith, and Master Maudeleyn, tailor, and ever so many folks beside."

Edmund drew his breath hard. These were men who stood high in their respective callings, men of substance and high respectability. Francis was the goldsmith employed by the Lady Mayoress herself; and Norbury was the cousin of a gentleman in the household of the Duke of Lancaster. Considering his own connection with the Hood, and the circum-

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stances of his father's death, it was only too probable that he would be one of the next victims. And it was not a merely selfish feeling that made him wish to escape it. The invalid mother and helpless sister —what would become of them? And Alice—he wondered if Alice would be sorry—just a little.

While Driver was speaking, a distant sound arose, growing louder with rapidity. The crowd, escorting the prisoners, was surging down Thames Street on the way to Newgate. Some were sympathisers, some enemies, but by far the greatest number were mere sight-seers. Kyrieshaw gently pushed Edmund into a dark passage, and Driver slunk into the shadow of a porch. The roar and the throng swept by, and the street was left clear.

"Master," whispered Driver, "willn't you go home? It's none so far."

"Nay, Driver. I will go on my way."

And he went on.

Edmund found his hard task rather easier than he had expected. The ladies were so relieved to hear that the Alderman was not sentenced to any dreadful fate, that the sad tidings which concerned themselves were passed lightly by. Edmund besought them to make their home with him for a time, at least until something more certain should be known. Mistress

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Northampton seemed rather to like the idea for herself and the old lady; but she was a great stickler for propriety, and it was scandalous in her eyes that Alice and Edmund, unmarried, should live under one roof, or that she should be beholden to him for a home. Alice must go to her uncle William's house.

"Then I go withal," said her grandmother.

"Nay, Mother!" Mistress Northampton was beginning.

"If Alice go, I go," said she, firmly: and Edmund blessed her in his heart.

It was at last arranged that Mistress Comberton and Alice should apply to William Comberton, her eldest son, for present shelter: while Mrs. Northampton, and her little boys, also for the present, was to accept the invitation to the Silver Bow. All servants were to be dismissed, except one bowerwoman, or maid, for each lady.

"Aye, we're all to get us gone, every soul!" said Simpkin the next evening, as he stood leaning against the door-jamb of the smithy, while Roger Astelyn hammered out a horse-shoe: "me that's been yonder these fourteen year, and old Paul Sumpterman, that's going in thirty. I don't reckon Master Will 'll want much of us."

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"Be the gentlewomen a-going to Master Will's?" asked Roger, suspending his operations to wipe his heated brow and look up at Simpkin.

"Aye, old Mistress and Mistress Alice, they be."

"Then I'm rare sorry for 'em."

"Why, man, what for?"

"Hast thou seen much of them folks?"

"Master Will's folks? Nay, none so much."

"Humph! Well, I have."

"Well, what ails 'em?" inquired Simpkin, finding that Roger's confidence went no further.

Roger stood up and threw back his hair with one hand.

"I've wrought there many a time; and Master Will's got a mistress. Mistress Joan Comberton. And a cantankerouser toad——"

Roger went on with the horse-shoe. When he had finished his proceedings, during which sundry shakes of his head had diversified their monotony, he threw down the hammer.

"I'm sorry for Mistress Alice. Aye, I am so!"

Somebody else was sorry for Alice, and made one more attempt to alter the decision as respected her. But it was found to be impossible. Mistress Costantyn sided against him, and Edmund gave up all

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hope of a change. Gunnora was the only sympathiser, and Gunnora was nobody.

The change that had passed over her fortunes was made apparent to Alice within the first hour that she spent at her uncle's house. The only daughter of the Sheriff of London had become the niece of a skinner on Garlick Hill. Her aunt seemed to regard her as a servant—scarcely a superior servant. She was called upstairs and down twenty times a day; set to amuse little Joan, three years old, to hold baby Parnel, or subjected to the tender mercies of Will and Jack, uproarious boys of five and seven. At the Silver Bow, Alice would have been an honoured guest; on Garlick Hill she was simply an overworked nursemaid. She felt the difference more bitterly than she had ever expected to feel it. She scolded herself for caring about it: but none the less she cared. The mere bodily fatigue she endured was a trial to the cultured young lady, who until then had known no harder work than delicate cookery and elegant needle-work, which could be resigned into the hands of a subordinate when she was tired. If Edmund desired to create himself an object of interest in the eyes of Alice, and to make her regard the Silver Bow as a haven of peace and comfort, he could not have done better than to let

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her go to Garlick Hill. Had it not been for the presence of her grandmother, who often interfered on her behalf, and was always ready to comfort her, Alice thought, extravagantly but sincerely, that her heart would have broken.

It was all the worse because her mother permitted no visits from Alice. Gunnora was sadly disappointed when she found even this solace denied her. But Mistress Northampton was inexorable. Alice and Edmund must not meet under his roof until she passed into the house as his bride. And so long as her father's fate hung in the balance, the marriage must not take place.

Had it been possible to consult the imprisoned father himself, the decision would have been greatly softened. He would have wished the marriage to be solemnised at once for the sake of all parties; and the little feminine proprieties which were of such importance to the feminine soul of Mistress Northampton, would have seemed of small moment to his masculine mind. But this nobody knew, though his mother guessed it; and she thought the lesson of patience and obedience would do the young folks no harm, and so far as she could she would spare Alice.

And so the days wore on.

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It was on the twenty-second of August that the ladies left the Hood, for no delay was permitted, nor were they allowed to carry anything with them but the clothes they wore. Down to the least shred, every atom of the property of an outlaw was forfeit to the Crown: and the members of his family were not exempted from the influence of that rule. In this instance, a solitary exception was permitted in respect of little Will, the youngest boy, who was discovered trying to secrete his pet kitten in his frock, and the good-natured officer, who was himself a father, diligently looked in another direction, and suffered the little child to retain an article of no market value.

The eighth of September was a festival of high importance, being the Nativity of the Virgin. All trade was suspended, and everybody attended church in the morning. The images of St. Mary were robed in splendid dresses, many of them the gifts of royal and noble persons, and decked with jewels of priceless value. Very ugly pieces of carved wood many of them were, but the uglier the image, it may almost be said, the more certain was it to have a tradition attached that it had fallen from Heaven or had been designed by St. Luke. This Evangelist, according to Scripture, was a physician; but tradition made

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him a painter, and as a painter the public of the Middle Ages persisted in regarding him.

Romanists tell us indignantly that they do not worship images, nor pray to them. Exactly the same thing was and is said by the heathen. The very worshippers of Jupiter and Diana have left on record that in their opinion no man in his senses would pray to a piece of stone. I have asked a missionary who had travelled and taught in different lands how many heathens he had known who actually worshipped the image, and failed to look through it to the god whom it was supposed to represent. The striking reply was, " Not one."

Moreover, an image set up in a church must be one of two things, an idol or an ornament. If it be an ornament, no notice will be taken of it by the worshippers beyond an occasional look. If more attention be paid to it than this—and especially if the worshippers kneel in prayer before it—it must be an idol, in the only sense in which the heathen themselves understand idolatry.

And is it less than appalling to hear modern Protestants speak of deliberately going into such places as these to offer prayer? excusing themselves by the sentimental notion that "the place where others have offered prayer to their god must be a

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holy place," and the true God is more likely to hear them there than in other places! Why, if there be one place in the world where God will not hear the prayers of His servants, I should expect that place to be an idol temple. "What doest thou here, Elijah?" as in any way a participator in the worship, ought to recur to the minds of such as if it were spoken to them from Heaven. Surely of the sin of idolatry the Lord will not hold them guiltless.

Akin to this is the more common notion that the church is the proper place to pray in, and that when we want to pray we ought to go into a church. "To have no church to pray in during Lent," to find a church locked upon week-days, or a parish in which there is not daily service, is a sore trial to the minds of these foolish Galatians. But do they find the Great Example giving them any hint of this either in His practice or His teaching? He prayed on the hill-side when He sought a place of retirement; and He bids us enter into our closets and shut our doors, when we would pray. Given a man who cannot live without prayer, and trust him to find a place in which to pray.

The majority of the Lollards were little in advance of their Romish brethren in respect of Mariolatry. On but very few minds was it even beginning to

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dawn that Mary was not above all others the advocate with God, or that kneeling before an image of her could possibly be an idolatrous proceeding. That she was immaculate was allowed by all. Even John Wycliffe himself only awoke to the doubt of it a few months, perhaps a few weeks, before his death.

The households, therefore, from the Silver Bow, and the Blue Hart on Garlick Hill, attended their respective parish churches, St. Augustine's and St. James's. Mass over, the public first went home to dinner, and then turned out into the fields for a general holiday. There were plenty of places where games and dancing could be had upon the grass. Just outside Moor Gate lay Moor Field and Finsbury Field; outside Bishop's Gate, the 'Spital Field; and outside Aldgate, Goodman's Fields. If any one chose to cross London Bridge, at that time the only bridge across the Thames, or—which most people preferred—to row across the river in a wherry, on the Surrey side lay Paris Garden, the Bank, and Horsely Down; though that portion of the bank which stretched from Paris Garden (opposite Blackfriars) to the bridge had an extremely bad character, and would be avoided by any person who had a regard for his or her reputation. Further west, on the City side, all was green, with a scattered house

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or group of houses here and there, beyond New Street, which had not yet acquired its modern name of Chancery Lane. The Convent Garden lay north of the Strand; St. Martin's and St. Giles's were literally "in the Fields:" Piccadilly was known only as the road to Reading, and Oxford Street as the way to Uxbridge and Oxford. Stepney, Bethnal Green, Hackney, Islington and Clerkenwell, Paddington and Bayard's Water, Kensington and Chelsea, were all country villages at some distance from London, and no more regarded as a portion of the metropolis than Lichfield or Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Those who rowed down to distant Westminster—a separate town, the Liberty of the Duchy of Lancaster lying between the Liberties of Westminster and of the City—went past the grand monastery of Black Friars, the outlet where the Fleet River ran into the Thames, the monastery of White Friars, the Temple, the once magnificent Palace of the Savoy, town house of the Duke of Lancaster, which Jack Straw and his followers had burnt into charred ruins, the Mews where the royal stables were kept, close to the Cross at Charing, which stood just at the point where the Strand, the Haymarket, and Whitehall met: then past Scotland Yard, of ancient time the Palace of King David, that "sair saint for the crown;"

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past Whitehall, the street on the other side of which was known as the Court Gate, and reached to King Street (there was no Parliament Street): past the privy bridge, Westminster Hall, and Westminster Palace, then always the official and frequently the personal residence of the Sovereign; past St. Stephen's Chapel, the church of the palace, and "Our Lady of Pue" just beneath it, opposite which was Westminster Abbey, and beyond which were only a little group of houses, and the green fields again.

There had been a supper party at the Silver Bow, to which Mistress Costantyn and Gunnora had pleaded hard that Alice might be asked. The pleading was in vain. Mistress Comberton might be invited if they liked; but not Alice. The elder members of the family from Garlick Hill were asked; a measure which left Alice in entire charge of her small and trying cousins, and was not by any means a pleasant ending to her holiday. Will and Jack Comberton were a pair of the most mischievous monkeys in London, and the unheard of and unthinkable ways of mischief which they invented were enough to try the nerves of the strongest-minded care-taker. Alice had a headache, which the noises attendant on the proceedings of these young gentlemen were not calculated to improve; and her spirits were unusually

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low. With good health, calm nerves, and a sunny temper, it was not a common thing for Alice to suffer from low spirits without special cause. But all these qualities had been sorely tried of late; and to-night she felt inclined to act the part of the Discontented Pendulum, and count up all the future ticks due in life with a sense of overwhelmed faint-heartedness. At last—and a very long last it felt in coming—she got the ungovernable children tucked into bed and asleep; and, for once alone and at leisure, she came back to the little hall, and leaning her arms on the casement, looked out into the summer evening. It was about half-past seven, which in Alice's eyes was bed-time. She was determined to make the most of her quiet hour, and to stay up until the elders should return.

Alice had not been many minutes at the window when, to her surprise and almost alarm, she heard her own name softly called from the street below.

"Mistress Alice!"

At first she took no notice. The name was a common one, and was doubtless intended for some person across the street or in the next house. But the call was repeated, and this time more circumstantially.

"Mistress Alice de Northampton!"

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Alice put her head out of the window at that appeal. She saw a large-made, fine looking man, wearing a leathern apron which bore marks of hard usage, and an artisan's jerkin above. In those days, the rank of every man could be instantly read in his attire. This was evidently a working tradesman.

"Who art thou, friend?" asked Alice rather shyly.

"You know me not," said her visitor with a smile which lit up his handsome grave face. "I've never seen you but in church, so it's no wonder. Alderman knew me well, and Mistress, she knows me. Maybe you've heard my name. I'm Roger Astelyn, black-smith, of Old Change—right over against the Silver Bow. Master Costantyn, he knows me rare well, and hath ever sith he were born."

Alice's suspicions, aroused at first, were beginning to give way. Few men who were not Lollards would have got through a speech of that length without profane language.

"Will you let me within, Mistress Alice? I know I'm a big un, and I look rough belike, but I would not hurt a hair of your head,—no, not if I were paid a ton o' gold to do it."

"I cannot tell, friend," said Alice, rather tremu-lously. "I have been set here in charge till mine

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uncle come home; and if I should do well or no, to let any in——"

"Mistress, I bring you a message," said the smith, dropping his voice, "that I may ill speak in the street."

"From whom?"

Alice little anticipated the answer.

"From your father."

Caution, responsibility, timidity, went to the winds then. In another minute, the heavy bolts, which taxed all Alice's strength, were drawn back, and Roger Astelyn stood in the hall. He closed the door and rebolted it before he spoke.

"You have seen my father?" cried Alice breathlessly.

"Aye, I have seen him—yestereven."

"Yestereven! How came you hither from Dorset sith yestereven?"

"I went not to him, Mistress Alice; he came to me. The Alderman is in London to-night."

"In London! To-night!" cried his daughter in a tone of mixed delight and apprehension. "Then was he—is he—prithee, friend, tell me all!"

"I will. Mistress Alice, he stands again afore the Council, at Westminster, as to-morrow. Yestereven they brought him from Corfe; and as they passed

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from Queenhithe up Bread Street, I was a-going down, and I met 'em."

"Then the Sheriff let you speak with him?"

"Nay!" said Roger with a grim smile. "If old Sim Wynchecombe had been there, much talk we should have had! It were Jack Marlins, Sheriff's man, as were leading of 'em, and Jack and me's good friends. By same token, he wed my mistress's kinswoman. So I just gives Jack a glint o' my eye, and he gives me a glint o' his'n, and says he to his men, 'Lads, this is dry work. Fetch us a pot o' mead fro' th' Black Bear,' quoth he; 'and we'll sit us down o' th' causey while we sup it.' And then, see you, all at once he sees me. And, 'Why, Cousin Roger!' quoth he; 'come and have a sup, man.' So I sat me down o' th' causey, and had a sup wi' Jack: and if I was next to the Alderman o' one side, well, Jack looked tother way. So I got a message for you and Mistress."

"Oh, what was it?"

"Well," said Roger, rubbing his eyebrows with one big hand, "it went so far in, Mistress Alice, I reckon I shall ha' some work to fetch it out. He bid me say to all on you—you, and Mistress, and old Mistress too—as he thought ever on you and prayed for you: and it were more for all your sakes than his own that

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he longed to come home. And you was to keep up good hearts, and pray too: you never know what the Lord may think to do, quoth he. But whatso should hap, if he were cast for death, or prisoned for life, you were never to think as how he mistrusted the Lord, or loved any on you a whit less.—Beshrew this watering o' mine eyes! the east wind must ha' got into 'em!—That's the message, Mistress Alice. I give it to Mistress and old Mistress, at Silver Bow, already: but I thought maybe you'd have a fancy to see a man that had seen him, and have th' message straight belike, not through somebody else. And now—without I can do you some service—I wish you good even, Mistress Alice."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, a thousand times!" sobbed Alice, holding out her hand to the smith—a rare honour from a lady at that time. "But do tell me further how he looked, and if he seemed sad or blithe, and how he hath borne the dreadful prison!"

Roger Astelyn bent over the young hand and kissed it, as reverently as if it had been that of a princess.

"Well, he might look worser," said he in a cheerful tone. "He's a bit gaunt and white—prison's like to make him so, you know: but he's full blithe;

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though he's something sad.[1] He asked me how you were, and if you were wed. I said 'Nay,' and but if I read his face well, he'd liefer ha' had it 'Yea.'"

"And my Uncle Robert, was he there?" asked Alice quickly, and a little inconsequently.

"Nay, he wasn't. But Alderman said he was alive and at Corfe, though he took it main hard. Master Norbury was there, and Master More. I'm going to Mistress More now, to tell her I see her master, and when he shall be cast."

"Then will I not tarry you in any wise," said Alice. "You have done me greater kindness than I could look for. Good even, and God bless you!"

"Aye, and God bless you, my fair mistress!"

The bolts were drawn back, and Roger Astelyn strode down Garlick Hill. When he had reached the corner, he stopped a moment and looked back. The fair young head had sunk upon Alice's hands at the casement, as though she were either weeping or praying.

"Master Nym!" said the blacksmith to his absent friend, "you'd better! She's a deal too white. I reckon yon cantankerous toad works her like a mill-horse. I wonder what Mistress is thinking on. Thy father wouldn't like seeing thee i' that guise, my

[1] Very cheerful, though rather grave.

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pretty bird: no, he wouldn't! If it were me, I'd——well, any way, I'd see!"

Edmund Costantyn was quite of Roger's mind. He had been trying to "see" ever since the Alderman was taken; and finding himself baffled, had made up his mind not to wait beyond the sentence, unless of course it should be a sentence of death. If the Alderman were set free—of which there was small hope, or rather none—he knew all would be right then: and if he were doomed to any less sentence than death, he would tell Mistress Northampton at once that he would wait no longer for Alice. He thought it cruel of her to part them so determinately and thoroughly as this. She should not do it beyond the time fixed.

Edmund had been obliged to resign the idea of letting the year go by after his father's death. The circumstances, he felt, were altogether changed; and so much had happened since that February morning that it seemed far more than a year behind him. And there was Alice to think of, beyond himself and his own relatives; she was in a very different position now, in one from which she needed rescuing, and this appeared to be the only mode of rescue which lay open.

Alice was two years older than when she had built

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her airy castles, and had been rather disappointed to find how little Edmund Costantyn resembled her fanciful hero. She was more than two years wiser; she had been growing mentally very fast during these months of suspense. And seventeen, in the fourteenth century, was a higher figure than the age of brides usually reached. The imaginary hero had quite receded into the distance: that she knew. But it was not until that night that Alice fully realised how entirely the living one had taken his place. The background of her life was filled with Aunt Joan and the children, and her grandmother, mother, and brothers: in the foreground was her father, and his coming trial. But that one passing word of Roger Astelyn, that when her father had asked if she were married, "he would liefer have had it 'yea,'" seemed somehow, she knew not how, to have shown her her own heart, that she too would liefer have had it yea, that the foremost foreground of all was occupied not by her father, but by the one figure of Edmund Costantyn, as he had come forward to her that day in the still-room with his hand held out, and a quiet, pleased, half amused smile upon his lips. And that veil once dropped from Alice's eyes, it could never be bound over them again.

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CHAPTER VIII.

WHEREIN THEY KNOW THE WORST.

> "Wherefore adieu, mine own heart true!
> No other rede I can;
> For I must to the greenwood go,
> Alone, a banished man."
>
> —OLD BALLAD.

"ARE you alone, Grammer? May I come in?"

"Come in, my child," answered old Mistress Comberton, affectionately.

Alice came in, knelt before her grandmother, and received her blessing; then she sat down on a soft hassock, at her feet, and laid her head upon her grandmother's knee. It was not long before Mistress Comberton heard some soft sobs and long-drawn sighs, the more touching because they were so quiet. She laid her hand on the girl's head, and stroked the soft hair.

"Weep, my maid; it will do thee good."

"O Grammer, how good you are!" sobbed Alice.

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"You are the only one will let me weep without a word. Uncle Will must needs know wherefore it is —wherefore!—and Aunt Joan chides me to waste time and make silly moans for that I cannot help. If I could help it, there should be little need to weep."

Mistress Comberton understood full well the intensely illogical style of comfort adopted by some people—those who exhort you not to regret what cannot be undone—as if you would, in the opposite case!—or not to grieve for a pet animal, since it has no soul—which is equivalent to an exhortation not to weep for your friend *because* you will never see him again!

"What is it mostly troubleth thee, my Alice?"

"Oh, Grammer, this dreadful waiting! Always put by to another day! Nothing ever settled and done with! If I could only know the worst—and get it over!"

"Ah, Alice! Thou wilt not say that if thou come to know—*the worst.* For that shall mean a thing done that none may undo, until the morrow when dead men shall hear the voice of God's Son, and they that hear shall live. It shall not be over, my child—rather shall it only then begin."

"Grammer! You never look for—for——"

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The white horrified face and dilated eyes finished the sentence for her.

"I look for death," was the much quieter answer of the prisoner's mother. "Nay, rather say, I look for life: that life which hath no ending, and which shall know no sorrow. The grief will be ours, Alice, not his. For me, it shall not much matter: I shall see him again so soon. It shall be harder for thee, poor young maid, that hast known so little sorrow, and before whom there lieth maybe a long life. But never forget, my child, that God calleth thee to live but one moment at once. Try not to live the life to be ere it come, neither to keep living again the past travail. Cheat not the present moment of the pain God sendeth, by striving to drown it in some foolish vanity: but neither do thou borrow pain from the past, or live through it aforehand in the future. He that was bidden to carry one log of wood every day for a month, should do ill if he perversely bare all the thirty every day till the month were over."

"But, Grammer!—you think he will—die!"

"Aye. I think he will die, Alice."

The girl's face asked a further question, which her tongue was not allowed to ask. "How can you speak of it so calmly?"

"Matters look very different, Alice," said her

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grandmother, answering that unspoken query, "whether thou look at them from below or from above. Looked at from below, death seems the end of all things. But looked at from above, it is but the passage-way which leadeth from the waiting-chamber into the King's hall of audience. And some of us, that have tarried a good while in the waiting-chamber, and are full weary of the dark, and the cold wind, and the hard forms, are not sorry to hear the summons to the warmed and lighted hall where the King's feast is spread. *We* would fain keep our beloved by us in the ante-chamber till the call come for us: but is it kind to them?"

"Oh, I cannot! I cannot!" was the answer, broken by passionate sobs.

"Mine heart, I fault thee not: nor maybe doth He that wept at the grave of Lazarus. Ask of Him to grant thee His patience, and the desire above all things to do His will. Short of that—of all schenship and gruccheris,[1]—let thy grief have its way."

The Alderman and his fellow-prisoners, Norbury and More, had been once more remanded. Had up before the Council at Westminster, on the ninth of September, they were sent to the Tower, and a bench of eight judges was appointed, before whom they

[1] **Reproach and murmurs.**

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were to be tried finally on the twelfth. Sent to the Tower! Mistress Comberton knew too well what that meant. To send any prisoner thither was almost equivalent to a sentence of death.

"Grammer, they say," said Alice, catching at the last straw of hope, "that Master Seneschal is made head of the judges that shall try him. Think you not there is good hope in Master Seneschal?"

This was the Seneschal of the Household, Sir John de Montacute, a Lollard who never furled his colours. When he saw that the persecution was setting in, all that he did was to make his will, and then wait quietly for God. He died in his bed, as such men often do.

When Alice asked this, with the light springing to her eyes, no answering light came into the eyes that gazed tenderly upon her.

"'Hope thou in God,'" said the old lady. "'Lord of virtues, blessed is the man that hopeth in Thee.' We be not bidden to hope in anything else."

"But Master Seneschal!" urged Alice.

"If the Lord will, He can work deliverance by Master Seneschal; and if He will, He can work it by my Lord Mayor," replied the old lady sturdily.

"Grammer, it makes me feel wicked to hear that! If God can help us, why does He not?"

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"My child, He shall make thee answer. 'It is better to thee to enter feeble into life, than to have two hands and go into Hell.'[1] He careth more that thou enter into Heaven than that thou have mirth and welsomeness[2] in this life. They be but small childre, and foolish belike, that would rather have a little cake to-day than a great feast to-morrow."

Both Edmund Costantyn and Roger Astelyn were among those who pressed into the hall of the Tower on that twelfth of September. The former brought with him a token from the Seneschal—all the Lollards knew each other—which secured him entrance: but the big blacksmith brought nothing save his own powerful elbows, which he used to such good purpose that nobody chose to bar his way.

When the prisoners were brought forward, Roger, who had fought his way to Edmund's side, heard a sort of gasp from the latter which told him how shocked he was to see the change wrought in the Alderman. The latter was now looking not only pale and worn, but very sad. Whatever might be his friends' hopes for him, he seemed to have none for himself. When the charge was read out—the same as on the previous trial,—after the simple answer of "Not Guilty," John de Northampton was

[1] Mark ix. 43. [2] Prosperity.

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silent. The spirit which had nerved him at Reading deserted him now. Norbury and More made similar answers. The witnesses were heard, the charge was delivered, and the jury brought in their verdict.

"Guilty, one and all."

They were strained eyes that watched the next motion—watched Sir Robert Tresilian rise from his seat, and assume the black cap—whereby they knew that for one at least among those hapless prisoners, the only deliverance was to be by death. One by one the names fell from his lips as he gave sentence —"John atte More, Richard Northbury, John de Comberton, otherwise called John de Northampton," —and then they knew the worst, and hope was over.

The trial had been long, and the suspense, the long fast, the anxiety, and at last the dreadful end, were too much for Edmund Costantyn. He grew white, reeled, and fell into the arms of Roger Astelyn, who lifted him up and bore him out of the hall, amid some scornful and some pitying looks, and the usual amount of whispered gossip. Roger carried his burden—not a heavy one, for Edmund was of slight build—just outside the Tower precincts, to the Abbey of St. Mary of Grace, where he besought a cordial to restore his strength. The monastic physician, Brother Herbert, after one or two questions as

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to the cause of the swoon, quickly fetched a cup of clarry, which was a mixture of wine with ginger, pepper, saffron, and honey, and was in much use as a cordial draught. The fresh air soon brought Edmund to himself, and the clarry completed the cure.

"There, Master Nym! You fare better now," said Roger, as cheerily as was in him.

"Shall I ever fare better?" moaned Edmund. "Roger, dreamed I this woful thing, or be they all cast for death?"

"All cast, Master," said Roger sorrowfully.

"And I must go home and tell them!"

"I'd fain share the burden with you, if I could," said the blacksmith.

"Thou hast shared it," replied Edmund, more like himself. "What should all we have done without thee?—Father, I thank you heartily for your cup, and pray you accept mine oblation."

It was a piece of gold which Edmund offered, and which Brother Herbert took with much gratification, for he had not by any means expected so large a gratuity from a patient of that rank. But crowns and pence were alike to Edmund that day. He took from his purse the first piece that came to hand, and hardly knew what he gave.

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It was a long, weary way back to the Old Change, and Edmund wished it at once shorter and longer. Roger, who took the initiative, having more of his wits about him, went by back streets as much as possible. At length they arrived at the Silver Bow.

"Now, Master Nym, take your heart to you, lad," said the blacksmith in a pitying, affectionate tone. "The Lord's not dead, nor like to be. And He's no but to say to them folks 'No further!' and all the judges and tipstaves[1] in England can't go another step."

"But He does not say it!" was the answer, in a whisper of anguish.

"If you know He willn't, you're a wiser man than me," said Roger Astelyn, quietly, as he turned into the smithy.

"Too late!" sighed Edmund sorrowfully.

Roger turned back.

"'Too late!' What mean you by 'too late?' Wasn't it too late, four good days too late, when one woman heard it spoken to her, 'Have I not said to thee that if thou believest, thou shalt see the glory of God?' And she saw it. Nay, nay, Master Nym! There's no 'too late' in the councils of the Lord. But hark ye, lad—there's a deal of tarrying till just

[1] Officers of justice so termed from the official staff they carried.

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before it's too late. And after all"—these last words were added when Edmund had left him—"it won't matter much on the resurrection morrow."

"Roger! art thou never going to waken?" demanded Mildred 'Astelyn, after she had pulled her lord and master's hair more than once, and had come as near shaking him by the shoulders as a woman of her inches could do to a man of his. "Do wake up, for pity's sake!"

"Eh! what?" said Roger, three-quarters asleep. "Not time to rise yet, sure-ly?"

"Man! hast thou no ears? This half-hour past—well nigh," added Mildred, realising that the time given was somewhat exaggerated, "there's been such a batterin' o' th' door as was enough to rouse a dead man, let be a sleeping. Do thou rise up and see what folks wants, or I must don my gown and go."

"Eh! let be—I'll go," said Roger, roused at last.

He opened the window, and peered down into the black night, in which nothing was visible.

"Is any there?" said he at last.

"Art thou in doubt thereof?" demanded a laughing voice which Roger recognised. "Man alive, but thou sleepest well! My arm acheth full sorely wi' battering o' thy door."

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"Jack Marlins! Lack-a-day, what brings thee here, to abash all the vicinage?"[1]

"No fear, if thy neighbours sleep aught like thee. Let me in, Hodge, and I'll pay for my welcome."

The last words were spoken in so significant a tone that Roger felt sure they had a latent meaning not apparent on the surface. He ran down, unbolted the door, and let in the Sheriff's man.

"What moves thee come i' th' midnight?" asked Roger, as he stirred up the dying embers, and put fresh wood on the kitchen fire.

"What moves thee go abed by daylight?" laughed Jack. "Why, man, it's no-but gone eleven. St. Mary Somerset chimed the hour as I came by."

"Call that good hours?" responded Roger. "Wilt thou sup a stoup o' home-brewed, Jack?"

"Never lost a good thing for 'no, thank you,'" answered Jack; and Roger drew the ale, which was not of a strong character, and came back to the kitchen.

"Well, and what dost thou think I came for?" said Jack, when the jug was half empty.

"I am waiting to hear," was the answer.

"Waiting's a good thing, Hodge. If thou'd tarried a bit longer i' court this even, thou'd ha' slept sounder,

[1] Frighten the neighbourhood.

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trow. Wala wa! but I shouldn't ha' waked thee while morning then."

"Jack! is aught more news anentis the good Alderman? Tell it me quick!"

Jack nodded, for his head was in the jug.

"Well?" said Roger, who felt as if he could not wait another second.

"Well!" said Jack, setting down the empty jug. "When thou hadst left court with yon young man as swooned—how fares he, poor soul?—come to?"

"All well now," was the hasty answer; "get forward, Jack."

Jack gave a wicked wink at the andirons with the eye furthest from Roger.

"Well—when thou hadst gone forth, as I said—dear heart, how doth good Mildred my cousin? I had well nigh forgat to ask for her."

"She's well; do get on!" said Roger.

"Well—after thou hadst left the court, as I was a-saying—couldst thou get me another sup of this stuff, Hodge? It's uncommon good."

"Not a drop, while I've heard thy news," cried Roger. "Man alive, keep me not o' tenterhooks all night!"

"Dear, dear, what a lack of patience and for-

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bearance!" observed Jack, piously. "Mefeareth, Hodge, thou shalt not have shriven thee of late."

"I shall lack all the priests in the Ward to shrive me, if I get much more o' this here!" cried poor Roger, in desperation. "Jack, I'll kick thee if thou dost not tell me all afore thou'rt five minutes elder. Thy news should be good, to deal thus with a man that's well nigh heart-broke."

"Dear, dear, so bad as that?" replied Jack, another wink at the andirons testifying to his enjoyment of the situation. "Well, if thou hadst on those boots I saw in court, I don't say as I should joy much in a kick from them. But that pair o' chaucers[1] 'd come easier a deal."

"I'll go put 'em on this minute," said Roger grimly, getting up. "There's sixteen hobnails in each sole, and I hope it'll learn thee a lesson."

Jack leaned back and roared with laughter.

"Sit thee down, Hodge—sit thee down, man!" said he, when he had done.

"Then wilt thou play with me no longer?" demanded aggrieved Roger.

"I'll tell thee truth, and now," said Jack more gravely: and Roger sat down. "I have good tidings for thee, else had I not kept thee o' th' tenterhooks.

[1] Slippers.

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After sentence was given, Hodge, but afore the prisoners were removed, comes Sir Ralph Stafford, the Queen's squire, from the King, with a message to Master Seneschal."

Roger's heart throbbed. Sir Ralph was a brother —the only Lollard of his family.

"He bare the King's command to fordo[1] the sentence of death on every of the prisoners——"

Roger sprang from his seat.

"And instead thereof they be doomed to perpetual prison, eighty leagues from London town: Master Norbury at Corfe Castle, Master Northampton at Tintagel Castle. Whither Master More goeth I cannot tell thee, for one spake to me, and I lost a bit."

If the Sheriff's man had never before been astonished, he was then. Roger Astelyn set up such a shout of "Glory be in highest things to God!" that Jack Marlins stared at him in unbounded surprise. But what came after astounded him still more. The good blacksmith, whose heart was as simple as that of a little child, knelt down and spoke to his Master, in a style which his visitor had never heard in his life.

[1] Repeal, do away with.

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"Lord!" said Roger Astelyn, "I told Master Nym not to dread Thy being too late, and all the while I dreaded it myself down here——" and he struck a resounding blow on his big breast. "I never thought Thou wert so nigh as this. Forgive me mine unbelief! And surely, Thou that hast done this, canst do more. I'll never dread[1] Thee no more, if Satan 'll let me be—but he willn't. When he comes nigh, good Lord, come nigher! Don't Thee leave me to myself, or I shall be a fool. Praised be Thy name for this Thy mercy! Be it done."[2]

And Roger got up, feeling a great deal more comfortable, and not having the slightest idea that he had made reckless Jack Marlins excessively uncomfortable.

"Hodge!" said that worthy in an undertone, wherein sundry feelings were mixed, "dost thou call that praying?"

"Why, what dost thou call it?" was Roger's return query.

"I cannot tell thee, for I never heard nought o' th' sort afore. But where's thy beads?"

"The Lord isn't tied down to beads, man. Nor I

[1] Doubt.

[2] The Lollard English Amen.—The exact date of the commutation is not on record, but all the circumstances point to its having almost immediately followed the sentence.

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amn't, neither. Thou didn't want beads to ask me for more ale. Thou shalt have it now." And off went Roger with the jug.

"That's the Queen's work," said Jack, inconsequently, when Roger had returned.

"Then God bless her, a thousand times o'er," said Roger, warmly.

"No-but the King's well inclined thereto: but my thoughts o' this is, it's her," continued Jack, ungrammatically. "I say, Hodge, art thou one of they folks?"

"One o' what folks?—kings and queens?" answered Roger, laughing. "Is this here small ale a-getting in thy head, Jack?"

"Stuff! I'd lack a hogshead afore it did. I mean they new doctrine folks—Lollards, they calls 'em now o' days."

"It's full ancient doctrine, Jack, for thou mayest read it o' God's law."

"Not afore I'm learned to read. It's queer, Hodge."

Roger laid his hand on Jack's shoulder.

"Jack, lad," said he, "I want to go to Heaven, and I'd like thee to come."

There was no answer. Twenty years afterwards, when the persecution had actively set in, and the

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statute, *De Hæretico Comburendo*, was in full force, Roger Astelyn read the answer in the ashes on Tower Hill.

The sentence of life-long imprisonment, which yesterday would have seemed a most deplorable doom, came to the relatives of Alderman Northampton as an unanticipated happiness when it replaced the sentence of death. It was impossible to say what further relief might not yet follow, and equally impossible not to hope. Where there was life there was hope: and in the fourteenth century, when government was less a matter of routine than now, and more a question of personal will, anything might be expected to happen without unreasonableness. There was also the consideration that the King's long minority was drawing to its close, and when affairs were in his hands changes were naturally to be anticipated. For a man to be in prison to-day, and a Minister of State to-morrow, or *vice versâ*, was no very unusual thing in medieval times. So, on that thirteenth of September which followed Jack Marlins' nocturnal visit, they were in better spirits at the Silver Bow and the Blue Hart than they had been for weeks previous. Each of the ladies had now set her heart on one thing—to obtain a personal

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interview with the Alderman before he should be removed from London. To do this they had to work through some person of influence with the Constable of the Tower, for in the Tower the prisoners were still lodged.

The Constable of the Tower, Sir Thomas Morieux, was a man not unkindly disposed to the "new doctrines"—had he been so, he would scarcely have married a Beaufort—but he was above all things a soldier, and he had the reputation of being a martinet. It was therefore a little doubtful whether any intercession would prevail with him; and that which did so must be of a powerful character.

"Had Dr. Wycliffe or Father Hereford been hither," said Edmund, regretfully, "we might have counted on them for mediators with Sir Walter Disse."

This was the Lollard confessor of the Duke of Lancaster, who as such would be likely to have considerable influence with the Lady Blanche Morieux, whose tutor and confessor he had been from her infancy. But would Sir Thomas, grown-up soldier as he was, allow himself to be influenced by a child-wife of only twelve years old, however high her blood and rank might be? All these considerations rendered the matter extremely doubtful: but the attempt at least was thought worth making.

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The chain of influence had to pass through several hands. The Vicar of All Saints was first applied to, and he readily undertook to mediate with his acquaintance Sir David Mort, who was a chantry priest in the Duke of Lancaster's service. Sir David passed on the petition to Sir Walter Scott, one of the Duke's chaplains, and from him it reached the potent confessor, Sir Walter Disse. The last-named priest was perfectly ready to give his assistance, but he shook his head at the mention of the Lady Blanche.

"She is too young to meddle, and should scarce be hearkened to," said he. "But wherefore go no higher, and fare better—even to my Lord's Grace himself?"

And Sir Walter did what few other members of the household would have dared to do,—he carried the request right to the Regent of England, so far as any one man can be said to have enjoyed that title. That he did not more thoroughly deserve it was nobody's fault but his own. Had John of Gaunt done his duty, without fear or favour—done it as John Wycliffe and John de Northampton did theirs—a very great deal of the misery that came on England and her Royal House might have been spared to both. More splendid opportunities of serving God and his country no man ever had than

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he. He was the only man on earth, humanly speaking, who could rein in his brother of Gloucester; and Gloucester was rapidly becoming the evil genius of England. But John of Gaunt suffered, not from physical indolence, and not from intellectual inertia, but from that most incurable of all diseases, paralysis of the will. It is incurable in its very nature—because its unhappy subject has lost the power of desiring a cure; that is, not of idly wishing it, but of starting up and working to secure it. He is quite prepared to act—only not just now. And as Miss Ophelia most truly remarks in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, "Now is the only time there is to do anything."

The Duke, however, was quite willing to do a kindness,—even now. And his own Lollard proclivities, purely political though they were, and entirely free from any interference with his moral conduct, inclined him to do a kindness for a Lollard whenever it came in his way. So, passing back again through the various hands, a small slip of parchment reached the Silver Bow, signed with that potent princely name, wherein John, by the grace of God King of Castile and Leon, of Toledo, Galicia, Sibila, Cordova, Murcia, Jahen, Algerbe, and Algesiras, Duke of Lancaster and Earl of Rich-

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mond,[1] paid some courtly compliments to his very dear and well-beloved Sir Thomas Morieux, and affectionately prayed him to allow his prisoner, John de Northampton, to speak with two persons for one hour, under such conditions as were necessary for the prisoner's security.

So much time had been taken up with the intercession that only one evening remained for the interview before the prisoner was to leave London. It was necessary to ascertain the pleasure of Sir Thomas both as to the hour and the persons to be admitted. Edmund Costantyn undertook this delicate task. He found it, even armed with the precious letter, not too easy to gain admission to the presence of the redoubted Constable; for many of the officials who reverently handled the parchment, demurred exceedingly to admitting the bearer. However, by dint of courteous entreaties in some cases, and a dexterous turn of the golden key in others, Edmund did at last succeed in reaching the great man.

In a handsomely-furnished room—such as we should now term a gentleman's study—in the White Tower, stood Sir Thomas Morieux, a tall, spare, good-looking man of some thirty years of age, with

[1] This is his official style as given in his Register and charters.

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quickness and decision written in every line of his face. A slight contraction of the brows, not indicating displeasure so much as a call for promptness and plain dealing, made Edmund at once bow low and deliver the letter without adding any request of his own.

"The King of Castile!" murmured the Constable to himself on opening it. "Humph! Northampton—two persons—an hour—humph! If this letter had come from any meaner hand, young man, I should not have thought it fitting with my duty to allow this communing. But I suppose—so being—what two persons are they?"

"If it serve your pleasure, Sir, the wife and mother of the prisoner."

"Then it serves not my pleasure. I'll let in no women. They alway weep and make ado. If the prisoner hath a son or brother of meet age——"

"Sir, his sons are but little childre. But if it would please you to count me as such, being troth-plight to his daughter, truly I would render you hearty thanks."

Sir Thomas looked at Edmund almost severely, but the young man did not flinch.

"Good," said he. "I love a man that can meet mine eye. You may come, and bring another with

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you—let it be a man, not your younger, and of good reputation."

"Might it please you to allow of Father Hunt, Vicar of All Saints the More, that was parish priest of your prisoner?"

"Good. That shall serve. Five o' the clock this even—keep time. God keep you!"

And Edmund was summarily dismissed from the presence of the Constable. As he hastened out upon Tower Hill, and past Barking Church, he thought to himself that there was not much fear of his being too late. All along Tower Street, through Harp Lane into Thames Street, and on to All Saints' Vicarage, Edmund hurried, anxious to catch the Vicar in proper time, for it was now past one o'clock, and he must go home and report his success and want of success before he could keep his tryst. He was afraid the poor ladies would be sorely disappointed, and a little afraid of objections on the part of the Vicar. Not that he supposed him unwilling to see his old friend, but the Rev. Hamon Hunt could do nothing in a hurry, and was apt to be very slow in taking in a new idea. Never supposing that one at least of the ladies would not be admitted, the Vicar had not been apprised of the matter at all: and whether his intellect would wake up between one

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and five o'clock sufficiently to enable him to accompany Edmund to the Tower, was a problematical question. The suggestion of the priest's name had been quite a sudden thought on Edmund's part. William Comberton only occurred to him to be instantly dismissed from his mind as entirely unsuited to the occasion, being a man who had no thoughts beyond his business, and to whom the rise of a penny in the price of leather was of incalculably more consequence than the future of his hapless brother. Roger Astelyn was the man he would have liked to take, for he thought him one of the truest friends the Alderman had: but he knew that inferior person had no chance of admission in such a case. The Vicar was his next thought, and he spoke it out.

"Is the Father within? Dear heart! Well, he is, if he's none asleep. He was a-jabbering furrin tongues to hisself an half-hour gone, and maybe he's at it yet," said Ankaret, when she answered Edmund's knock. "Do ye go forward, Master, and see." And she pointed to the door of the Vicar's study, to which Edmund appealed, and receiving no answer to his knock, opened it and looked in.

"'*Quia enim juxta est ille,*'" reached him in sonorous tones, before he perceived the worthy Vicar,

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seated at a small desk-table, wearing his cassock and skull-cap, and tracing with one finger a passage in an enormous MS. of the writings of Pope Pelagius II. "*De quo scriptum est*——"

"*Scriptum est, bone Pater,*" said Edmund, breaking in unceremoniously upon the Vicar's studies, "that you shut yonder great book and come with me."

"Eh? Lack-a-day! who are you?" exclaimed the startled Vicar, shading his eyes with his hand.

"You know me not? or you cannot see me belike? I am Edmund Costantyn, and I hold a letter from my Lord of Spain[1] to the Constable of the Tower, to allow two men to commune with Master Northampton at five o' the clock this even. I am one, and methought you should fain be the other. How say you?"

The Vicar's face wore a more dubious expression than Edmund had anticipated.

"I would like right well to see mine old friend," said he: "but—in the Tower—it is an ill errand!"

"Are you afeared?" Edmund's tone was one of amazement, with a faint shadow of contempt.

"Of 'prisonment? Oh nay! I have alway been a true subject and a loyal. But——"

"But what?"

[1] The usual colloquial title then given to John of Gaunt.

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"Well—the world doth regard—it should scarce serve——"

"Whom should it scarce serve? I thought you served God."

The Vicar's conscience gave him a sharp twinge.

"Oh, of course—my good young friend, like all young folks, you be rash and uncautelous.[1] Wit you not that at this season the Lollards be in evil odour?—and to have man's name meddled up with them should be much to man's hurt. For me, you wit, it were small matter; soothly, you know my belief; but I must needs think of my flock. My Lord Mayor were little apaid therewith; and I dread that Master Warbleton and Sir Michael de Chaddesden should like it evil. Sickerly I am sorry. But I think—I do think, Master Costantyn, it were better to keep me forth of the fray."

"You have many masters, Father," said Edmund in so quiet a tone that the Vicar congratulated himself on the tact with which he had escaped. "I serve but One. Methinks I shall be the happier man—and shall maybe have good chance to make the better servant. Good morrow."

And he shut the Vicar in with Pope Pelagius, and a conscience which sadly interfered with his com-

[1] **Incautious, imprudent.**

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fortable study of that Father for the remainder of the day.

Outside the Vicarage, Edmund paused a moment for thought. Whom should he ask next? And the name of Sir John Peche flashed upon him. No sooner thought of than done. Edmund turned northwards, and as quickly as rapid walking could take him there, was striking the bell at the door of Sir John's house in Abchurch Lane.

He found a different reception here. Sir John Peche was not more committed to Lollardism than the Vicar, but the fear of committing himself further which tormented the one was no bugbear to the other. He would be glad to go. Then Edmund turned again into Candlewick Street, and went on to Garlick Hill.

Mistress Comberton met him in the little hall.

"Repreved![1]" said she. "Let me spare thee the saying so."

Edmund explained how matters stood.

"The Lord knoweth best," said the mother in a tone of quiet sorrow. "May be we had unmanned him, and he shall have need of all his strength."

She gave him a message to her son—short, but pithy: and as Edmund was about to take leave,

[1] Refused.

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expecting nothing further, she stopped him, and rang the little handbell which stood on the mantelpiece.

"Tarry but a minute and commune with Alice. She shall desire to send a word to her father belike."

And the tender-hearted old lady left the room, and permitted the lovers to have a private interview. That Mistress Northampton would not have allowed it Edmund felt pretty sure: but Alice was now in her grandmother's care, and he thought he might as well accept and enjoy the crumb of comfort granted him.

Not much comfort, nor pleasure neither, was coming his way just now. More than a few minutes he did not allow himself to linger. Then on again to the Silver Bow, where he had to endure Mistress Northampton's much more unrestrained lamentations, back to Abchurch Lane for Sir John Peche, and with him forward to the Tower, where they arrived as the shadow on the sun-dial was nearing the figure that denoted the hour fixed for the interview.

Here they found themselves expected. On Edmund's giving his name, he was let in at once by a warder in the royal livery—which was white and red, not, as now, red and yellow—at whose girdle three enormous keys clanked, held by a leathern thong.

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"You keep good time," said he in a satisfied tone. "Full sicker theranent, *we* are. Had you come a chime too late, I'll not say you had won in. Time was, we weren't so plaguy masterful—five minutes afore, or five minutes after, take your own time—but now, wala wa! Well, new lords, new laws. Come forward, my masters. But how's this? Methought one of you was to be a priest?"

Edmund explained. The warder looked a little dubious.

"Now, if we had had but Sir Alan de Buxhull, rest his soul! that was at top o' th' tree afore *him*"—the warder's thumb, turned back over his shoulder, indicated the White Tower—"he'd never ha' cared a fiddlestring who came in nor who went forth, so they were good subjects and peaceable folk. He wasn't so foot-hot loving to priests, neither. I trust his soul hath gat grace, nathless: he was as good a man as e'er stepped in shoe-leather, and maybe the saints should take account thereof.—I'll win in, Master, and see what folks say anentis this change; you must tarry a minute."

Leaving them in the court-yard, the loquacious warder went into the White Tower, and after a few minutes' delay, came out and beckoned them to follow him.

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"We're a bit covenable[1] to-night," said he, "so there's not been much said hereabout."

He led the way into the Beauchamp Tower, up the stone staircase, and unlocked one of the heavy doors. He announced the visitors, and left them to make their way in as best they might, locking the door behind them. To them, fresh from the out-door light, the place looked almost dark. But they were speedily reassured by the sound of the familiar voice which had been silent to them for seven months, and by each feeling his hand clasped in the warm grasp of John de Northampton.

[1] Agreeable, accommodating.

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CHAPTER IX.

JOHN WYCLIFFE GOES HOME.

"Gone to begin a new and happier story,
Thy bitterer tale of earth now told and done;
Those outer shadows for that inner glory
Exchanged for ever. O thrice blessed one!"
—DR. HORATIUS BONAR.

ONLY one hour, and the news of seven months to tell, and wishes to ascertain, and advice to ask, and sad farewells to take, in this last interview which was ever likely to be granted! It was no wonder that Edmund felt overwhelmed, and for a few minutes left most of the conversation in the hands of Sir John Peche. But he very soon braced himself up, and took it into his own. He had not spoken many words when his friend's hand was laid on his shoulder.

"Nym, I left a boy at the Silver Bow, and this is a man come to the Tower to-night."

"I was struck into a man at the Standard in

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Chepe, the third of last February," was Edmund's answer in an unsteady voice.

"My poor lad! I can crede that. But tell me, how is it thou and Alice are not yet wed?"

"It is not my fault," said Edmund firmly. "I desire it above all things."

"Then who stands in the way, or what? I know full well, my boy, that thou shalt not better thy worldly matters by linking thy name to mine. If thou hadst the least wish——"

"Father!" said Edmund, using the word for the first time, and it went red-hot to his friend's heart from his own, "do you know me so little as that? Let the world go! Food and raiment, with God's blessing, be all I ask here below. Maybe I shall make for Mistress Alice the ruder home, but at least I can promise her a true and loyal heart, and so much of the good things of this life as mine hand may find to give her."

"What could any maiden ask more?" replied her father. "Take thou God's blessing and mine, my dear son, and as thou shalt deal with my child may He reward thee! But what tarrieth thee, Nym? Is it aught that a word from me might help withal?"

Edmund coloured and hesitated.

"You will never have it forth of him," put in Sir

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John Peche, "so hear you it from me. Mistress Northampton hath a fantasy—women alway have fantasies—that Mistress Alice should not meetly be wed while you are in this case."

"And as I shall be in this case for life, the which may be twenty or thirty years yet," said Northampton, "Alice must not be made the sacrifice. Sir John, I do entreat you, as you love me, say to my wife that if my word had ever power with her, I do full lovingly bid her that she should now let it weigh to suffer Nym and Alice to be wed without much tarrying. For some few weeks, if she will, be it so: but let not the months go by. You will do mine errand? It should come better from you than from Nym."

"That will I, full wilfully," said Sir John. "I did never much take to fantasies of women. I reckon I get too many of them at home."

"And thou," added the prisoner affectionately, turning back to Edmund, "say to my little maid that I give her God's blessing and mine, with all mine heart, and I do desire her to be as good woman and as true wife as her mother and grandmother before her. Better can she not follow. And bid her —and all—hold fast by God's law, and suffer no false teaching of men to beguile them from it. Bless my little lads from me, and bid them be good

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knaves, and obedient to their mother, and that they be a comfort to her and to their grandmother. Tell them—for lads will at times be masterful and perverse under women's ruling—that when they obey them, they obey me. Poor little knaves!" added the father sadly. "Well—God is 'the Father of the fatherless and motherless children, and the Judge of widows.'[1] 'Lord, Thou art made help to us, from generation into generation.'[2] I am not afeared—even for them, and it is far harder to trust our darlings in God's hands than to trust ourselves."

"We hope greatly," said Sir John, "that when the King come to his full age, and take his sceptre to him, things shall be much changed for the better."

His friend's uplifted hand stopped him from adding more.

"Bid me not hope," said the prisoner, shaking his head, "otherwhere than in God. He is the only master that never faileth hope; the only one that 'shall more be a friend than a brother.'[3] Other lamps be apt to go out when most we need them: only the light of heaven faileth never."

Edmund gave him the three loving messages with which he had been charged from the hapless ladies to whom the prisoner stood nearest in the world.

[1] Ps. lxviii. 6. [2] Ps. xc. 1. [3] Prov. xviii. 24.

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His wife bade him keep a good heart, and hope in God; and trust her to do what he would have wished done to the best of her knowledge and power. Alice sent him word that she would pray perpetually for his release, and surely God would hear their constant and united petitions. His mother struck a higher note.

"Tell my dear son," she had said to Edmund, "that I pray God bless him with all mine heart: and God may have better blessings waiting him in the hold of Tintagel Castle than He could have shown him in any chamber at the Hood. As of old time, so now, 'He wist what He was to do.'[1] We be too ready to command Him whom we be bounden to obey. Rather say we unto Him, as Esay,[2] 'Lord, here am I' ready to work His will, and to go whither He biddeth us. The journeys will be over one day, and we shall yield our account at the King's Exchequer of the King's money given to us for chaffering, and then shall the feast come, and the home-coming for ever. Bid him keep true, and hold truth. It shall be only a little while."

Every word of this message, delivered in a low tone, so quietly that a surface observer might have thought the sender cared little, had burned itself

[1] John vi. 6. [2] Isa. vi. 8.

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into Edmund's heart. But for that very reason, it was hard work for his tongue to utter it. The prisoner himself showed more emotion in sending the return message to his mother than to any one else. Perhaps he felt that if he ever should be released, it would probably be too late to see her again.

"Time's well nigh up," said a voice through the key-hole. "And I daren't leave you, not a minute over."

"Thanks, friend!" answered Northampton from within. "A kindly knave, though a thoughtless," he said to his friends.

So then came the last leave-taking. They all knew that nothing else was likely.

"Until we meet again!" said the prisoner gravely. "Until to-morrow! the morrow of the resurrection morning, when there shall be no farewells any more for ever!"

They passed out with eyes that saw nothing. One glance back showed Edmund the tall figure of the Alderman, looking sadly after them; and he gave him a parting smile. Then the great door clanged to behind them, and they saw him no more.

"He shall have his way!" said Mistress Northampton, in a voice interrupted by sobs, when Sir John Peche delivered her husband's message. "No man shall ever say with truth that my Jack could not have

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his way with his own childre for-why he was in prison. Edmund shall have Alice so soon as convenience serveth. Only, lad, give me the week or twain, as he said it, to get mine eyen dry, or I shall be an ugsome [1] thing at the wedding festival."

"Dear Mistress," was Edmund's answer, "you shall have full that. Master Northampton gave me a charge the which I must fulfil ere many days be over. He would fain have Master Doctor Wycliffe to know of all that hath happed, the rather sith he thought that he might send some word or letter that should be of comfort to you: and he prayed me to render him visit at Lutterworth, the which, if God be served, I shall do soon. Master Wycliffe is now a full old man, and Master Northampton had heard say, of a prisoner of our doctrine, that he is bereft of all his friends saving two—Master Purvey, that did so much aid him in setting forth God's law in English, and his curate Master Horn. He prayed me, if I should see that Master Doctor should desire it, to tarry a few weeks with him afore I turned again, and to minister lovingly unto him, which I will full gladly do. Now, if it stand with your pleasure, leave me go quickly on this errand, and at after my return let us be wed. How say you?"

[1] Ugly.

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"Be it done, lad."

It was rather principle than inclination which dictated this suggestion from Edmund. He knew how hard it would be to tear himself away and go on this errand, if his marriage were to precede it. Dr. Wycliffe's life was probably to be reckoned by months, for he had attained a most advanced age in the eyes of his contemporaries; and if not done at once, there might be no opportunity to pay the visit at all. It was also probable that Alice would be no loser, since in his own absence, and after the message from her father, surely Mistress Northampton would allow her to be a frequent visitor at the Silver Bow. It was arranged, therefore, that Edmund should set out for Leicestershire on the last day of September, before which he could scarcely get his business affairs into a proper state to be left.

People were not in such a hurry over things then as they are now. A journey from London into Leicestershire was no light business, but a sort of affair before which a man made his will, and settled all his worldly concerns as if he never expected to come back. Nor did people run through half England for a day or two, and then go home again; they stayed on a visit for weeks, if not months. Both going and returning were tremendous events.

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Edmund engaged Kyrieshaw as his business substitute during his absence. He begged Mistress Northampton to look after Gunnora, and to keep a sharp hand over Gillian, for he well knew that she, not his mother, would be the virtual house-ruler. And—as he was going away, and might never return—would she grant him a favour?

"Any thing in the world, Nym."

"Then—give leave for Mistress Alice to come and tarry with you during mine absence."

"O Nym, couldst thou not have asked something else at me than that?"

"I desire nothing else," replied Edmund, smiling.

"How shall I say thee nay, lad? yet it is nowise seemly. Do bring down thy boon to somewhat reasonable!"

"Well, what say you, then, that she come by nows and thens, though here she tarry not fully?"

"Aye, that should be a deal better," said Mistress Northampton with a relieved air. "I would not so much gainsay that—as thou shalt be hence."

So, by asking for the greater benefit, Edmund secured the lesser.

Just after sunrise on the last day of September, Edmund set out on his journey. He was clad in a tunic of black striped with white, which in his day

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was called motley—a name given to every mixture of two or more colours,—a pair of dark blue hose, and over all a black courtepy, or short cloak. On his head was a hat of Flanders beaver, and his black boots were fastened with white buttons. He rode a bay horse, with a bridle of red leather. Behind him, on a horse of smaller value, came his servant Robert, leading a sumpter-mule laden with the baggage of both. The journey was expected to take about five days, the average day's ride being twenty miles. The first day's journey would be the hardest, for Edmund aimed at reaching the Abbey of St. Albans for the night.

At this time, inns were of two kinds, the hostelry, which lodged and fed its guests, and the herbagery, which did not provide food for the guests' servants. But most abbeys and priories would take in travellers, provided they were of the same sex as the inmates. Some monasteries received guests of either sex, but no nunnery would admit men. It was the more comfortable mode of travelling to lodge in an abbey, but not necessarily the less costly, since a handsome donation had to be left behind, if the traveller were not ready to be handed down to posterity painted in the darkest colours of monastic brush.

St. Albans being a favourite place for pilgrimage,

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Edmund found plenty of company on the road. He slept at the Abbey, in a little turret-chamber by no means magnificently furnished, but a tradesman in those days stood very meanly in public estimation, and outside the City walls an alderman's son was nobody.

The second day's journey was begun later, for its stage was to be the shortest of the series. Fourteen miles brought them to the stately Abbey of Dunstable, where Edmund shared a small room with eight other travellers. The third day's seventeen miles saw them at Newport Pagnell, and here he had recourse to an inn, where after supper in the kitchen, with the host for company, he slept in a loft, where there was no window but a wooden shutter closing the unglazed orifice. At Northampton, fifteen miles further, where he arrived on the fourth day, Edmund intended to have tried the inn again. Unfortunately for his intention, every hostelry was full, as a miracle play was going on in the town, and he was driven to the Cluniac Abbey of St. Mary in the Fields, where he found the worst lodging he had yet endured. Edmund was very thankful, on all accounts, when at the close of the fifth day he rode into Lutterworth, and demanded of a small boy carrying a battledore the way to the Rectory.

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The Rectory stood beside the church, a fine Gothic edifice then about a hundred years old, to which side aisles had been added at a later period. The horses were drawn up before the gate, and Edmund dismounted and knocked at the door. It was opened by a grave, respectable-looking woman of some forty years of age, who replied to his query if the Rector were at home, that—

"That is he; never hath he been many roods hence, this two years nigh."

"Then I pray you tell him that here is a messenger from Master John de Northampton, sometime Lord Mayor of London, that hath tidings of import for him."

The woman left the door, and went into a room on the right hand, from which she returned in a minute with a welcome written on her face.

"Master Doctor prays you lovingly to come forward, and hath bidden me see to your knave and the beasts."

The little room to which she led Edmund proved to be the Rector's study. It was furnished with remarkable plainness. Two large desks, to one of which a seat was attached, of stained walnut-wood —then the wood most commonly used for furniture —stood each on one side of the window. A wooden

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settle ran along the wall at the opposite side, and three or four stools were in the corners. Not a cushion was to be seen except one thin one of red baize, which lay on the seat of the chair attached to the desk. Edmund glanced at the place where the priests of his acquaintance usually kept the vessel for holy water, and saw that none was there. A plain wooden cross hung upon the wall, but no other image or picture was to be seen. But all over the room, on the settle, on the stools, on the desks, books and rolls of parchment lay thickly piled, showing that the word study was a most accurate description of the chamber.

At the desk which had no seat stood a young man of three and twenty years, dressed in clerical garb, turning over the leaves of a thick MS. as if searching for some passage. In the seat of the other desk sat the Rector of Lutterworth, in his black cassock, a skull-cap on his long silver hair, and a quill in his hand. He was evidently writing. As Edmund entered, he laid down his pen, and without rising, held out his hand to his visitor.

"Welcome, young Master! I am fain to see any from my very good and true friend, Master Northampton. And how doth the good Alderman and all his?"

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"Father, I am sent to you with heavy tidings."

The quick ear of the Rector, which even a stroke of paralysis had not dulled, instantly caught both the fatigue and sorrow in the tone.

"Sit down, friend, and take your ease.—Why, what now? Not dead, sickerly? I trust in God, not dead?"

"Not dead, Father, but as evil: doomed to perpetual prison in Tintagel Castle in Cornwall."

"God comfort him if His will be! Soothly, these be heavy tidings in very deed. And wherefore is it, I pray you?"

"He and other stood charged with compassing the death of Sir Nicholas Brembre, and with seditious gatherings in the streets of the City."

"Would you have me believe that?" demanded the Rector contemptuously. "Do you?"

"Never!" said Edmund warmly.

He saw that the bright quick eyes glanced at him with approval.

"And you? Are you of kin to him?"

"I shall so be, ere long, if God be served," said Edmund with a smile. "I have been trothplight to his daughter divers years. My name is Edmund Costantyn, and methinks you did once know my father—Alderman Costantyn, of the Old Change."

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"Knew him? aye, and loved him, as all did that knew him. I am full glad to welcome his son. I perceive your friend's ill hap frighteth you not," said the Rector with an answering smile.

"When man's friends be in sore travail, surely, is not the time to forsake them," was the reply.

"It is the world's time," said Dr. Wycliffe thoughtfully. "And it was the time when Christ's disciples fled from Him. Keep a true heart, young man; it is more worth than a full purse. And how doth my good friend your father?—well, I trust."

"He doth well," said Edmund in a low voice. "The Lord is his everlasting light, and he shall never see evil any more."

"Aye, aye, is it so? Forgive me that I asked a thing so sorrowful for your answering. Truly, my questions have as yet sped so ill, that I well nigh fear to put another."

"Methinks," said Edmund, "I have now spoken all mine ill news. Mistress Northampton fareth so well as may be looked for, and Mistress Comberton belike. Sir John Peche and his dame be well, and Father Hunt, and all other of your friends that come to my mind."

"And where tarrieth Father Hunt at this pre-

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sent?" inquired Dr. Wycliffe, with a twinkle of the bright eyes.

Edmund understood him in a moment. "Methinks," said he drily, "at the village of Faint-heart which lieth near to the town of Harking-Back."

"Ah, he hath there a country house.—You are weary, young Master, and have need to refresh you. Jack, my son, see thereto, I pray thee.—This is my curate, Master Costantyn; his name is John Horn, and as a son in the Gospel hath he served me these two years,[1] sithence the Lord's hand was laid upon me. I pray you lovingly, while you tarry at Lutterworth, make my house your home—leastwise, if you can put up with plain fare such as we have. Here be no painted houses nor Dives' dishes, nor purple and white silk.[2] You shall lie hard, and eat of bread and milk, if you dwell at Lutterworth Rectory."

"I reckon I can well put up with aught Dr. Wycliffe can," said Edmund with a quiet smile.

Both host and guest perfectly understood that the invitation was given for a considerable time. And as the time went on, both were so well pleased with their mutual intercourse that Edmund found he

[1] Ordination was given in the Middle Ages much earlier in life than now. The age of John Horn is historical.

[2] This is Wycliffe's translation of "purple and fine linen," Luke xvi. 19.

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was not to depart easily. Three times he suggested his return, and on each occasion Dr. Wycliffe begged for "one more week or twain," until November, when Edmund had intended to be at home, was run out, and December was growing old.

During all this time Edmund was learning, for his host and master did the same. Never had the old man's intellect seemed so fresh and clear, never had new thoughts so crowded in upon his powerful brain, as during those last months of 1384. One after another the old moorings were cut away, and the soul launched forth upon the ocean of eternal truth. But Wycliffe never put out to sea without a compass, as some who profess to follow the same paths are doing now. What he found in the Book which he loved to call "God's law" was for him an absolute, imperial, everlasting certainty. It was not a thing to be passed through the human cullender of some vague ideas as to what it was morally imaginable that God might do, far less as to what it was morally proper that God should do. "Thus saith the Lord," was as potent to John Wycliffe as to Isaiah or Paul.

One of the most remarkable points in Wycliffe's history is the extreme lateness in life at which his convictions began. His political history commenced about twelve years before his religious one, and he

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was above forty years of age at the earlier period,—forty years being in the fourteenth century equivalent to sixty now, for the average duration of life is much greater than it was then. But if the flower blossomed late, the fruit ripened with wonderful quickness.

For seven years now had Wycliffe warred with heart and soul, by tongue and pen, against monachism and endowments, Papal supremacy, indulgences, transubstantiation, simony, and the tyranny of the priesthood. He had been slower in awaking to the evils of auricular confession, of pilgrimages, and of war. Now, at the very last, his eyes were opening to the futility of the invocation of Saints, to the sin of image-worship, to the unscriptural nature of Mariolatry, and to the non-existence of Purgatory. In this lower world they never opened to the doctrine of justification by faith, nor to the full assurance of hope. God justified him without his comprehending the process of justification, and God kept him unto the day of Jesus Christ without his ever realising that he would be so kept.

Strange ideas were many of these to the youthful mind of Edmund Costantyn, and for a time he wavered between the old teachings of the Church and the convictions, so unexpected and contrary to all pre-conceived notions, of this revered and beloved

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friend. But he very soon perceived that Wycliffe's suggestions were no baseless fancies, but facts based on that infallible and eternal Word of God which He has magnified above all His name. When Edmund was ready to inquire with Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" his teacher answered with Christ, "Have ye not read?" and he was dumb.

To all religion which deserves the name there must be some one infallible test and standard of truth. No superstructure can exist without a foundation. No army can gather or rally without a banner. No kingdom can be governed without a law. To the Romanist and to the Ritualist, the test is The Church. But request the definition of what the Church is, and you will probably receive a very vague description of a very indefinite thing. At the best and clearest, you are referred to a series of man-made traditions, whereby too often the law of God has been made void. Ask the latitudinarian and the unbeliever of all shades what is his test, and he refers you to the moral consciousness of the individual—a standard the height and colour of which must vary with every bearer. But both are of man's invention. Only to the evangelical Protestant, whether conformist or nonconformist, the one revelation of God is the infallible test, which he dares neither add to nor

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diminish from it. Individual Protestants do from time to time fall into one or other of these sins: they are the two grand temptations of all human nature. But be it observed that the Protestant does either contrary to his creed, while the Romanist in adding, and the Agnostic in diminishing, are following out their creed.

Edmund was not slow to receive the idea that there was no Purgatory. We all receive those convictions most easily which go with the grain, and at the notion of Purgatory his heart and intellect had always been inclined to rebel. But he was very slow to be convinced of the folly and sin of Mariolatry. To him, as to all who hold his creed, Mary, not Christ, is the centre of their religious system. His name is indeed bracketed with hers, but she is the active partner in the firm. It is to her that Roman Catholics instinctively repair in any time of trial, and look for help in any perplexity. In their eyes, the man whose faith in Mary is shaken must sooner or later lose his faith in Christ. He cannot reject her sinlessness and continue to believe in the Incarnation![1] One might have supposed that the experience of three hundred years, during which this has not been the case with millions of Protestants,

[1] In stating these arguments I quote from a Romish Bishop.

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would have been somewhat trying to common sense. But the first duty of a Romanist—and what is said of Romanists is equally true of Ritualists—is to divest himself of common sense in reference to religious matters. Otherwise it might have been expected to occur to such, when they urge that a sinful woman could not give birth to a sinless man, that by parity of reasoning this sinless woman must have had sinless parents, and they in their turn must have had the same—flowing on, in an ever-widening stream, till we must either set up a son and daughter of Adam born before the Fall, or must come to a whole world of sinless beings at a prior period of history.

A religion in which this sinless and potent Virgin, this Queen of Heaven and Mistress of the angels, this aid of Christians and refuge of sinners—for Mariolators apply all these names to her—was to be degraded from her exalted throne, and reduced to the level of a mere dead holy woman, was at first indescribably startling and revolting to Edmund Costantyn. A religion without Mary! It was impossible—it was impious!

"My son," said the Rector of Lutterworth, with that smile which he who has reached the Delectable Mountains naturally gives to the young pilgrim struggling up the Hill Difficulty, "I thought as you,

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once. But I now knowledge that I did wrong. Time was when I writ and spake the very self words you have now spoken, and full as heartily belike. But now I know that I have babbled many things which I was not able to make good. Yea, I may say with Paul, 'When I was a child, I spake as a child.' Is it not the mark that a child is become a man, when ye see him of his own will to put away childish things? But read—read!" And Dr. Wycliffe pointed to the great Latin Bible which always lay on his desk. "Read! and if thou come on any word whereby my words shall be disproven, show it unto me, and I will full meekly submit me thereto."

Edmund Costantyn had received an unusually good education for his station in life. The Vicar, Mr. Hunt, recognising his studious turn of mind, had besought his father's permission to teach him Latin, in the hope that the Alderman might afterwards see his way to yielding so promising a blossom to the garden of the Church. Mr. Costantyn had granted the first request, though he shut his ears to the second. So Edmund could do what very few tradesmen could then do, and was able to read the Vulgate with facility. He obeyed Dr. Wycliffe now, and pored, hour after hour, upon those parchment pages written in the Rector's hand and that of his friend Purvey,

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where the quaint black letters were only varied with a very occasional capital letter in red ink. And as he read, his wonder grew. If this book were the revelation of God, how far had the Church departed from it! —and how came it that she had so departed? That the Church could not err was to his mind a maxim as self-evident as that two and two made four. If, then, the Church could not err, and the Scripture could not err, how was it that the two had now drifted so far apart? He put the questions timidly to the Rector.

"'The Church cannot err!'" was the reply, with a flash of brilliant light in those wonderful eyes. "My son, dost thou call the fiend's limbs 'the Church?' 'Of their fruits ye shall know them.'[1] That is the Church which sueth after Christ; not that which sueth after Satan, and maketh to themself painted houses and costly raiment and delicates for to pamper the flesh. If a man err, he cannot be suing Christ therein. The laws of Antichrist be not grounded on God's law. 'Stand ye therefore' as Christ hath made you free, 'and nyle ye eftsoons be holden in the yoke of servage.'[2]"

This was cutting ideas up by the root with a vengeance! Edmund had dimly wondered whether Dr.

[1] Matt. vii. 20. [2] Gal. v. 1.

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Wycliffe would go so far as to allow that the Church might err, and here he was calmly pushing that dread proposition out of his way, in order to reach the far more terrific theory that the thing which had erred was not the Church at all, but a synagogue of Satan!

"But we must worship[1] and obey the Church!" gasped Edmund.

"The Church—well: not Antichrist, that hath enslaved the Church. Make we not blind men our judges, but learn we wit of God's law."[2]

"Father! you call not the Pope Antichrist?"

Edmund expected a fervent denunciation of such profanity. He got what he did not expect.

"I call him Antichrist that standeth against Christ," said the Rector, sturdily. "If popes or bishops or any other shall judge against the judgment of God, they be Antichrists.[3] Saith not the Apostle, '*Ex vobis ipsis exsurgent viri loquentes perversa*'?[4] They be none of the Church."

"But so saying, Father, you should set up a new Church."

"Impossible, my son. '*Una est columba mea.*'[5]

[1] Honour, respect.
[2] Arnold's Select English Works of Wycliffe, ii. 49.
[3] Ibid., ii. 231. [4] Acts xx. 30. [5] Cant. vi. 9.

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There can be no new Church, but if there should be a new Christ."

"Then there be two Churches?"

"There be two bodies, and ever were: the Church that is Christ's spousesse, and the children of the fiend. They be Christ's that sue after Christ. 'He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me.'"[1]

Dr. Wycliffe quoted indiscriminately from the Vulgate and from his own English version, just as either came to his mind.

"Then if a man err?" said Edmund, earnestly.

They were sitting in the study, and it was Tuesday evening—the day of St. John the Evangelist.

"If a man err," was the reply, "'if any man sinneth, we have an Advocate anentis the Father, Jesu Christ, and He is the forgiveness for our sins.'"[2]

"And if a man fall away from truth?"

The answer came in a very solemn tone. "'*Videte, vigilate, et orate.*'[3] '*Vigilate, state in fide, viriliter agite, et confortamini.*'"

Mr. Horn, who hitherto had seemed lost in his own studies, now lifted his head from the manuscript which he was writing.

[1] John xiv. 21. [2] 1 John ii. 1. [3] Mark xiii. 33.

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"Father, I lovingly beseech you not to be late abed, for your strength is not equal thereto."

"Thou art right, my son." The Rector rose, with the laughing remark to Edmund, "See thou, if this lad were my grandfather, he should not rule me more wisely."

"I am fain he is gone to rest," said the curate, when the old man had left the room. "He hath seemed to-day more weary than his wont is."

Edmund had not noticed it. He had rather thought the Rector unusually bright.

"Ah! the blade is bright and well-tempered enough," answered Mr. Horn with a sigh. "But the scabbard is well-nigh worn through."

The morning of the 28th of December rose brilliant alike with sun and hoar-frost. Morning service was at nine o'clock; and Mr. Horn, who had to officiate, left the Rectory somewhat earlier than the others. A few minutes before nine, the Rector walked in with a slow but firm step, leaning on Edmund's arm, and holding his silver-headed cane in the other hand. As he passed the door, he paused a moment to speak to two women—one a venerable white-haired matron, the other a young woman with a baby in her arms.

"I am fain to see thee forth again, Goody Bryd,"

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said he. "The babe is well, trow? And how goes it now with Dickon? Doth he keep now to good ways, or is there yet travail thereanent?"[1]

"I thank you, Father, the babe is full thriving, and Dickon's done a deal better of late," answered the younger woman, dropping a courtesy.

"Why, well said!" responded the Rector, passing on to the chancel, where Edmund left him, the former seating himself in the communion chair, on the north side of the altar, and the latter mingling with the worshippers below.

The mass[2]—it was high mass, being Innocents' Day—proceeded in the usual manner. Dr. Wycliffe took no part in the service except as one of the worshippers. But there was no intoning, and no incense: the Rector of Lutterworth detested these innovations. That which was set to music was sung, and that which was not was read in the natural voice. But when the thrice repeated supplication came, to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, the Rector's voice was heard to join with fervour in the petition. Heard, for the last time!

[1] Richard Bryd (Bird) of Lutterworth received the royal pardon—for what offence is not stated—May 21st, 1383. (Pardons Roll, 5–21 Ric. II.)

[2] Before the Reformation, "mass" was the general term for Divine service, as well as the special name of the communion service. Hence Michael*mas* and Christ*mas*.

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"Grant us peace!" were the last words of John Wycliffe.[1]

Two short collects followed the *Agnus Dei.* Then Mr. Horn lifted the paten above his head, and at the instant that he did it, the aged occupant of the communion chair sank heavily on the ground.

The scene which followed was indescribable. Those of the congregation nearest to the altar pressed forward, losing all thought of time or place in the anxiety of that dread moment. Mr. Horn himself, preferring mercy to sacrifice, set down the paten, and lifted the old man up with tender hands. Loving strong arms raised the communion chair and him within it, and bore both out to the Rectory. Edmund had rushed forth as soon as he saw what had happened, and had the door open for them when they came. The Rector was lifted gently out of the chair, and laid upon his own bed. Then a privileged few pressed round him, entreating him to speak to them—to say what it was that had occasioned his sudden fall.

He would never speak again outside of the Land of Peace. The shining eyes glanced from one to another, and the drawn lips tried to smile farewell.

[1] If Wycliffe were audibly repeating the responses in this service, these must have been the last connected words which he uttered.

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They saw too plainly what had happened, that another stroke of paralysis had frozen up the life, and that release from the world and all its sorrows was close at hand.

As soon as ever he could bring the service decently to a close, Mr. Horn hurried to the dying bed of him whom he had loved as dearly as a father. The old man knew them all—they felt sure of that. He understood them when they breathed into his ear holy words of hope and comfort—they had no doubt about it. But the thanks for their tender care must be kept for Heaven, and the farewells which were impossible on earth would change to welcomes there. He lingered until the sunset of the last evening of the year. And then, just as the sky was lighted up with the golden glory of the departing sun, the Father of all the Reformations passed in at the gates of gold, and they were shut up after him.

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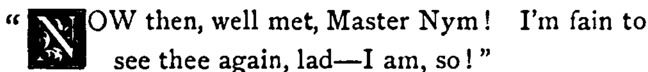
CHAPTER X.

WEDDING BELLS.

“ What then? Why, then another pilgrim song;
  And then a hush of rest divinely granted;
And then a thirsty stage—(ah me, so long!)—
  And then a brook, just where it most is wanted.

“ What then? The pitching of the evening tent;
  And then, perchance, a pillow rough and thorny;
And then some sweet and tender message, sent
  To cheer the faint one for to-morrow's journey.

“ What then? The wailing of the midnight wind;
  A feverish sleep; a heart oppressed and aching;
And then, a little water-cruse to find
  Close by my pillow, ready for my waking.”



“NOW then, well met, Master Nym! I'm fain to see thee again, lad—I am, so!”

These words were accompanied by such a squeeze of Edmund's hand in the powerful grasp of the big blacksmith, that he wondered rather how many, than if any bones were broken.

“Lad, I've rare good news for thee! Not the best —nay, nay, not that—but still it's fair and fetise.”[1]

[1] Charming, tasteful, attractive.

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"I am glad to hear it, for I bring the worst news for you and England that you will hear this many a year."

"Nay, now, what so?" asked Roger, with a complete change in his tone.

"Master Doctor Wycliffe, that hath taught us all, —he rests with God."

"That's good news for *him*," said Roger gravely. "Take your heart to you, dear lad. There's worser things than one you love going to Heaven."

Edmund shook his head, but not at all in dissent. This colloquy took place just inside Moor Gate, and as Edmund was walking his horse down Lothbury with Roger Astelyn beside.

"Well, give me thy news, Roger, for mine heart lacketh somewhat to make it light. All be well, trow, or thou shouldst scarce have met me thus."

"All be well, Master—no-but, if you have brought home e'er a bunch o' roses with you, they'll none be out o' place in Mistress Alice's cheeks."

"Roses in January! Art dreaming, Roger?"

"They're to be plucked in January or any day, by them as knows where to look," said Roger, drily. "I rather think, Master Nym, there'll be one or twain in your saddle-bags."

Edmund smiled. "Well, and thy news, Roger?"

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"Well, where go you to do your wooing, Master Nym?"

"Garlick Hill, I reckon."

"I don't."

"What, is Mistress Alice and the old gentlewoman come to mine house?"

"You're out yet," said Roger, shaking his head.

"Why, what then?"

"They're back at the Hood, Master Nym."

"At the Hood! Hath it been granted?"

"Fifty marks by the year, to Mistress Northampton, fro' th' Stillyard," said Roger, who always shortened his words under the pressure of excitement: "and you may guess, Master, that means the Hood."

"Trust me, I am right glad to hear it."

"Aye, and that's not all. Guess you, Master Nym, who you'll find down in your place in Fish Street a-measuring folks for new sotlars?"

"Not Blyton, surely!" exclaimed Edmund in delight. He had sorely missed his father's skilled and faithful manager.

"Jack Blyton, and none other. And Master Rob Comberton's forth, too. Tide's turning, Master."

"May God grant it!" said Edmund from his heart. "But how came they forth?"

"My Lord o' Salisbury bailed Master Rob, and

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th' Abbot o' Colchester bailed Jack Blyton; but Blyton was let forth first by above a month. He's been down i' Fish Street at his work well-nigh two months now. Heavy bail, Master Nym, and same for both—a hundred pound."

"Heavy, in good sooth! The Abbot shall not suffer. Verily, Roger, thou hast met me with good news."

"Aye, and I've scarce made an end yet. Who think you hath Master Northampton's lands granted?"

"Nay, I cannot guess. Friends, maybe?"

"Shoreditch, my Lord Duke of York: that's good or bad, as may be. But Tottenham lands be granted to Sir John de Beauchamp of Holt, and he's one of us, you know."

"I am fain it is to none worser man.—But, Roger, —I had meant to ask thee aforetime,—have Master Northampton's debts been paid? Thou hadst a bill I know."

"I had, and I sent it in," said Roger, grimly. "Had it been Master Northampton hisself, that had lost his lands and kept his liberty, ne'er a corner should he ha' seen o' my bill: but I hadn't such tendresse over they hawks and kites as was like to divide th' spoil, that I'd make locks and keys for them for nought. I sent it in, and I gat it paid;

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and so did some other folks—and there was a two-three as owed him money, but they wasn't nigh so foot-hot as tother sort, saving Mistress Woodroue, that was Mistress's friend. There was some outside folks made plenty o' noise—saints know what call they had. Prior of Bermondsey, he come: there were six shilling owing to him for rent, quoth he, and he made sixty shilling worth o' noise o'er it. Howbeit, he gat it, and much good may it do him. Then come my Lady Prioress o' Dartford, of her litter, all o'er velvet and gewgaws——"

"Roger! a Prioress all o'er gewgaws!"

"Nay, I wis not well how you call the things, but they was shiny and they rattled, and if that's renouncing pomps and vanities o' this world, I'll get any man i' London town to renounce 'em to-morrow to that tune. Well, she lacked some rent too, for them two shops and the mansion in Old Fish Street, and she wasn't so easy pleased as Prior. She would ha' 't there was back rent owing—come to twenty-three pound and more: and didn't she look like a harpy as she dropped it into her gipser, that's all!"

Edmund's gravity gave way. "What wist thou about harpies, Roger?"

"Oh, I know they was ugly goblins o' some sort, as was fond o' clutching folks' goods. I don't know

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where they dwelt, nor when, but if you was to send me to search for one on 'em, I'd turn Dartford way. Well, when she'd done, there was a rascal as I'd like to ha' had a go at—I would, so!—as fine a fiddler as ever you see in your shop, all donned o' green silk and laced wi' silver, and his sleeves as long as to-day and to-morrow and a good piece o' th' day after, and the boots o' him—eh, wala wa! but them boots was a sight! Master Nym, they was made o' red Spanish leather, and clapsed[1] wi' white buttons, and as I'm a living man—leastwise," said Roger, hastily correcting himself, for in his excitement he had come too near a manner of speech which pertained to his pre-Lollard days—"leastwise, I mean, I'm sicker,—they was a good ell long from heel to toe. Eh, the bravery on him! He should ha' been marched up and down the Chepe, for to be looken at."

"But who was this shining Prince, Roger?"

"You may well ask. No-but a bit of a girdle-maker at Salisbury, that had furnished Master Northampton wi' some goods, and if they was worth no more than him as made 'em, they lacked no paying for. And 'long o' him come a pelter[2] and a pinner,[3] and they was pretty nigh as gay and grace-

[1] The usual pronunciation of *clasped* in Roger's day. [2] Furrier.

[3] Dealer in pins, introduced into England only three years before this time.

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less as him. Afore I'd make myself a popinjay[1] like that! Well, good e'en, Master Nym, and I wish you a happy meeting."

"I thank thee, Roger. At this present I can think of little beyond the parting with that my dear master."

Roger laid his hand upon the saddle.

"Master Nym, think not of it, but of him. Would he turn back, think you? The truth he taught us is not dead, lad; nor the Lord that raised him up is not dead:—dead! There is no such thing as death to God's own folks. Fallen asleep, Master Nym; he was an old man, and he's gone abed a bit afore us stronger ones: and, lad, it's no long while till morning!"

And without another word, Roger Astelyn turned into the smithy, and Edmund alighted and went into the Silver Bow. His welcome from Gunnora was ecstatic: from his mother it was languid and querulous. He had been away such a time! What did he think of himself, either in the light of a son or a lover? Three weeks—three whole weeks—had she been left with no better company than that of Gunnora, a poor silly child who was no company at all. Nobody ever came near her: what was the good of calling people friends who turned their backs on you when

[1] Parrot.

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you were ill and miserable? Mistress Northampton had only paid her two visits since they returned to the Hood, and Lady Peche never came at all. It was too bad! Neither Egeline nor Muriel ever thought of their poor old mother; and now Edmund was beginning to neglect her. Now that he was come back, she supposed he would want to spend all his time at the Hood. And business! If Blyton had not returned to his post, the business would have gone to complete wreck,—of that she was perfectly sure. But young men were so thoughtless! She supposed he had been enjoying himself down in Leicestershire — and much his luxury had been troubled by thoughts of his poor ailing mother!— very likely making love to some giddy girl or other whom he found there. It would break Alice's heart, and hers too — that was certain! And Mistress Costantyn went on to draw a highly-coloured illumination of the lamentable results of this imaginary defalcation, treating her supposition as veritable fact, until she grew quite pathetic over her sorrowful picture.

Edmund heard her out patiently. He had passed through some trying discipline during the previous twelvemonth, and he was better inured to bear such scenes than he had once been. Nevertheless he felt

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them distressing, as who would not? But he tried to put his own feelings aside, and consider only those of his mother.

"Mother," he answered gently, "you be under a mistake. My faith stands pledged to Alice de Northampton, and I shall ne'er belie it. I tarried at Lutterworth, truly, longer than I meant, but it was for-why Father Wycliffe did thus beseech me to do. And now, Mother, Heaven holdeth him, and I am come back to my duty and for your comfort."

Edmund's words proved the text for another homily.

Mistress Costantyn went off at once, as if touched by a match, on the theme of this new trial. If Father Wycliffe were dead, what was to become of the Lollard cause? It would infallibly perish, and without delay. The hopes which she had entertained for the future of her country were dashed to atoms. England was ruined—her downfall was imminent and irremediable! And poor Mistress Costantyn wept and wailed over her incomparable afflictions as though no woman had ever been so tried, at least since the siege of Troy.

As Edmund walked down to his counting-house the next morning, he was troubled by thoughts of the nature which the Puritans termed exercises of

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spirit. He had not yet dared to visit the Hood, even to tell his news, for he was afraid of provoking another shower of tears if he left his mother for a minute on the first evening of his return. It was with a sensation of sickening yearning for the impossible that he wondered if the old days would ever return, even in regard to this one item. Would she ever again be what she had once been? And if not, to what would he be bringing Alice? She would be better off where she was. Had he any right to load her with this burden which he felt so intolerable himself? And it was likely to press more heavily on her than on him, for she would be the constant companion of his mother at times when the monotony of his life would be varied by the interest of business, and other outside matters. For one moment he struggled hard with a temptation which came over him. There were two lives before him, and he had reached a point where it was possible to choose either.

He knew that a proposal to take up his quarters entirely at the Hood would be welcomed with delight by the helpless ladies who sorely felt the want of their natural protector. Selfishness pleaded passionately on this side, and it took the fair form of love for Alice. But many minutes had not passed before

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Edmund recognised the voice which was speaking to him,—the voice which had suggested to Eve, "Yea, hath God said?" and through Peter had urged the Saviour of the world to "pity Himself" more than the souls of men. The next moment Edmund had stooped and lifted up his load.

"'My yoke is soft, and My charge light.' Lord, make it so to her!" he said in his heart.

The temptation had been very specious, and the conflict very sore. But he stood a conqueror. He would not keep back even his dearest treasure at Christ's call. The hand of the Father had bound this burden upon him, and he would quit himself like a man, and be strong.

It would have been easier to bear if he had not known that there was a remedy within reach. If his mother's distressing complaints had arisen from genuine illness, pity might have had full sway. But the apothecary who had seen her had assured him that this was not the case: and Edmund, who could not shut his eyes to facts, had perceived, however reluctantly, that Mistress Costantyn was very well able to exert herself when she chose, and that it was only the things she disliked which she found it impossible to do. At first yielded to in sorrow and weakness, the evil spirit had remained when the sorrow and weakness had left her. And one of its

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worst features was that it seemed to grow upon her.

As he walked and thought, a great pity filled Edmund's soul for that unhappy mother—a deeper compassion than any real illness could have evoked. The malady was of the soul. There was only one Physician who could deal with diseases of this nature. Had he made a genuine and sufficient appeal to Him? He determined that in future there should be no doubt on that point.

Edmund's reflections had reached this stage when he found himself at the door of his shop, and he turned into the counting-house. A sudden revulsion of pleasurable feeling came upon him as he saw at the desk the familiar form of John Blyton, his head stooped over a ledger, but raised the next moment to greet his master's step.

"Dear old Jack! the best of welcomes awaiteth thee!" said Edmund heartily, as he gave both hands to his manager.

"I reckoned you'd have me back, Master," answered Blyton, with something in his eyes which was not all light.

"Have thee back!" was Edmund's reply, delivered with unmistakable intonation. "And how hath it gone with thee, old friend? tell me all thereanent."

"Well, Master: full well," responded the manager.

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"I only took the wind on my face a bit. But it is full pleasant to get under shelter."

"It is not pleasant to be out in the blast," said Edmund, significantly.

Blyton quietly read his young employer's face.

"Well, that hangeth somewhat on who's your fellow in the journey," said he with equal meaning. "It is full hard work breasting that wind, without you have Christ's arm to stay you on. Aye, it is so!"

"If man might know when things would have an end!" sighed Edmund.

"That should be sight, not faith, Master. And it should not be easier alway. Would it so, think you, if you saw that some matter should go on for twenty years, when you hoped to be rid thereof in twain? And beside—Master Edmund, shall I make you partaker of a thought the which helped me no little through the cold wind that hath blown o'er me?"

"Prithee, so do, Jack."

"I thought," said Blyton in a low voice, "of that word, in John's Evangel, 'witting all things that were to come on Him.' He knew it all along, from His baptism—may be from His very cradle. The shadow of the coming cross, Master, and of the agony in the Garden, must have been a burden on His soul through all His life. He could have no hope of escape,—every day it drew nearer and nearer. And what is man's life worth, if you cut off hope? Yet,

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look you, He went about His business as though no such thing were. Master, read you ever busily[1] the four Evangels? and have you marked that He was alway ready for work, and yet never in any bire[2]? You and me, I reckon, we'd have felt travailed with those little childre, and with all the foolish questions He was asked. We should have lost our tempers, may be. But look how tender He was to the babes, and how patient with the questions. And all the time, for three and thirty years, in His soul's sight, that Garden, and that cross!"

Perhaps Blyton would have made his little sermon shorter, if he had not read signs of a recent storm passed through upon Edmund's face, and had wanted both to help him, and to give him time to recover himself. And when he ceased, another Voice took up the theme, and fitted a text to the sermon in Edmund's heart. It said, "Whether ye might not one hour wake with Me?" The only answer which Edmund gave to Blyton was a smile. But to that inner Voice he responded, in tones which no other could hear, "'Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou wist that I love thee.'[3] 'Help thou me, and I shall be safe.'"[4] Then with a calm look which satisfied Blyton, he sat down and asked for the ledger.

They were soon deep in business—discussing botews, or high boots, at eightpence the pair, best

[1] Carefully. [2] Hurry. [3] John xx. [4] Ps. cxix. 117.

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quality, and sotlars, or low shoes, at sixpence; galoches—over-shoes, as now—which were expensive articles, costing one and twopence; whether a fresh stock of red Spanish leather should be laid in for chaucers, loose undress slippers; and what was the latest vagary of fashion in the toes of cracowes, the long boots which tapered so far and so uncomfortably in front of the wearer that they had to be tied to the knee by silver chains. Was it desirable to order more of these last articles from Nicholas Rouland, the goldsmith in Tower Street? or a fresh selection of metal buttons from Adam Kirkeby, the latoner in Fleet Street? Had the embroidery for ladies' slippers come in from Maud Bailey the trimmer? Should some buckles of foreign filagree be procured from Fiorentino the Lombard merchant, or more of plain gold or silver from Agnes Goldsherer? Silk was wanted for ladies' linings; should it come from Master Richard Whittington the mercer, or from Marco Lombardo, who sold Venice ribbons and Tours silk and satin of Bruges?[1] The books were balanced, and Edmund discovered that he was a richer man than when he had left London.

"Kyrieshaw dealt not ill, methinks, until thou camest," said he to Blyton. "I took him for an honest fellow."

[1] All these were real tradesmen in London at that time.

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"He hath done full well, Master," said Blyton, decidedly.

"Let me see," pursued Edmund, "what shall be due unto him? I covenanted with him for sixpence the day and his victualling. He came hither the last day of September, which unto—what day didst thou discharge him, Jack?"

"I never did, Master. You set him in place; and you are my master as well as his."

"I see," said Edmund with a smile: "thou didst find him ado in the shop."

"Not so, Master, under your pleasure. I found him manager, and it was not for me to undo your work."

Edmund looked up in unfeigned astonishment.

"He hath been manager all these weeks!—and thou?"

"I have served in the shop," said Blyton simply.

"John Blyton!" cried his master, "dost thou give me to wit thou hast been serving under Kyrieshaw?"

"Of course, Master," was the quiet answer.

Those were days when, in every rank of life, precedence was sharply defined, and etiquette extremely minute. For Blyton to serve under Kyrieshaw was equivalent in its way to a duke putting himself voluntarily below an earl. For an instant Edmund was silent. Then he said,—

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"Blyton, old friend, thou hast learned Jesu Christ well."

The old manager, whose hair was white, and who for twenty years had been head of that establishment under Alderman Costantyn, smiled significantly as he replied.

"Well, Master, methinks I had served ill my 'prenticeship at Corfe, had I come hither to grudge the yoke upon my neck."

It was with feelings towards Blyton rather like those of a son than of a master that Edmund took his way to the Hood at the close of his day's work.

The visit was a strange mixture of pain and pleasure. The news of Wycliffe's death was far more at the Hood than it had yet been elsewhere. To others he was merely the revered teacher of truths previously hidden by an evil system: but to the Northamptons he was the old friend in addition to it,—the friend attachment to whom and to whose cause had cost John de Northampton his liberty, and almost his life. Yet there was some cheerful converse over those items of good news which Edmund had learned from Roger Astelyn; and to him that could not be an entirely painful visit which restored Alice to his eyes. Before he left, he reminded Mistress Northampton of her promise.

"Aye, and I will abide thereby," said she.

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Edmund pressed for the naming of the day.

"Well," said Mistress Northampton slowly, "we be close upon Hilary, it is true. What sayest thou to the morrow of Saint Chrysostom?"

What Edmund thought was that she was spinning the time out to the furthest possible limit, for it was now the tenth of January, and the day mentioned was the twenty-eighth. What he said was,—"At your pleasure, Mistress."

"Good. Then we will say that morrow," answered Mistress Northampton, with a rather relieved air "Nym, wilt thou do me the kindliness to let Father Hunt know it?"

Edmund was so determined to have no more putting-off that he could help, that in returning home he went round by the Vicarage of All Saints. He could not help feeling amused at the poor Vicar's alarmed expression on catching sight of his visitor, who, he probably thought, had come to drag him away to some extremely unwelcome place or thing. Edmund began first with his matrimonial business, and the Vicar's brow cleared immediately. He expressed his thorough gratification at the call made upon him. Then Edmund told him the sadder news—of Dr. Wycliffe's death.

The Vicar was evidently shocked and distressed. So much so, indeed, that long after Edmund had

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left him, he sat holding a dry pen between his fingers, and looking out over the river with eyes which saw none of its barges.

"If man could be alway as he at times is!" sighed Mr. Hunt half audibly. "If he could keep Heaven next door, and send away the world and all that is in it! Some do, I believe. I would I were of them! He did, in very sooth."

And all that evening he was thoughtful and dreamy, balancing gold and dross, wondering if it would be ever possible to him to let the dross go and to seek for an abundant entrance into that Golden City whither his old friend had gone.

The next morning, the world was back again.

"Sonties! but I'm nigh tore o' pieces!" gasped Mildred Astelyn, as, after extricating herself from the crowd at the door, she emerged at last into the cooler and calmer precincts of the west doorway of All Saints.

"'Shouldst ha' come after me," said Roger, looking down on her. "Women be perverse. Alway was, sith Adam' days, so far as I've heard tell."

"Now, Hodge!" deprecated the lady. "Keep a civil tongue i' church, at any rate. Shall we go up to th' further end?"

"Bide a bit," said Roger. "They'll be by th' font at first, thou wist."

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"Oh aye, so they will," returned Mildred, fanning herself with her apron, though it was winter.

A little stir at the door announced the arrival of somebody: and Mistress Northampton, superbly dressed in crimson silk, old Mistress Comberton, in sober black, Mr. William Comberton, in white and blue, and his wife in bright green, entered the church, and took up their places near the font. A short time afterwards appeared Egeline Dyneley and her husband, Muriel Palmer and hers, and Sir John and Lady Peche, all attired in their best. Then came sweeping along the aisle Lady Margaret Walworth, wife of the sometime Lord Mayor (who was knighted *not* for the death of Wat Tyler); and after a little while Sir William Walworth followed her, accompanied by Sir John and Lady Worth. This was unexpected honour. Blanche Worth was the daughter of a Princess of England, and in choosing her present husband she had come down very low, in order to obtain a Lollard mate. Master Robert Comberton now appeared, and last of all, leaning on the arm of the bridegroom, Mistress Costantyn, who —though she meant to go all the time—had suffered her friends to exhaust all their persuasions before she would allow herself to say so.

The bridegroom, of course, was out of mourning on this occasion. He wore a long gown of blue

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camlet, trimmed with marten's fur, white hose, a tunic of brown striped with blue, black boots with white buttons, and a cap of bright scarlet. Having taken up their stations by the font, they waited for the bride.

One of the oldest friends of her father led her in —a very exalted person in comparison with all but two of those present—Sir Richard Stury, the good old Lollard knight who had been "of the Bed-chamber" for twenty years or more, and was a member of the Privy Council.

Alice de Northampton wore a dress of scarlet baldekyn, over which was a tunic of "ray" or striped material, in this case of gold and white, a mantle of black cloth, lined and furred with miniver, and a garland of roses on her head, from beneath which flowed down her sunny hair, and streamed over the black mantle. The roses were of course artificial, and were strung upon a chain of gold.

Following the bride came her six bridesmaids, clad as it pleased them, in no uniform colour or style—Gunnora Costantyn, Amana Peche, Philippa de Burnham, coming first, and behind them three considerably smaller—Alice Dyneley, Elizabeth Palmer, and Joan Comberton. The last-named young lady had been so cross over her dressing that there had been some fear for a necessity of superseding her, in order not to drive the ceremony beyond the canonical hours.

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At the font the bridal party were met by Father Hunt, who conducted the first or betrothal part of the service. Introit, collect, epistle, gradual, and gospel being over, the pair plighted troth, after which they advanced to the altar, where a much more important person waited for the equally important conclusion. The Archbishop of York came forward to the steps of the altar, and uttered the offertory and the "secret," during the former of which Edmund placed a fee of two shillings upon the priest's book. Then followed the exchange of rings, which constituted the real marriage. At the words, "With all my wórldly goods I thee endow," Edmund laid a silver mark upon the priest's book, which was appropriated by Alice. Leaving the ring upon her finger, they knelt down, and there were some long prayers, and the mass, and finally the benediction, and then bride and bridegroom rose from their knees, and the ceremony was over.

"Dear heart!" exclaimed Mildred Astelyn in a whisper, "but Master Nym's up first! If I'd been Mistress Alice, I'd ne'er ha' given him the chance!"

"Thou didst not give it me," said Roger with a grim smile. "But it's best so, Mildred."

"Aye, Hodge, I guess it is," was the meek reply.

The wedding feast was at the Hood. Alice herself, as well as her mother and the maids, had toiled

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over the preparations for some days. It opened with a sucking pig—of course cut in pieces; a whole pig, of whatever size, was restricted to the peerage. The dishes were numerous and good, the wines choice, and the company well pleased. There were a few items, however, which showed the rank of the various guests in a manner wherein we should never dream of marking it now. The finest simnel bread was served to the Archbishop and Lady Blanche, wassel to the knights and their ladies, brown or barley bread to such as were in trade, and had not been knighted. This last class included the bridegroom. The bride, being the daughter of an ex-Lord Mayor, who has the rank of an earl, was served with wassel. So much for the high table.

At the tables which ran down the hall, at right angles to the daïs, were seated the servants of the family, and any body else who chose to make his way in. Among these were Roger and Mildred Astelyn. So far as his personal feeling went, Edmund would willingly have invited Roger to his own table, and Alice certainly would never have objected: but etiquette stepped in and menacingly forbade so levelling a procedure. Here also sat Blyton and Kyrieshaw, and all Edmund's shopmen, who with their wives were invited guests.

When dinner was over—they did not call it break-

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fast in those days—the tables were removed, and the hall cleared for dancing, so universally a part of the day's proceedings that a medieval bride would scarcely have felt herself married without it. The minuet, which headed the ball, was regulated in the strictest manner. The bridal pair must open the ball with each other, after which each must take the partner of highest rank present. Edmund therefore offered his hand to the Lady Blanche Worth, and Alice fell to Sir Richard Stury. But after this formula had been complied with, any body might dance with any body for the remainder of the evening, rank being entirely set aside except in the case of royal persons. It was, however, considered proper that the bride and bridegroom should dance with as great a variety of partners as they conveniently could.

Alice had done as much of her duty in this respect as she felt able, and she begged her last partner, Sir John Peche, to allow her to sit down for ten minutes. She had not rested for half that time when a voice at her side accosted her in a rather meek and diffident manner.

"Mistress Alice!—leastwise I ax pardon—Mistress Costantyn."

"Well, friend? Roger Astelyn, as methinks?"

"He, to serve you," said the big blacksmith, with

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a pull at his hair. "Mistress, will you grant me leave to put a question to you?"

"Surely, good Roger."

"Then—if it like you to tell me, who's a-going to be master at Silver Bow—you, or Master Nym?"

"Well, methinks," said Alice, fighting hard for her gravity, "when I have but now behote[1] to obey, it were as well I began not my work with striving to be master."

"That's it!" exclaimed Roger. "I'm fain to hear you say it. It's unlucky t' other way. Hens as sets up to crow be never good layers. And they never crows so well as th' old cock, neither. They're neither one thing nor t'other. Look you, I once had one o' that sort i' my yard, so I know somewhat anentis it," said Roger very gravely. "It's alway best to let th' fore horse lead, look you. If th' hind un's treading of his heels all along, a-trying to get first, like as not there'll be a mash."

"I will try to avoid it," said Alice, biting her lips.

"Look you," said Roger, who evidently took a warm interest in the matter, "angels gets sent of all manner of errands; but none on 'em ever strave together which should do the well-favoured uns, as I've heard tell on. I reckon, Mistress, you're not so very much better nor th' angels."

[1] Promised.

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Alice decidedly assented to this proposition.

"Well, then, you let th' fore horse go afore, and there'll be a chance o' th' goods coming in safe," concluded Roger. "Thank you, Mistress Alice: there's a weight off my mind."

Off he marched, and Alice allowed herself to laugh.

The dancing was over, and so was the supper; the bride and bridegroom had retired, with all that array of time-honoured observances which were never omitted, though many of them would have been more honoured in the breach than the observance; the guests had departed, and the lights were out. In the street just opposite the windows of the darkened house, stood Roger Astelyn and John Blyton.

"*He*'d ha' been glad to ha' seen this day," remarked the former. "I reckon he'd like to hear on't, if a man could get it to him."

"Don't run any risks, Astelyn," said Blyton, kindly.

"Nay, nay, it is not worth the while," answered Roger sadly. "There's too little chance for the risk. But will he ever come forth and hear it?"

"God knoweth. And you'll get no further than that, friend, if you beat your brains for an hundred years twice told."

"Well!" said Roger, softly stroking out one of the bride's ribbons, which were always cast down to be

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scrambled for by the public, "Well! Heaven will hold us all."

"The angels shall see some sights, I reckon," replied Blyton. "Some glad meetings of severed friends shall there be there! We can 'bide to tarry a bit in this ante-chamber, knowing it."

He stepped aside the next minute to give place to the litter of the Lady Idonia Brembre, who, "in gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls," was going home after an evening party.

"Ah! you're up at top o' th' tree now," said Roger, apostrophising the proud, handsome occupant of the litter, when she had passed by. "Maybe you'll not tarry there so long. And I couldn't say—I dread it's wicked, but I couldn't say, I'd be sorry to see you come down! It isn't human natur'—is it, now, Master Blyton?"

"It is not," he admitted. "But maybe it lieth in God's grace."

"Human natur' 's strong in me," said Roger. "And that critter's not to be named same day with Mistress Northampton, let be Mistress Alice. Master Blyton, when'll all they wrong things be set right?"

"God knoweth," said Blyton again.

"Master Blyton," said Roger, as they began to walk down the Ropery on their way home, "don't you think th' tide's turning a bit?"

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Blyton shook his head.

"Nay, now, sure-ly! Here's you and Master Rob Comberton come forth, and the Hood given back—sure-ly!"

"One or two waves may break higher up on the shore, yet the tide may be still ebbing," answered Blyton. "If I mistake not, friend, it hath further to run out yet."

"Don't say it, Master Blyton—don't say it!" cried Roger distressfully.

"Well, I won't say it," was the reply with a smile.

"Aye, but don't think it!"

"Astelyn," said Blyton almost solemnly, "if all they who were gathered in that hall to-night—not to speak of other folks—be alive and well five year hence, I cannot see far into time coming."

"Well, we must all die, for sure."

"Aye, but I mean death by violence."

"Whom think you of?"

Blyton did not answer that question.

"And mark me, Roger Astelyn, when the tide doth turn, there shall be some heads forfeit."

"Eh, well! It's a queer world this," replied Roger. "Up at top o' th' wheel to-day, and down at bottom to-morrow! Methinks it is best to stop down at th' bottom."

"It is the royal place," said Blyton in a quiet

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tone. "'I am in the middle of you as he that ministereth.'"[1]

"If all folks thought so, Master Blyton—it'd be another manner of world we should waken up to o' th' morrow. Eh, it would so! But what think you o' that Jack Straw fashion o' talk—that there should be no kings nor lords, but all men as good one as another?"

"I think as Paul saith—'Each man, in what cleping he is cleped, in that dwell he.'[2] If all men were made alike to-morrow, how long should it last?"

"A marvellous short time wi' some folk. But o' th' land, Master—they folks say God gave the land to the men o' th' country. What say you?"

"That say I."

"You do so! But they have it not, look you."

"Have not they? Who hath, then?"

"Aye, but it's no-but a few amongst 'em."

"It seems to me," was Blyton's answer, "rather likely that God gave the land to them to whom He did give it, than to them to whom He hath not given it."

"Well," said Roger slowly, "that sounds like sense."

"Have you and I right to tell God that He hath

[1] Luke xxii. 27. [2] 1 Cor. vii. 20.

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parted out the land to too few folks, or to the wrong folks? I tell you, friend Astelyn, if all men had a little more of one matter, this world should be a deal happier place."

"Tell me what it is, and I'll have a try for it."

"Content."

"Right you are!" said Roger, after a pause for reflection. "Stands to reason, if man be content, he lacks nought."

"Nor envies any man."

"Well, Master Blyton," said Roger, as they reached Blyton's door, "tarry one minute—how may a man get content if he hath it not?"

"Let him pray for a thankful heart," said Blyton, "and he shall soon have a merry one."

"I'll try it," said Roger, as he turned away. "Give you good even, Master Blyton."

"Ah, friend!" murmured Blyton to himself, as he watched the big blacksmith's stately stride down the street, "if we all had as much as thou, there should be far less trouble in this world."

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CHAPTER XI.

THE TIDE RUNS OUT.

"Yea, I have felt like some deserted world
That God had done with, and had cast aside
To rock and stagger through the gulfs of space,
He never looking on it any more."

—JEAN INGELOW.

THE storm which John Blyton foresaw was not long in breaking. On the ninth of July, in the following year, the Duke of Lancaster sailed for Spain; and as the Princess of Wales had died in the preceding autumn, the only two hindrances to the coming tempest were taken out of the way. Gloucester, the youngest of the King's uncles, caught the reins as they dropped from his brother's hands, and in three months from the time of Lancaster's departure, Gloucester was to all intents and purposes King in England.

He did not begin by making war upon the Lollards, though this was his ultimate purpose. There were a few who were not Lollards, but who were too faithful to the Crown to bend as he chose

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to sway them. His first act, working through a too submissive Parliament, was to remove these. On the very day that Parliament met—October 1st, 1386—London was startled with the news that the Lord Mayor and the Lord Chancellor were impeached before that august tribunal.

The Lord Chancellor, Michael de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, was a man who may be said to have risen comparatively from nothing. His mother was a knight's daughter and an heiress, and his wife was the same: but on the paternal side he was descended from no higher source than London merchants, and thus was merely the equal of Edmund Costantyn. At that time, a tradesman was very low down in social position, unless he contrived to acquire it as an alderman or a knight. The servant of a peer was considered a far superior man. Within the City of London was the only exception to this rule. Michael de la Pole, thus humbly descended, had risen from the ranks with unusual rapidity even for medieval times. The King found him a faithful servant; but with the nobility he was excessively unpopular. Most of all was he disliked by the hierarchy. They all resented his sudden rise, and took pains to show it by addressing him on all occasions as "Michael"—a proceeding designed to remind him of his lowly origin, since the Christian name was the usual form

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of address to the lower classes. This must have been extremely galling to Suffolk, whose besetting sin certainly was vanity. He clung to his Norman "de la" tenaciously, while men who wrote in English called him Michael atte Pool; and in one of his extant charters he lets us see his delight in as many titles as he can gather around himself and his relatives, with the transparency of a child. Exactly in the terms which would have been used by the Sovereign, but which were not suited for any one below a princess, he speaks of his mother as "the most noble lady, our mother, the Lady Katherine."[1] The pronoun "we" was at that date used by all nobles, but not by mere knights, such as Suffolk was at that time. How far Suffolk was or was not a Lollard, by outward profession at least, is not an easy question to solve. One or two points of his history favour the affirmative presumption; and not the least is the fact that he won the intense hatred of that accomplished hater, Bishop Arundel of Ely. There are, however, other facts, which seem to rebut this supposition.

The Lord Mayor, who was impeached with Suffolk, was Sir Nicholas Brembre, who had held the office for three years running, ever since John de Northampton had vacated it. He, too, was not undeserv-

[1] Close Roll, 2 Ric. II.

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ing of his fate; probably he merited it more than Suffolk. The charge brought against him by the citizens of London, on which the House of Commons acted, was twofold; he had, with a strong hand, caused himself to be elected Mayor, and he had "made divers enarmings, had destroyed the King's true subjects, some by open slaughter, some by false imprisonment, and some had fled the City from fear."[1] But a further series of petitions, from various guilds, in which the Cordwaners' Company led the way, went into more interesting details. In rather comical Norman French—this language, in the fourteenth century, is apt to sound comical—these petitions stated that Nicholas Brembre had been elected "against the free election of the City;" that he "came into Chepe with a great number of armed men, to the great dread of the good men of the said City, and there suddenly, without right, justice, and process of law, caused to be cut off the head of one John Costantyn, cordwaner, of the said City."[2]

So Nicholas Brembre's sin found him out, and he paid the penalty for the murder of John Costantyn.

The Duke of Gloucester now laid a firm hand upon the reins of power. He passed, on the 19th of November, through the subservient Parliament, an Act by which all real power was placed in his hands

[1] Rolls of Parliament, iii. 225.

[2] Ibid., p. 226.

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during the remainder of the royal minority; he filled all the offices of state with his own nominees; he and his followers solemnly "renounced their allegiance"—as if allegiance had not been a debt to be paid where it was owed, but a favour to be conferred at pleasure—at Huntingdon on the 10th of December: and the terrible civil war set in, wherein Gloucester and the Privy Council fought to the death, the real kingship of England being the prize in view.

It was well then for those who were near the bottom of social distinction. Such men as Roger Astelyn were tolerably safe, so long as they held their peace. But the higher up a man was, the more danger he was in.

The Privy Council had consisted of eleven persons, of whom three were Lollards of the most pronounced type, and three more were kindly affected towards that party. Against six out of the eleven proceedings were taken. Five out of the six fled before the storm—Sir Nicholas Brembre, Sir Robert Tresilian, the Earl of Suffolk, the Duke of Ireland, and the Archbishop of York. But Gloucester found his subservient Parliament not sufficiently subservient for the accomplishment of his objects, and he dissolved them, calling another immediately. On the third of February, 1388, the Merciless Parliament was opened at Westminster. And then men began

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to see that what had at first been regarded as an agitation for the removal of a few persons politically obnoxious to Gloucester and his followers, was neither more nor less than a religious crusade against the adherents of John Wycliffe.

All the Justices except seven were sent to the Tower, and the councillors who had fled were impeached. Sir Robert Tresilian was betrayed by his own servant. At Tyburn, on the 19th of February, he suffered the penalty of the law; and on the next day, at the same place, Sir Nicholas Brembre gave in his account to God.

"Good morrow, Master Blyton. Is tide turning *now?*"

"Art thou content therewith, Roger?"

Roger Astelyn rubbed his forehead, as if he found the query a little difficult to answer.

"Well!" said he, drawing the word out to a portentous length, "no, I amn't, leastwise—Master, I saw my Lady Brembre go by this morrow, all o' doole for her lord."

"Did that content thee, Roger?"

"That's right what it didn't. And it should ha' done. While that critter was a-queening it of her silks and satins, I'd ha' liked well to ha' taken her down a peg: but when I see her in her doole, a-looking ever so white and sorrowful — look you,

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Master Blyton, it didn't go down pleasant. Felt like as if I'd had a hand in it."

Blyton smiled with full understanding.

"But is tide turning? That's what I want to know. What think you now?"

"We shall see ere long."

"But think you so, or no?"

"Nay, Roger, I think the storm is breaking, and that many a gallant ship, and many a leaky vessel, will go down therein together."

Five days later, Roger Astelyn was absolutely certain that Blyton was entirely mistaken, and that the tide was turning. For the head of Alderman Costantyn was taken down from Ludgate, and laid in a coffin with the four quarters of his body, which were thereupon delivered to his widow for burial.

John Blyton still shook his head. "God grant it be so!" said he in reply to Roger's exulting query. "But methinks this has been done but by way of fordoing all the deeds of Sir Nicholas Brembre."

A strange mixture of pain and comfort to the family at the Silver Bow was that long-deferred funeral. Edmund was especially afraid of the effect on his mother. To his surprise, the result was for good and not harm. When the poor relics of her husband had been at length laid to rest, Mistress Costantyn's spirit seemed to rest too. She never

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reverted to her old type; but she became calmed and softened, less complaining, and more active, more ready to come out of herself and enter into the feelings of others. It was an unspeakable relief to all about her. Alice questioned her grandmother as to how she supposed it was.

"Methinks, dear heart," said the old lady, "the sight of his coffin recalled her from her sorrow, which had become well-nigh a malady, to the memory of himself for whom she should sorrow; and may be—I cannot say—coming nearer to him, she got a touch of the robe of the Master with whom he dwelleth."

As that dreadful year of blood went on its way, it became more and more apparent that the tide had not turned, but that the storm was coming nearer. One of the under-sheriffs, and a gentleman of the household, were hung at Tyburn on the 4th of March. On the 20th of the same month a corporal oath was administered to every citizen at the bar of the House of Commons, that he would "keep the peace and cause it to be kept, and be against all who would disturb it; that until the end of the session he would suffer nothing to be done against the persons of the five Lords Appellants, Gloucester, Derby, Arundel, Warwick, and Norfolk, and would sustain them during life, to live and die with them, against all other persons: saving always his allegi-

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ance to our Lord the King, the prerogative of his crown, and the laws and good customs of the realm."

"Master Nym," said Roger Astelyn, "what do you anentis this corporal oath here?"

"Take it, Roger, to be sure."

"Are you so marvellous dear-loving to my Lords therein named, trow? I amn't."

"I never said I was."

"But you bind yourself to live and die with them?"

"Saving the King's pleasure, and the law, and mine allegiance. What is then left unsaved?"

"Oh, that's where you are, is it?" said Roger, stroking his beard with a grim smile. "Well, may be that shall stand the hammering."

The next step was the borrowing of £5000 from the City, the Dukes of York and Gloucester, with other peers, being sureties. Then Bishop Arundel of Ely, one of the two great enemies of the Lollards, was translated to York in place of the gentle Lollard Archbishop Neville, in exile at Louvain. And when Parliament, prorogued immediately after the oath-taking, reassembled on the fourteenth of April, the judicial murders began in good earnest. Before some of this work could be done, it was necessary, or at least very desirable, to get the King out of the way. If he should unhappily recollect that he was

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just of age, and determine to take the law into his own hands, it might be awkward. Fortunately for the miscreants who were directing affairs, he had not yet done this: and they provided against it as far as in them lay, by packing him off to Wales, where they held him to all intents a prisoner at their will. But there was always the fear that the prisoner might escape, might reach his capital, might plead his own cause with that most trying portion of his lieges, the citizens of London, whose Lollard proclivities and unpleasant notions of independence were by no means a satisfaction to the minds of the Lords Appellants.

So the axe was set to work, and the best blood of England reddened the sawdust on Tower Hill, or stayed its course upon the elms at Tyburn. Not the highest in heraldic precedence, but the noblest souls who could be worst spared if England were to remain great.

Sir John Beauchamp of Holt was the first to hansel that axe. He was a Lollard of the most pronounced type. Then followed Sir John Salesbury, squire of the chamber, and John Calverley, squire of the Queen. They too were uncompromising Lollards, and for four hours had the young Queen knelt at Arundel's feet pleading for the life of her favourite squire. She was scornfully told to pray for herself

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and for her lord, and that order we can have no doubt that she obeyed. There was some need for prayer.

Then Sir Simon de Burley, the King's beloved tutor, the trusted friend of the Black Prince, was dragged out upon Tower Hill despite his silver hair. The Lady Blanche Worth, and the Lady de Molyneux, were roughly dismissed from the Queen's service, and they were probably thankful that they escaped butchering. The mockery of a renewal of the coronation oath closed the Merciless Parliament, and the Lords Appellants, in the name of their outraged Sovereign, granted themselves the neat little sum of £20,000, "for their labours tending to the King's honour, comfort and safety."[1] They had torn from him every friend but his wife, and had nearly broken his heart.

They now proceeded to show mercy. Three indicted persons—two of whom were not of particularly good character—were most graciously pardoned. The Lady Blanche Worth was munificently permitted to retain her dower,[2] the Lady Idonia Brembre to keep her own property, her husband's only in her right,[3] and the Lady Joan Salesbury to recover her splendid wardrobe.[4] Moreover, the citizens of

[1] Close Roll, 11 Ric. II. [2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid., 13 Ric. II., Part 1. [4] Ibid., 12 Ric. II.

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London were forgiven their offences, with the exception of persons convicted by the Merciless Parliament, persons excepted in the general pardon previously proclaimed, persons who had offended since the rising of Parliament, and three more mentioned by name at the head of all these exceptions—John More, Richard Norbury, and John de Northampton.[1]

"Master Nym, what think you o' th' proclamation?" asked Roger Astelyn abruptly, meeting Edmund and Blyton in the street.

"Truly, friend, I am sorely disheartened to find my father excepted."

In the fourteenth century, a man always gave to his relatives by affinity the same titles as to those by blood; and beyond this, persons whose children had married addressed and spoke of each other as brothers and sisters.

"And you, Master Blyton?"

"I think," was the quiet answer, "that we have to wait for God. A little longer, maybe, than we hoped."

"It's a burning shame!" said Roger, letting himself go. "I would I had that rascal that writ down them names upo' my anvil. I'd take the biggest hammer to him—I would, so! I wouldn't leave as much o' him as 'd beat out into a penny piece. I'd make him skraigh![2] Aye, you may look on me and open

[1] Ibid., *in dorso.* [2] Shriek.

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your eyes as wide as you will, and send your eye-brows any whither you've a mind. I'm got into th Old Testament amongst them fighting folks, and I reckon I shall 'bide there a bit till I can come down to th' blessings in that fifth o' Matthew. There's things as man can't stand. I made th' best heads to my nails as ever I did make, in th' half-hour after I'd heard yonder news. Didn't I bang th' anvil? I give it him! I tell you what, Master Nym—the Devil must have an uncommon spite again' Master Northampton. God keep his heart up, if he hear in them grim old walls that he's one of the only three left unpardoned by name!"

"Amen!" said Edmund. "I do hope heartily that he may not."

But he did hear it. And that evening on which the news came to him, all God's waves and billows dashed over the prisoner of Tintagel, for his last hope was dead within him. The royal minority was over, the expected pardon was proclaimed, and he was distinctly exempted from it. How was he to know that in every thing except bodily locomotion, the young King was as much a prisoner as himself, his hands fast bound, and everything which he did not wish done by men whose one object was to bind the Word of the Lord and to destroy his servants? It seemed to John de Northampton that God had

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forgotten him that night. He had covered Himself with a thick cloud, that his prayer should not pass through. There was to be no release for him but death.

The untasted supper lay upon the table, and the prisoner paced up and down his cell with feet whose weariness was nothing to the wearier soul within. He looked out of the narrow window, from which nothing was to be seen except the precipitous bluffs, and the everlastingly restless sea. There was a large piece of sea-weed on the shore, just visible as a black speck upon the yellow sand. The incoming sea would swallow it up. It could not escape its fate. Fate! Yes, that was the proper name. It was fate which governed all things. And this was his fate: and life might last for him yet twenty years or more. How was he to bear it?

He watched the sea-weed with a melancholy interest which might almost be termed superstitious. The sea lifted it, and went back, leaving it still upon the sand. Again the same thing was done—again—again. The fifth wave sucked it into the vortex, and it became a lost thing in that heaving waste of waters.

Lost! forgotten! Life went on for others: but that was not worth calling life, only bare existence, which would go on for him. Day after day would

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break with no change—night after night would fall in that eternal silence, broken by no voice for which he cared or that cared for him. In the morning he would say, "Would God it were even!" and in the evening, "Would God it were morning!" and neither would ever bring him release or hope. It was manifest that God did not will that he should have either. The Being at the heart of the universe was a machine without a heart, without personal will or personal care—an almighty Juggernaut, whose car rolled on with no thought for the insects crushed beneath its wheels. It was a wild and terrible place in which Northampton's soul stood that night.

"Not yet made an end, Master?" said the gaoler, entering, with a plate in his hand. "That is well. I came to bring you a bit of a treat belike. A kinsman of the Lieutenant's came this even—a priest he is—and Lieutenant bade me dress you one of the quails he brought withal, for there be many of them. I'll look in again anon. Take your time."

The gaoler was not a heartless man, and he could see how sore was the heart of the man to whom he spoke.

"Thanks, friend," the prisoner paused in his walk to say. He sat down at the table, and tried to eat; found it impossible, and resumed the walk.

When the gaoler came back in half-an-hour, he

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found the case even worse than he had thought it. He took away dishes and table: and turned round just before leaving the cell, with the only suggestion of comfort which occurred to him.

"Master, would you like to see the priest?"

Northampton's heart was yearning for human companionship, but not that of a stranger to whom his griefs were nothing.

"He must be an holy man, I guess," said the gaoler, "for he is clad but of a frieze coat and a leathern girdle. He might do you a morsel of good, Master, if you would shrive you."

The prisoner's walk had stopped. Frieze coat and leathern girdle! That was the official costume of Wycliffe's "poor priests"—of the men by whose instrumentality his soul had been first brought to God. Ten minutes later, the gaoler ushered the priest into the cell; and a cry broke from the prisoner, as his eyes fell upon no stranger face, but on a dear and valued friend of old time whom he knew full well.

"How is it with you, dear friend?" said Canon Hereford.

"What brought you hither?" inquired John de Northampton, in tones whose tremulous fall told his friend how deeply he was moved.

"God, if you need me," was the pithy answer.

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"I need Him," cried the prisoner piteously. "I cannot come forth, I cannot find Him. Mine hands grasp empty air. If you have the power, lead me to His presence, and mine heart shall bless you."

Dr. Hereford's reply was a quotation. "'Sir, if thou hast taken Him up, say to me where thou hast laid Him'—to whom was that spoken, friend?"

The sad, thirsty eyes said to him, "Go on!"

"He was there; but she knew Him not. He is here to-night, but your eyes are holden. I know how it standeth with you, for I have passed three years in the prison of the Vatican, and I have been where you be."

"Three years!" echoed the prisoner. He had not counted four yet. "And you were set free?"

"By God, not man," answered the Canon. "I was cast for life, as you have been; but at the end of three years was a riot in Rome, wherein the prisons were set open, and they within them might go whither they would."

"And you be come home, still under ban?"

"I have proved that man's ban is no worth, when it shall like God to fordo it. I guessed that He had need of me here. Friend, I have had enough of having a care of myself, and for the rest of life I shall leave God to care for me."

"If I had but your brave heart!"

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"My brave heart! When a mother beareth her babe about, say you the child hath a brave heart for-why he suffereth him to be holden?"

"He hath——"

"Aye, what hath he? Think you thereanent."

"He hath faith in her."

"Right so. Yet not witty[1] faith, methinks. I never heard yet of a babe that should take his faith to pieces, to see how he did trust his mother. No-but, he feels safe, for-why she hath hold of him. Neither cherisheth he dread lest she let him go. Can you reach thus far? He meditates thereon not at all; he feels her arms about him, and he is content."

"Aye, but I feel not the arms about me! If I so did——"

"You are cold, and your limbs be numb. Creep closer, and warm you by Him that holdeth you."

"Doth He hold me?"

"Doth He hold you! Doth the mother hold the babe? She is thoughtless and giddy: looking after her own pleasure, she suffers the babe to slip, and he is hurt. What call you that mother?"

"Careless and evil."

"And shall those words serve for Him? Come—in the stead of speaking anentis Him, let us speak to Him."

[1] Conscious.

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And Dr. Hereford knelt down, and prayed in words that went to the tired, desolate heart of the prisoner, and through them God gave him back that which he had lost,—the consciousness of His presence, the hopeful realisation of His love and care. It was not for the first time that Nicholas de Hereford thanked God for the three years in that Vatican prison, which had taught him how to know the heart of a prisoner, though they had seemed so wofully weary in the passing.

He could communicate little outside news, for he had seen as yet none of his old friends except Purvey and Hunt, and the latter had seemed as much afraid of him as of a man in confluent small-pox. To have his name mixed up with that dreadful Hereford, who was afraid of nothing, and went to such unheard-of extremes, was terrible to the compromising and man-fearing soul of the Rev. Hamon Hunt. He had got rid of his visitor as soon as civility would permit him, and had lived in mortal fear of his Archdeacon ever since the event. Dr. Hereford saw the struggle, and was both amused and saddened by it. He knew that a double-minded man was sure to be not only unstable, but exceedingly unhappy. If any of my readers desire a receipt for unhappiness, let them diligently cultivate double-mindedness and fear of their neighbours' opinion of them, and they will be

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secure of as much misery as they can possibly wish.

The Vicar of All Hallows, however, in this short interview, had happened to mention that the Hood had been regranted to Mistress Northampton, and that Edmund and Alice were married. So much, therefore, the Canon was able to repeat. The sadder news had come from Purvey,—that John Wycliffe was gone home.

"It would be easy to go to God!" sighed the prisoner.

"Aye," said Dr. Hereford. "It is harder to wait for Him."

One other item of news he was able to impart, which helped to cheer Northampton's spirit—the facts of the singular political situation. The royal minority, virtually, was not yet over, nor the power in the hands of the King, from whom the Lollards had hoped so much. They could not forget that he was the son of the Princess of Wales who had been the nursing mother of the Church, and they also hoped much from the influence of the Queen. So long as the King was a helpless captive in the hands of the Lords Appellants, this hope was still in the future. The Duke of Lancaster was yet in Spain: when he came home, if not before, it was possible the tide might turn.

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"And meanwhile," said Dr. Hereford, "one step at a time. You here, whose work is waiting for the light—and we yonder, whose work is labouring in the light—we both toil for the same Master, and both shall have good wages. I guess, the harder toil, the heavier wages."

"Which is the harder?"

"That which he that hath it feels the hardest. Which that shall be, God and himself do know."

Dr. Hereford left behind him a lighter heart than he had found. His own was ready braced for action. With him, every item of time was looked at so entirely in the light of eternity, that what other men thought hard was very easy, and what they thought bitter became sweet.

The poor Vicar of All Hallows the More, who was his diametrical opposite, was a sore sufferer during these years of persecution. There was that within him which would not let him quite withdraw from the Lollard cause, nor cast in his lot entirely with the enemy. No, he could not do that: but neither could he stand out and show the courage of his own convictions. He could not with any comfort say good morning to his dearest friend in the street, for the painful dread that one of his enemies might witness the meeting. He dared not invite any brother priest to occupy his pulpit, lest he should say

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—not anything unsound or untrue—but something which would bring him, Father Hunt, into collision with the orthodox authorities. He lived in such perpetual terror of hot water that a slight occasional scalding would have given him far less suffering in the end.

Surely the world holds no man more pitiable than this! Yet it contains thousands of Hamon Hunts, and very few Nicholas Herefords.

The new year opened ominously. On the 18th of January, at the petition of the Archbishop of Canterbury, all possession of the "books, booklets, placards, etc., of Master John Wyclif and others, whether in English or Latin," was made penal, and he in whose hands they were found was to be arrested and tried before the Council.[1] The Vicar of All Hallows flung his into the fire within an hour of the proclamation. At the Hood and the Silver Bow they made safe hiding-places for them. Blyton buried his books in a box in the garden. Roger Astelyn said it was "jolly stuff," but he followed the same plan. Dr. Hereford left them on his desk, and went about with an English Gospel in his bosom.

"Matters is bad," said Roger Astelyn. "I've given o'er hoping for tide to turn. It's no-but coming

[1] Patent Roll, 12 Ric. II., Part 1.

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up higher, every wave. They'll shut man's mouth next. One good thing, sickerly—they can't shut up man's thoughts!"

"They be apt to be the busier when his mouth is shut," replied Edmund Costantyn with a smile.

The Earl of Huntingdon had just entered on his office as Constable of Tintagel Castle. Northampton's case was not bettered thereby. Son of the Lollard Princess of Wales as Huntingdon was, he was guilty of no Lollard proclivities whatever. Those of his prisoners who were, soon found themselves in a more uncomfortable position than before. Any little indulgences which might hitherto have been allowed to them were at once curtailed. The tide indeed seemed very far from turning. The second of May fell upon a stern, cold, stony state of things, wherein every man looked fearfully in the face of his neighbour, and all speech by which men could be compromised was silent—except for those cries, still but exceeding bitter, which shot past the golden stars as they went up to God.

And Roger Astelyn, barring his door that evening, with one of those cries shut within his heart, had not the faintest idea that they were all about to be answered—that on the very next day the tide was to turn at last.

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CHAPTER XII.

THE TURN OF THE TIDE.

"Our yet unfinished story
Is tending all to this:
To God the greatest glory,
To us the greatest bliss."
—FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL.

"I GUESS, Alice, there shall now be green pesen to be bought."

"I will see to it, Mother."

"And I would thou shouldst tell Emeline to have more care of her sauces. Didst not see, she sent up sober sauce with the urchin yestermorrow?"

"Aye, Mother, I spake to her anentis it."

"And what said she?"

"I trust she shall do better another day," said Alice, not feeling inclined to report that the cook's answer had been to the effect that she had sent up sauce in that house when her young mistress was in the cradle, and did not choose to be instructed on that head.

Alice had not found her housekeeping cares of the

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easiest description. Edmund, holding the masculine ideas that houses managed themselves, and that any woman could cook and clean by nature, had not realised this phase of his young wife's troubles. Euphemia had fallen in with the new *régime* pleasantly enough; but Emeline and Gillian proved very trying indeed. They had been virtually their own mistresses for so long that the resumption of the former state of things was looked on as a hardship; and both resented the idea of subjection to a mere girl like Alice. Euphemia's kindly endeavours to keep the peace and do right were scorned as a desertion to the enemy; and Alice had soon discovered that to carry her difficulties to Mistress Costantyn merely brought fresh annoyance on herself. She early determined not to vex Edmund with perpetual complaints: so she stumbled on along the rough road, bearing her own burden as best she might, often making sad blunders, and feeling for a time sorely humiliated by them, but meanwhile learning as she went. And Alice learned by this discipline far better lessons than how to govern a household, —namely, how to govern her own spirit, and how to be patient with the blunders of others, and to keep humble in remembrance of her own, and above all how to prize the sympathy and aid of Him who keeps the stars rolling in their courses, and the

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seas in the hollow of His hand, yet humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in earth: who is as ready to give wisdom to a woman puzzling over a household problem, or to comfort a little child fretting over a lost toy, as to assist a prime minister in the policy needful to guide an empire, or to speak peace to a monarch deprived of his kingdom.

By this time, moreover, Edmund, who could see what was before his eyes, had begun to have some inkling of the state of affairs.

"If Emeline be too much for thine hand, Alice, let me know it," said he.

"I thank thee—when I cannot help it," said Alice, laughing. "But methinks we may bear with her something longer yet."

"Well-a-day! heard you the news?"

These words, spoken in a breathless exclamation, made them all look up from the supper-table. In the doorway stood Roger Astelyn, his hands black from the anvil, his leathern apron still on, his hair touzled out of all regard to appearances, and his whole likeness that of a man who had heard something of the most startling nature, which was either so good or so bad that he could not keep his friends waiting for an instant before he poured it into their ears.

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"Wala wa! what disturblement!" plaintively sighed Mistress Costantyn.

"Why, Roger, man, whatever is it?" cried Edmund. "Come within and do us to wit."

"But this minute—at Standard—in Chepe," said Roger, evidently having run till he had scarcely breath left. "It's proclaimed—King's of age—he'll reign hisself—no more governors. Lord o' Gloucester's—set aside—and Warwick—both banished fro' Council—seal's given to—Bishop o' Winchester. It's true. Glory be to God!"

The elevation of the Bishop of Winchester, and the depression of the Earl of Warwick, were matters of no moment. But that Gloucester was banished from the Council, and made powerless for evil, was news which struck up a *Te Deum laudamus* in every Lollard heart, and showed the policy by which King Richard meant to rule. Once more, as of old in his boyhood, but more effectually now, he stood forth and said to his people, "I will be your leader!" They were ready to be led. Alas for both King and people, that the time ever came when they once more listened to the voice of the charmer, and allowed the iron yoke to be fastened on their necks again! But that was far in the future, and to-day all was joy and gladness to the Lollards, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

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The morning of that third of May had risen on the same state of things as before. The Council had assembled—that Council wherein the imperious Gloucester was master, delivering his opinion as if it were a command, and then walking away, as though the views of any other member were beneath contempt after *he* had spoken: while the King sat mute, a mere lay figure occupying the throne. But this morning, when the Council had assembled, and business was about to commence, that happened which changed everything. A quiet voice from the hitherto silent throne asked an unexpected question.

"Fair Uncles," said the young monarch, "I pray you tell me how old I am?"

The peers exchanged glances—some of satisfaction, some of trepidation: all of astonishment. There could only be one answer given. His Majesty was in his twenty-third year.

"Then," resumed the King, "I am of full age to govern my kingdom?"

Even Gloucester could do nothing but assent.

"Henceforth, then, I will reign. Fair Uncle of Gloucester, and you, my Lord of Warwick, I thank you for your services, and I have no further need for them."

Thus the personal reign of King Richard was inaugurated. And as Gloucester, followed by War-

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wick, left the royal Council where he was no longer to exercise the trust which he had so utterly betrayed, he must have felt like a man checkmated at the instant when he thought that he had won the game.

Had King Richard been the selfish tyrant which the contemporary monks represent him to have been, and which picture, without ever inquiring into its authenticity, too many modern writers are ready to copy from them, his first act would have been to revoke the statutes passed by the Merciless Parliament, to take dire vengeance on its members, and to call back from exile those true and trusted friends of whom he had been violently and cruelly deprived. He did none of these things. On the contrary, his first act was to pardon all who had had a hand in the recent evil work, and to remit the taxes just levied on the oppressed people. He suffered the Lords Appellants to pocket their twenty thousand pounds —which came out of his coffers; he took from them not an office nor an acre which they had been pleased to grant to their worthy selves—both being in large numbers. On the 5th of September the banished Earl of Suffolk died in his exile at Paris, and on the 20th of November the Duke of Lancaster came home.

The enemies of the Lollard Church were now

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beneath the wheel of fortune. This was soon made manifest. In vain the Archbishops, Courtenay and Arundel, on behalf of the clergy, refused their hitherto powerful voices to statutes passed in restraint of the Pope's prerogative. A letter went to that potentate, in the King's name, on the 26th of May, 1390—a very remarkable letter, whether we look at its contents, at the names signed to it, or at those which are not appended.

In this striking document the Lollard writers cast back in the teeth of the Roman party the agricultural terms of contempt which they were wont to receive from them. They say that "horrible is the sight and lamentable the sound of modern husbandmen, who setting their hands to the plough, are looking back, through whose idleness the field of the Lord is left uncultivated, and becomes unfruitful, not ceasing to grow thorns and thistles." They carry the war into the enemy's camp by retorting upon them the Erastianism of which the orthodox loved to accuse the adherents of Wycliffe, by announcing that "instead of the God of gods appearing in Zion in perfect beauty, images of Cæsar are multiplied in the House of God"—thus reminding the Pope that his claim to be head of the Church was just as much a usurpation of Christ's prerogative as the claim of any other person. Having thus relieved their indig-

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nation, as if determined that the Pope should have no chance of misunderstanding them, they proceed to point out to him in detail what they mean. They ask him to recollect that "the advowsons of English cathedrals and churches were the property of the Kings of England, who at the instance of the See of Rome had conceded that the elections to these dignities should be free and unfettered." But—this they do not say in words, but they leave a euphemistic gap in the reasoning, which can be filled in no other manner; nor can those doubt how they meant to fill it, who know how often it was reiterated by John Wycliffe in the plainest possible English—the See of Rome, instead of leaving these electors free, has usurped their privileges, and has taken the matter out of their hands into its own. Almost in Wycliffe's words, they complain that lands are thus conferred on aliens who understand not the language, and who are promoted to benefices and dignities; and that when one bishopric is vacant, five or six translations are made, in order that the fees of as many appointments may enrich the treasury of the Vatican.

At the end of this plain and pungent epistle comes a list of signatures. Some, undoubtedly, were signed by hands without hearts. Even Gloucester did not refuse his name: but he knew that the eyes of his

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brother Lancaster were on him, eyes which thirteen years ago had seen him stand forth in Parliament as the apologist of John Wycliffe, and whose fiery glances of displeasure he never liked to meet. Beside Gloucester, the only distinctly orthodox signatory is Arundel. But the Lollards who sign are among the foremost members of the party, and they come in a long train. Lancaster, Rutland, March, Northumberland, Lewis Clifford, Richard Stury—these are names more than enough, if there were any guarantee needed, to authenticate the nature of that document which must have caused sore distress and perplexity to the soul of Boniface the Ninth.[1]

But perhaps the most remarkable fact connected with this list of names is the total absence of even one clerical signature. It is purely a lay memorial from beginning to end. And whatever may have been the case in other countries, it is the fact that in England every reformatory movement which has been successful has had its origin with the laity. The clergy may have united with them at a later period, but the laity have begun the work. And the beginners have often been a very little knot of laymen—not many wise, not many noble—but a group of unknown men with hearts on fire, and with God for their aid, like that first group of twelve fishermen

[1] Close Roll, 13 Ric. II., Part 2.

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who went out to turn the world upside down, and did it, by the preaching of a cross which was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. That little knot of laymen is sorely needed now.

Some among the Lollard party in 1390 would fain have seen the tide run in at an impossible pace. They wished it to turn at the hour, and to have covered the whole beach at five minutes past. But tides do not come in after that fashion, except in times of destructive tempest. And this tide came in slowly and softly, not after a destructive but a fertilising manner.

Very quietly and carefully the young King went about his work. The *coup d'état* by which he had assumed the reins of power had been sudden and unprecedented indeed; but the subsequent driving was as gentle as possible. The Council, engrossed by matters of grave importance, made no sign, and took no steps, towards the alleviation of smaller wrongs, or the carrying out of lesser desirabilities. The hearts at the Hood and at the Silver Bow grew sore, and Roger Astelyn waxed wrathful, as the weeks rolled by, and no glad news reached them of the release of the prisoner of Tintagel. Richard Norbury and John More were also prisoners still in Corfe Castle. They did not know that others in

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this world were thinking about it too; and far more, that One above this world was doing the same. For the thought, and the word, which go forth from men are apt to return to them very void: but God's thoughts become facts, by the mere property of being His.

"Why, look you!" said Roger Astelyn, with a thunge upon a bar of iron which must have hurt it considerably had it possessed nerves, "here's July a-coming round again, and nought done. And the King and all the Lords a-taking their pleasure a-hunting o' Leicester Forest"—no time of the year was secure from that amusement in the fourteenth century, nor down to the eighteenth, for that matter —"and then, when they've cotched stags enough, they goes home to their big palaces and stuffs and guzzles and lies o' feather beds,—why don't they never think o' folks as is worser off? Such a deal as they might do!" And Roger pounded away at the iron bar in an inhuman manner.

It was not at all usual for such unseemly and almost treasonable language to issue from the lips of the big blacksmith. But when a man's heart is not at ease, he will often use language of a very unusual type. The facts, indeed, could not be gainsaid. How many of us, from prince to peasant, might not do more than we do? But poor short-sighted Roger

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did not see that the very hunting-party which excited his wrath was to lead to the event which he desired.

On one of those July evenings, as they rode homewards from the forest to Leicester Castle, the Duke of Lancaster's horse drew near that of the King.

"Fair Sire, may I speak with you?"

"Surely, fair Uncle."

"Then—fair Sire, hath it been present to your mind that there was a thing done in past time which, under your gracious pleasure, should be well undone?"

"What point you at, fair Uncle?"

"At the prisoning of John de Northampton, sometime Lord Mayor, and other his partners. Hath it not—saving your Grace's good favour—been long enough, and beyond it?"

"I well-nigh forget their offence," said the King, thoughtfully.

"I entreat your Grace to do so," was the significant answer of the Duke.

Years after that day, Sir Richard Stury said to the Canon of Chimay, "The King loves all who pretend[1] friendship for him, but particularly the Duke of Lancaster." It was not surprising, therefore, that his reply should be, "Fair Uncle, it shall so be."

[1] The better translation might be "those who offer friendship." The Duke of Lancaster was assuredly not insincere in his friendship.

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The Duke of Lancaster, having thanked his royal nephew, turned aside to speak to some one else, and perhaps did not notice that his place was taken by his brother of Gloucester.

Meekness and humility were just now the parts played by that subtlest of laymen. He was very curious to know what his brother of Lancaster had wanted, and he soon heard it; for King Richard did not know how to bear malice, and the man who deceived him twenty times was as sure of being trusted again the twenty-first as if he had been innocent of guile. Had Lancaster not come home when he did, Gloucester would probably by this time have resumed his place in the Council.

Gloucester did not at all like what he heard. He looked upon Northampton as a very dangerous man. But he knew that his word once pledged, the King would not lightly withdraw it; and he therefore set to work to minimise the mischief of Northampton's approaching release. He reminded his royal nephew, in a confidential, affectionate manner, that it was a long time since the prisoner's sentence, and the King, having then been very young, had doubtless forgotten —if he had been fully able to realise—the exact nature and heinousness of his offence. To let him loose upon City society would never do. Let the man have his liberty—was not that all which His

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Majesty had promised?—but keep him out of the City, and especially out of any office and dignity.

Gloucester had his way. "Never was there King of England who so readily believed what was told him" by any and every person who could obtain his ear for a moment. So it came to pass that the pardon issued on the 28th of July for "John de Northampton, late Mayor of our City of London," provided that while all his lands and tenements were to be restored which had not been otherwise disposed of, and while he was to be free to "pass and repass at his convenience throughout all our kingdom," he was yet forbidden to venture within the City, "whether to come or to dwell there," and was declared ineligible for any electoral office thereto pertaining.

The Duke of Lancaster smiled grimly when he read that provision.

"That is my fair brother of Gloucester!" said he to himself. "Well, be it so for this time. Better luck the next."

Two days later, a similar, yet dissimilar pardon was issued for John More, and three months afterwards for Richard Norbury.[1] The disqualifying provision was not attached to them. They were permitted to live "in the City or elsewhere, without molestation from us or from our ministers."

[1] Close Roll, 14 Ric. II., Part 1.

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The Vicar of All Hallows the More was seated at his desk, one evening in August. The unpleasant reminiscences connected with the visit of Canon Hereford had passed away, the Archdeacon had been amiably silent, and no more had been heard of that objectionable Canon. The Vicar was calmly searching, in the quiet of his study, for a passage which he felt sure was somewhere to be found in the writings of Tertullian, but which had hitherto eluded his eyes. So absorbed was he in his interesting search that he did not hear a rap on the front door, and voices in the passage, until the door of his own study was opened, and he became dimly conscious that Ankaret was letting somebody in. He lifted his eyes from the book, not without a little sense of irritability at the disturbance, which was not by any means decreased as they lighted upon the man whom of all others he least desired to see.

"Ah! Give you good even, Brother Hereford," said the Vicar in some confusion. "You do find me —I am in search of divers words—" and he waved him to a seat, trusting from the core of his heart that he would not occupy it long.

Dr. Hereford was as well aware of the state of the Vicar's mind as if it had been laid before him in so many words of the plainest English. If his smile covered amusement, it hid no ill-will. On the

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contrary, he hastened to relieve his uncomfortable clerical brother.

"I thank you, Brother Hunt, I cannot long tarry. I did but come to entreat you to carry certain tidings to our friends at the Hood and the Silver Bow, the which I dread not you will gladly hear yourself. Master Northampton is forth of his prison, but forbid to dwell or to come within the City."

The Vicar showed his honest gratification at the news.

"I heard it," continued Dr. Hereford, "from the Lieutenant of Tintagel, that is a kinsman of mine; so I am well sicker it is sooth.[1] Pray you, do me so much kindness, for mine occasion serveth me not to bear the news myself, to let Mistress Northampton know that he cometh as soon as may be to the Priory of the Salutation without Newgate,[2] and there may his kinsfolk and friends see him."

The Vicar expressed his willingness to convey the intelligence at once.

"Then I will no longer tarry you, being myself in some bire," said Dr. Hereford, rising. "Brother Hunt, the Lollards be up again in good liking, so I trust you shall sleep the sounder for knowing it anentis my visit."

Leaving this Parthian dart behind him, and the

[1] Certain it is true. [2] The Charterhouse.

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Vicar in much confusion, Dr. Hereford let himself out, and his uncomfortable host put a mark in Tertullian, and prepared for his visit to the Hood.

He found himself spared a further journey, for Edmund and Alice were spending the evening at the Hood. But the news was too much for Petronilla de Northampton. The Vicar told it directly, without any preparation—it did not occur to him that good news might want breaking as much as bad, until he saw her sink down upon the form in a dead faint. After all the long years of separation and hoping against hope, the sudden close of her suffering overwhelmed her. The thought that she would never again behold her husband until they met in Heaven, had become familiar to her—it had been her sorrowful meat night and day, none the less bitter because outwardly she kept up, and could smile and try to cheer others. And now the unexpected tidings, all at once, that in ten days or thereabouts she should see his face and hear his voice, were more than the tried heart could stand and not show it.

The prisoner's mother bore it better, perhaps because her first thought was not of her son, but of her Father. "Lord, Thou hast blessed Thy land; Thou hast turned away the caitifte of Jacob!"[1] came softly from her lips.

[1] Ps. lxxxv. 1.

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Alice was helped by being necessary to her mother, so that she had no time to think of herself.

There were others, outside the two houses most nearly concerned, to whom the news was inexpressibly welcome.

"I can tell you, Master Nym, I did not know what to do, I was that glad!" said Roger Astelyn, suddenly transformed into the most devoted of loyalists. "God bless our good young King, and give him all as he'd like! I tell you, I went straightway and bought our Mildred a new kirtle and a couple o' kerchiefs; and then I come home and threw up my hat; and then I went a-hammering till I'd well-nigh wore out th' big hammer. Whatever comes o'er me, I must alway hammer it out. Whether it's joy or whether it's wrath, it just goes right into th' hammer. If yon big hammer could talk, he'd tell you more o' me than anybody else knows. He gets it, whatever's going."

It seemed impossible that Northampton could reach the Charterhouse under ten days from the date of his release. But when a week was over, his wife began to journey there every day to inquire for him. The Prior, an old friend of her husband, was very kind, and offered to send down one of his lay brethren to the Hood to let her know when he had come. But Petronilla's hungry heart was not to be satisfied with that. She must come herself. Some-

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times Alice went with her, sometimes Mistress Comberton; but Edmund was always there. At last, on the sixteenth evening, they were rewarded with a "yea" instead of the repeated "nay" which had seemed so hard to bear.

"Go you within, Mother," said Edmund; "I will turn back and fetch Alice."

So Petronilla yielded herself to the guidance of the lay brother who looked so profoundly uninterested in the transaction, and was led into a guest-chamber, where she met her beloved at last.

But there are no words to describe such meetings. They may exist in the language of that Heaven where there shall be so many. The earthly words are weak and inadequate.

At first Mistress Northampton thought her husband changed very little—wonderfully little, considering the lapse of time and the suffering through which he had gone. It was Alice's exclamation of "Father! can this be you?" which woke her up to the alteration. But when the flush of excitement and the light of joy began to pass from his face, and left it peaceful still, but calm and quiet, she too began to see how intensely altered he was. He had been a rather talkative man, and the enforced solitude of six years had left him a silent one. He had been bright and playful, and the long communing with

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God and his own heart had left him grave. Flashes of his old self came across him at times, but he was a changed man.

The question of residence was one of the first to be discussed, when the time came to discuss the future rather than to recount the past. The condition attached to the pardon left John de Northampton homeless, for his lands outside the City had been granted to other persons. The Grange at Shoreditch, and his manors at Edmonton and Tottenham, had passed from him; and to the Hood or to the Silver Bow he must not come. In this dilemma, before anything could be settled, his brother Robert came forward.

"Why, Jack!" said he, "what dost thou, talking o'er where thou shalt dwell, when I have an house at Shoreditch in the which is full enough room for thee and sister Parnel and the little lads? Mother can keep the Hood, without she will come too— and welcome shall you all be, full sickerly. Matters shall ne'er tarry long as they be. Trust me, thou shalt have a full pardon ere thou be mickle elder."

It was thought best, for all reasons, to accept Robert's invitation: but Mistress Comberton elected to come too; so the Hood was left vacant once more. There was some talk of letting it, which however was not done. Robert Comberton, whose

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sanguine temperament made his soul dwell perpetually either on the top of a hill or in the bottom of a valley—never between the two—expressed his positive and (for the moment) unalterable conviction that a complete pardon would be issued in a week at the furthest. When a month had passed without it, he was equally certain it would never happen. Mistress Comberton's quieter advice was to wait and see. If a year went by with no change, then it would be time to think of letting the Hood.

Parliament met on the 12th of November; and very soon afterwards, a second petition was presented to the Throne in favour of John de Northampton. It came this time, not from any single person, of whatever rank and influence, but from the whole Commons of England in Parliament assembled,—about as strong a proof of the innocence of the convict as it was possible to have; moreover, the House asserted his perfect innocence in the most distinct terms, as proved by the oaths of all the Aldermen, and notoriously known to be a fact. In answer to their prayer, a proclamation was issued on the 2nd of December, wherein the King was pleased to "revoke entirely and annul, in our present Parliament, by assent of the same Parliament, every sentence against the said John concerning all treasons, felonies, transgressions, misprisions, and

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other things whatsoever, pronounced at Reading or at our Tower of London." This decree made void at once the sentence of forfeiture passed at Reading on the 21st of August, 1384, the sentence of death passed in the Tower on the ninth of September, and the sentence of imprisonment for life, eighty leagues from London, to which it had been commuted. The aforesaid sentences were to be of no further authority in any way, nor for any time, whether past or future, nor was the said John to be impeded or molested in his occasions, by the King, his heirs, or his officers, in any possible manner.[1]

It was Saturday evening, the third of December, 1390. Edmund had returned from his counting-house, the week's work over, and it was nearly time for supper. Mistress Costantyn sat on one side of the wide hearth, on which the large oak logs were blazing, not only sending out a comfortable warmth, but lighting up the room so that no further illumination was needed. Edmund sat opposite his mother, on a form cushioned and banked—in other words, the back as well as the seat adorned with a handsome covering; and Alice, who like a good housewife had been overseeing her "kitcheners" in the preparation of supper, came in and sat

[1] Patent Roll, 14 Ric. II., Part 1.

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down beside him. At that moment a gentle rap on the front door attracted the attention of all parties.

"Who shall that be, trow?" asked Edmund of any one who chose to answer.

"It is Jem, I dread not," was Alice's answer; "he behote[1] me to look in this even, and do us to wit if Mother's rheum were amending."

It was Jem, as they saw the next minute. But it was somebody else too, at the sight of whom Edmund uttered an exclamation of delight, while Alice sprang up with a cry of joy and threw herself into her father's arms.

"It is come, then, at last?" said Edmund.

"Full pardon," answered Jem, for his father was hardly competent to talk, his own feelings and Alice's between them having overwhelmed him for the moment. "Sentences all fordone, and Father may dwell whither he will. All is merry as a marriage-bell."

"Aye me! how long will it last?" sighed Mistress Costantyn from her chimney corner; but nobody took any notice of the vaticination. They were all much too happy to heed it.

Master Northampton sat down where Edmund had been, but the two younger men preferred

[1] Promised.

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standing. Alice, disappearing for a moment, came back with a chubby object, which she set down on her father's knee.

"There's Jack, Father," was the short introduction, which, however, seemed perfectly satisfactory to the gentleman to whom it was addressed: and the chubby object, after gazing intently at him for some seconds out of a pair of blue eyes of preternatural gravity, discovered an eligible plaything in the pendants of his girdle; for it was at that happy age when the whole round world is an enormous box of toys.

The family returned to the Hood about a week later. There was nothing any longer to keep them away. Some of Master Northampton's friends, who had found the walk to Shoreditch too long for their weak courage, made their appearances in rather a shame-faced style; but he welcomed them all, and never showed any perception of the past defalcations in their friendship. The last person to call was the Vicar of All Hallows. He could not, whether as friend or as pastor, defer it any longer.

Just as Mr. Hunt walked under the great archway at one end, Roger Astelyn, who had been exercising his calling in the interior of the house, walked under it from the other. And before the reverend gentleman could make his inquiry in due form from the

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porter, Roger took upon himself to give him the requisite information, without ceremony of any sort.

"Give ye good even, Father! I'm fain to see the wind bloweth not too strong for you to venture forth. (Mr. Hunt enjoyed such excellent health that he never knew where the wind was.) Been a bit sharp o' late, hasn't it? so as you couldn't get up to Shoreditch. It'll be more well-pleasant now Master's come home. Oh aye, he's within; I have but now spoke with him. Wind doesn't trouble me, look you. When I want to see my friends, I never look to th' weathercock. I'm alway sorry for them folks as need it. They must have a deal more travail than such as me, which can go whither they will, and never dread. I wouldn't like to be so nesh, I can tell you."

Poor Mr. Hunt, who felt like a man transfixed with a multitude of pins, and yet who could not be quite sure that Roger's meaning was not simply literal, instead of skilfully turning the conversation, made matters worse by uneasily asserting that the wind did not affect him in any way.

"Nay, now, say you so?" responded the blacksmith with so well-feigned an air of astonishment, that the Vicar would have been set at rest, had he not detected the least possible twinkle of mischief in Roger's eyes. "Well, now, if I didn't guess that was what let you fro' going—wind blew too strong

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t'other way. I never reck of a good gust o' wind, not a quarter,[1] but I know there be folks as can't abear it but if a trembling takes 'em o' th' inside. Good health's a great blessing, Father."

The uncomfortable Vicar assented to this suggestion, and hoped that Mistress Astelyn was well.

"I thank you, Father, she's metely well at this present. She was used to be sore travailed with a breaking out o' both sides o' th' mouth, some years gone; but she put on a plaster as she heard tell on fro' one o' they poor priests, and she's been a deal better sithence."

"I am fain to hear it," answered the tormented Vicar. "Give thee good even, my son; I must be on my way."

"A full good even, Father," cheerfully replied the aggravating Roger. "Well, now, I am glad, sickerly, to know that you be not 'noyed o' that trembling o' th' inside. It's an ill thing, it is. And there's such lots of folk been took with it, these years past. You'd never think! It's so plaguy catching, too. Sooth to say, I well-nigh guessed o' late there was scarce a soul in London town as hadn't got it, set aside Silver Bow folks, and Master Blyton, and me. I do hope as you'll ne'er catch it. Good even, Father!"

The welcome which met the Vicar within was as

[1] Farthing.

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hearty as though he had braved martyrdom to pay his visit. It struck him with a sensation which was almost pain. And so it did to perceive that the old friend was wofully altered. It was no light suffering which had turned that nut-brown hair into grey, and made those heretofore cheerful lips take so grave a setting, and deepened the shadows in the bright merry eyes. And yet, underneath them all, lay something which the Vicar detected with a mixture of reverence and envy—a deep calm of indwelling peace, which had never before been such as it was now. He began to wonder if it were not almost worth while to wade through the troubled waters, if by so doing he could reach that firm fair shore beyond them.

Master Northampton himself seemed conscious of no feeling but deep thankfulness. The past had been hard to bear, undoubtedly, but it was over: let by-gones be by-gones. He was happy to find his mother still alive, his boys grown so much what he could have wished them to be, his Alice so bright and happy. He was ready to set his seal to the assurance that all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto them that keep His covenant and His testimonies.

"But how, if it were to turn back upon you?"

"I dread not the likelihood thereof. But if it were

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—well: the good Lord witteth better than I what is best for us all. He can bear the lambs in His arms whensoever and as oft as He will. Surely, the rougher the road be, the likelier He is to carry them. And, Father Hunt, suffer me to say, what you maybe wit more of than I—that the childer scarce know what their Father can be to them, till He has borne them over some dreary broken ground where there was need to hold them close."

There was some very pungent mental exercise for the Vicar of All Hallows as he sat in his study that evening. He had never been so near to the Kingdom of God as on the night when the conviction came to him that the men who dared all and suffered much for Christ were the calm and happy men, while those who tried to serve two masters, and thus to escape the suffering, only paid down their peace and comfort, to purchase to themselves bitter remorse, and tenfold the misery that they sought to avoid. What would it be if the remorse should last for ever?

But even that was not the sorest element in Mr. Hunt's painful meditations. Before him on the wall hung a large crucifix, and underneath it were carved two lines, which the Vicar's eyes had read a thousand times, and his soul never before.

"This did I for thee;
What dost thou for Me?"

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Had he come near betraying the Friend who had given Himself up for his salvation? Must it, could it be so any longer? Long into the winter night Hamon Hunt knelt in that study. And when the morning was breaking, there were a few words sobbed forth which the angels may have smiled to hear, and which, often as they had been chanted, had never been a prayer on those lips till now.

"'God, prove Thou me, and know Thou mine heart; axe Thou me, and know Thou my paths. And see Thou if way of wickedness is in me: and lead Thou me forth in everlasting way.'"[1]

Ankaret was horrified when she discovered that her master had never been to bed. But Canon Hereford, when he called at the Vicarage, made another discovery of a different kind: and Roger Astelyn never again expressed the ironical hope that the Vicar would not find the wind too strong for him.

[1] Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24: Hereford's version.

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HISTORICAL APPENDIX.

A.

John de Northampton, Lord Mayor.

Very little has hitherto been known of the biography of this remarkable man, who, emerging from the mist of silence, and passing into the mist of forgetfulness, stands out a solitary figure in the history of his time.

Who was his father, and what was his native county, are points still undecided. He had two brothers, Robert and William, both of whom bore the name of Cumberton, Comberton, or Combarton, while he was himself better known by the *alias* of De Northampton. Surnames at that date were barely in a settled state, an alias implied nothing wrong or unusual, and it was still possible, as in earlier days it had been quite customary, for two brothers to be known by different names. "Hugh de la Quarrere, and Edmund le Tanur, his brother," occur on the Close Roll for 1243; and "Alice Caunterbury, *alias* Alice de Bermundeseye," on that for 1385. Since all the members of this family except the Lord Mayor and his son bore the name of Comberton, it appears probable that this was the family name, and that Northampton is to be looked on as a personal soubriquet.

We first meet with John de Northampton in 1369, when he appears in a list of trustees responsible for the rent of certain lands. In 1375, on the sixth of December, conjointly with his wife Petronilla, he enfeofs Katherine, daughter of William Woodroue of Braybrok, citizen and fishmonger of London, with a tenement in Old Fish Street,

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for which she is to pay 13s. 4d. as rent by the year. (Close Roll, 8 Ric. II.) In the same year he took on a lease from the Prioress of Dartford, for forty years, at a yearly rent of £15 12s. 5½d., two messuages and three shops in Cordwaner Street, a continuation of Garlick Hill, which ran from Knight Riders' Street to Basing Lane. (*Inq. Johannis de Northampton*, 8 Ric. II. 77.) On the 4th of June, 1380, John de Waltham released to John de Northampton, citizen and draper of London, his heirs and assigns, all the right which he had of the gift of John de York in Beverley. (Close Roll, 3 Ric. II., *dorso.*) We find that his further property comprised (1) "several tenements in the city of London, at the Stillyard, in the parish of All Saints" the More, "near the Heywharf, in Doungate ward." This plot of land extended from the Ropery, a portion of Thames Street, to the Thames, and was bounded on the east by All Saints' Church, and by Stillyard Lane on the west. (*Inq.* 8 Ric. II. 77.) This was the inheritance of Petronilla, and we find mentioned as here situated, the house of Says the broiderer; "*lostiel de les Gascoignes*," or "*lostel de Gascoigne*" opposite the gate of the Stillwharf; "*lostiel Toryn*"—these were probably houses occupied by merchants from Bordeaux and Tours: "one place of Estreling"—namely, a house of merchants from the Hanse Towns:[1] "the Olderente"; "the Tylhouse"; "the house of the dyer, which belonged to Richard Lyons, in the Ropery, next the Stillwharf, in Wantgoeslane," afterwards corrupted into Wildgoose Lane; and "the door of the Prince in Wandegoeslane." (When the Black Prince lived in this lane is not on record. After his return from Calais, in 1347, he resided for a time in Pulteney House, on Fish Street Hill: in the reign of Charles I. this house was an inn, known as the Black Bell. He also lived at a place afterwards called Petty Wales, which lay between Billingsgate and the Church of St. Dunstan in the East.) "The house of the porter," "the house of the pewterer," and a brewhouse in the Ropery, close to All Saints' Church, are

[1] This afterwards became the Guild Hall of the Hanse Town merchants.

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also named as portions of this estate. (*Inq.* 8 Ric. II. 77.) A house named The Hood was in the parish of All Saints, and probably in this plot: so much is done and purchased for this house that it is very likely to have been the one in its owner's occupation. (*Ibid.*, and 10 Hen. IV. 44.)—(B) Two shops and a mansion were held by John de Northampton of the Prior of Bermondsey, at a rent of six shillings per annum, situated in the Old Fish Street, which was the name given to a part of Knight Rider's Street, and must not be confounded with New Fish Street (or Fish Street Hill), as the latter was considerably further to the east. This plot of ground stretched "from the King's highway to Lumbardeshill, Petreshill, and the Oldchange, and on the east to the tenement of Simon Turnam called Dystaflane." (*Inq.* 8 Ric. II. 77.)—(C) The Polehouse, the Grange, and "*la place de Bowes*," at Shoreditch.—(D) A house at Edmonton.—(E) Two tenements in Pentecost Lane, a narrow alley running between Newgate and what is now Christ's Hospital; one of these houses was called The Rent, and they were in the occupation of a chaplain and a poulterer. It is possible that "the house of the King's Confessor" (the Bishop of Llandaff) is identical with this house of the chaplain in Pentecost Lane.—(F) Certain lands at Tottenham, value 40 marks a year. We see from this list that John de Northampton was possessed of considerable property in the City, and that most of his freehold land came to him in right of his wife. In 1376 he had served the office of Sheriff, and in 1381 and 1382 he was elected Lord Mayor.

It appears to have been about the time of his election to the mayoralty that Northampton fell under the influence of the "poor priests" whom Wycliffe had sent forth as itinerant preachers. He at once embraced the Lollard doctrines, and began immediately to act upon them. The manner in which he attempted to purify the morals of the City is told in the text. "He rendered himself the terror of the licentious,"[1] and he seems to have created enemies in no small number and degree.

[1] Vaughan's Life of Wycliffe, ii. 185.

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The whole of the Fishmongers' Company were among these enemies—a fact otherwise so difficult to understand, that it can only be supposed that the vicious persons against whom Northampton had taken action must have included some eminent members of this Company.

Perhaps nothing will more distinctly show the contrariety and the falsehood of the charges against Northampton, than the simple repetition of them as recapitulated in three different places—first, by John Stow (apparently from the City records); secondly, by the monkish chronicler Walsingham; and lastly, as set forth in the petitions of the Companies of Mercers and Cordwaners, and of the House of Commons itself.

The first of these narratives is not easy to understand at the best; and without the light cast upon it by the others, and by the entries on the Rolls, it might fairly be termed unintelligible. "In 1382," writes Stow, "through the counsel of John de Northampton, then being Mayor, William Essex, John More, mercer, and Richard Northburie, the said fishmongers were greatly troubled, hindered of their liberties, and almost destroyed by congregations made against them, so that in a Parliament at London, the controversy depending between the Mayor and Aldermen of London, and the fishmongers there, Nicholas Exton, speaker for the fishmongers, prayeth the King to receive him and all his company into his protection, for fear of corporal hurt; whereupon it was commanded either part to keep the peace, on pain of losing all that they had; whereupon, a fishmonger, starting up, replied that the complaint brought against them by the movers, etc., was but matter of malice, for that the fishmongers, in the reign of Edward III., being chief officers of the City, had for their misdemeanours then done, committed the chief exhibitors of these petitions to prison. In this Parliament the fishmongers were by the King's charter patents, restored to their liberties; notwithstanding, in the year next following, 1383, John Cavendish, fishmonger, craveth the peace against the Chancellor of England, which was granted, and he put in suretie the Earls of Stafford and Salisbury." Stow pro-

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ceeds to interpolate this case concerning the Chancellor, which, shortly told, is to the effect that Cavendish accused the Chancellor, Michael, Earl of Suffolk, of taking a bribe of £10 on the case, which he denied: and inquiry being made, it was found that a subordinate official had accepted the bribe without his master's knowledge. Cavendish was imprisoned and fined a thousand marks, which were to go to the Chancellor. "After this, many of the nobles assembled at Reading to suppress the seditious stirs of the said John Northampton or Combarton, . . . that had attempted great and heinous enterprises, of which he was convicted; and when he stood mute, nor would utter one word, it was decreed that he should be committed to perpetual prison, his goods confiscate to the King's use, and that he should not come within one hundred miles of London during his life. He was therefore sent to the castle of Tintegall in the confines of Cornwall, and in the mean space the King's servants spoiled his goods. John More, Richard Northburie, and other, were likewise there convicted, and condemned to perpetual prison, and their goods confiscate, for certain congregations by them made against the fishmongers in the City . . . but they obtained and had the King's pardon, in the 14th of his reign, as appeareth of record." (Stow's Survey of London, p. 81.)

We now come to the account of the monkish chronicler, Thomas of Walsingham, as given by the historian Carte. "During the absence of the Duke of Lancaster [in France], John de Northampton, late Mayor of London, was tried and convicted of a conspiracy for murdering Sir Nicholas Brembre, the present Mayor, and several other worthy citizens. He had often gone about the street with crowds of people following him in a seditious manner; and when Brembre prepared to put a stop to this practice, one John Constantyn, calling upon the mob to stand by him, raised a great commotion. Sir Robert Knolles quelled it by seizing Constantyn as the head of the rabble, and carrying him to Guildhall, where he was arraigned, convicted by the testimony of several witnesses, as well as by his own con-

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fession, and afterwards executed.[1] Northampton had been kept prisoner from that time till his trial and conviction at Reading, when he was sentenced to perpetual imprisonment one hundred miles from London, and his estate forfeited. He excepted to this judgment as being passed upon him in the absence of the Duke of Lancaster; but it was executed, and the criminal sent to Tintagel Castle in Cornwall." (Carte's History of England, ii. 571.)

In the Parliament of 10 Ric. II. (1386) was presented a petition from the Mercers' Company against Nicholas Brembre, alleging that he proposed himself for Mayor, with a strong hand, "and was chosen Mayor in destruction of right; he made divers enarmings, and destroyed the King's true subjects, some with open slaughter, some by false imprisonment, and some fled the city for fear." He said that twenty or thirty of the mercers were worthy to be hanged. (Rolls of Parliament, III. 225, *a.*)

The petition of the Cordwaners' Company, presented at the same time, against Nicholas Brembre, and Nicholas Exton, urged that the former was elected Mayor "against the free election of the City. He came into Cheapside with a great number of armed men, to the great alarm of the good people of the said City, and there, suddenly, without right, justice, or process of law, caused to be cut off the head of one John Costantyn, cordwaner of the said City." Similar petitions were presented by the Companies of Founders, Saddlers, Painters, Armourers, Pinners, Embroiderers, Spurriers, and Bladesmiths.

Lastly, we find the more important petition of the House of Commons, wherein it is stated that John de Northampton's "purpose and entire intention was to sustain right and loyalty in the said City, and to reprove and punish, according to his power, injuries and other evils customary in the same; and for this [cause] certain persons of the said City, and others became mortal enemies of the said John, so that they impeached him to our Lord the King

[1] This sentence should be especially noted, as it is flatly contradicted by the petition of the Cordwaners.

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of divers treasons and misprisions of which he was not guilty, as is notoriously known. He was arraigned for the said treasons, etc., in which time his said adversaries had so great power against him, and were there present, to have taken steps [*passé encontre*] against the said John, to have made him be judged to a vile and heinous death, if he had then said that he was not guilty of the same. Wherefore the said John, seeing openly the very great destruction of him purposed by the said adversaries, put himself in the King's mercy, whereupon he was condemned to death, and his lands and tenements, goods and chattels, forfeited to the King." The House therefore petitioned for a repeal of all the aforesaid sentences, "considering that William Venour, then Mayor, and all the Aldermen, witnessed on oath that the said John was not guilty of any treasons, etc., and that they knew nothing concerning him except goodness and loyalty." (Rolls of Parliament, III. 282, *b.*)

William Venour was Mayor in 1389-90.

The above statements, contraries as they are, include all that is known of John Costantyn, excepting one entry on the Close Roll, Feb. 25th, 1388, which is a mandate ordering that "the head of John Costantyn, lately beheaded by Nicholas Brembre late Mayor, and set by the said Mayor on Ludgate, be delivered with the body to Alice his widow." (Close Roll, 11 Ric. II.) The style of Alderman, given to him in the tale, is merely an assumption, yet not an improbable one.

Very early in 1384 the vengeance of the priests and the Fishmongers' Company fell on John de Northampton. Sir Nicholas Brembre, the new Mayor, lent himself warmly to the proceedings, though he, being a grocer, was not a member of the aggrieved Company. On the ninth of February a mandate was issued to him, in the name of the boy King, to the effect that "We are informed that at the excitation of John de Northampton there has been a riot and insurrection in the City against our peace, to the great peril of us and our kingdom. We command you to arrest the said John, and send him to Corfe Castle, till we with the advice of our Council shall order him to be delivered thence." A second mandate commands Philip de Walweyn,

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Constable of Corfe, to receive the said John, and keep him there during our pleasure; and a third, addressed to Sir Simon de Burley, Constable of Windsor Castle, and an eminent member of the Lollard party, enjoins him to receive the said John, and lodge him hospitably in the Castle for two days and nights, if he shall be brought there by the King's lieges. On the eleventh, the order for arrest was still unexecuted: and a further mandate from the King directs the Mayor and Aldermen to arrest John de Northampton the Sheriff, and take him outside the liberties of the City. (Close Roll, 7 Ric. II.) This was done, and he was transferred to Corfe Castle. On the 15th of June following, his brother Robert de Comberton, and John Blyton, were also arrested and sent to Corfe (*ibid.*); and on the 3rd of August, orders were issued to send all the three to Reading, "to appear before the King's Council on the Wednesday after the Assumption (Aug. 17th), to answer for themselves, and afterwards to do and receive what we and our Council shall ordain." (Close Roll, 8 Ric. II.) But in the interim, something happened, which looks very like an attempt to rescue the prisoners. Hurried orders were sent on the 19th to Philip Walweyn, to secure the three safely; the Lord Mayor and Aldermen were commanded on the 20th to arrest John More, mercer; Richard Norbury, mercer; William Essex, draper; Robert Franceys, goldsmith; John Lincolle, goldsmith; Robert Riseby, draper; John Willardby and John Maudeleyn, tailors; and to keep them in prison till the King should order otherwise: William Hygyn, the Mayor of Corfe, was summarily deposed, for being concerned in "divers transgressions committed by our servants at the Castle, and our tenants, in that place," and John Loter was put in his place to execute the duties of the mayoralty until the day for a fresh election should come round. (Close Roll, 8 Ric. II.) It would appear that the order to Walweyn arrived too late for execution, and that the prisoners had already left Corfe: for they appeared before the Council at Reading only three days later than the day originally fixed.

The youthful King himself presided; but of course the

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real decision was in other hands. The charge brought against the chief prisoner, as will have been seen by the quotations already given, is variously stated by different writers. John de Northampton stood up and defended himself with spirit, demanding what right the Council had to try any man for his life, in the absence of its chairman, the Duke of Lancaster—a man whose known political proclivity to Lollard views would have been likely to make him lean in favour of the prisoner. But the condemnation of Northampton, and his ruin in some form, was a foregone conclusion with his enemies, of whom the secret centre was Archbishop Courtenay, and Brembre merely the catspaw, as will presently be seen. All three prisoners were sent back to Corfe Castle, outlawed, and their lands and goods forfeited to the Crown. The fate of the prisoners arrested in London on the 20th of August we do not hear, with the exception of the two first named, and of them we shall see much, as henceforward they are always the associates of Northampton. On the 4th of September the Lord Mayor is instructed to deliver these two, Richard Norbury and John More, to the Sheriff, Simon de Wynchecombe, who likewise receives orders on the following day to send them by Robert de Bekerton to the custody of Sir Simon de Burley at Windsor. Two days earlier Philip Walweyn had been commanded to deliver John de Northampton to John de Elyngeham, "to come before us and our Council at Westminster, on the morrow of the Nativity of blessed Mary next ensuing (Sept. 9th), that they may hear, do, and receive whatsoever our Council shall ordain." (Close Roll, 8 Ric. II.) In pursuance of this object he was taken to the Tower. On the 5th of September, Norbury and More were tried before the King, apparently at Windsor, when they "submitted themselves and their goods to our ordinance," and forfeiture of all their property followed. On the following day, John More's wife received a grant of her husband's house in the City, with all the goods therein contained. On the ninth, they were delivered to Robert Bekerton to take to the Tower; and its Constable, Sir Thomas Morieux, is charged to keep them separate, "so that one

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cannot speak with the other." This was the day on which John de Northampton appeared, or was to appear, at Westminster. But on this very day eight judges were appointed to try the three prisoners in the Tower of London, as if some further charge had been brought against them, of a more heinous character. These judges were, Sir John Montacute, Seneschal of the Household (himself considered one of the most "pestilent" Lollards in the kingdom; but his appointment was completely neutralised by the others); Robert Tresilian, Justice of the King's Bench, whose enemies term him the Judge Jeffries of the fourteenth century; Robert Bealknap, David Hannemere, John Holt, all Justices of the King's Bench; William de Burgh, Walter Clopton, and William Rikhill. Any three, four, five, six, or seven of these might constitute a quorum. They sat at the Tower, Sept. 12th, 1384, and the three prisoners—John de Northampton, Richard Norbury, and John More,—were brought before them.

The spirit and energy wherewith Northampton had defended himself at Reading were silent now. He saw that his enemies had determined on his ruin: and taking pattern by another Prisoner, of whom surely he thought that day, he answered them not a word. It could not much matter how or by whom he suffered, so long as heart and conscience, and the Spirit of God witnessing with them, bore him testimony that he was suffering for Christ. And of all such confessors, perhaps the deepest sufferers have been those who have not been allowed to die openly for Him, but have partaken of the fellowship of His sufferings by being arraigned upon side issues, and condemned upon false counts. It was thus with the Master Himself.

The three prisoners were condemned to death. In view of the subsequent commutation, the chroniclers seem to pass by the original sentence entirely: but that this was really the sentence, the Parliament and Close Rolls bear witness—"*judicialiter committos et morti adjudicatos*" (Close Roll, 8 Ric. II.) It was as a prisoner under sentence of death that John de Northampton returned to his cell in the Tower of London.

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When the sentence was commuted we have no information, but it seems to have been with very little delay. Nor do we know whether its alteration were due to the kindly heart of the youthful King, or to the intercession of some exalted person. Patent Rolls and Pardons Rolls—the two authorities likely to contain a notice of it—are alike silent here. But as the Duke of Lancaster's Register shows that he came home somewhere about this date, I am inclined to suspect him of having been the motive power. The commutation was alike in all cases. The three prisoners were "banished and exiled" from the metropolis, being forbidden to come near it by eighty leagues (Patent Roll, 14 Ric. II., Part 1.) Walsingham says a hundred miles, but this is not nearly so great a distance. According to the same chronicler, John de Northampton was detained in prison, the place of his incarceration being Tintagel Castle, Cornwall. The recapitulation of the commutation on this Patent Roll gives no hint of imprisonment: but we do find from another that Richard Norbury remained a prisoner in Corfe Castle (8 Ric. II., Part 2.) Of John More we hear nothing further, except that he and others were ordered to appear before the Council at Easter, 1398, apparently concerning another matter altogether. (Close Roll, 21 Ric. II., Part 2.)

Sir Nicholas Brembre received orders on the 14th of September, to seize all goods of John de Northampton, forfeited for treason, and to sell as many of them as would amount to the value of £1000, which he was to pay to Hugh de Segrave, the Lord High Treasurer. (Close Roll, 8 Ric. II.) The same day, a grant was made of "the manor of Shoreditch, with the Polehouse and Bowes, and their appurtenances, in the county of Middlesex, which sometime belonged to John Northampton, late draper, of London," to Edmund Duke of York, the King's uncle, Isabel his wife, and Edward their son. (Patent Roll, 8 Ric. II., Part 1.) In October and November we find various orders to pay outstanding debts owed by the prisoner—£12 7s. 5d. to Roger Astelyn, the blacksmith, in Old Change, whose bill is given along with the Inquisition of North-

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ampton: £34 18s. 6d. to Roger Moigne, citizen and draper, of London; £186 6s. 8d. to William Rokelond and others, of Salisbury; and 40s. to John Barley, draper. The outstanding assets were forty marks, owed by John Squery, goldsmith, and John Bacheler, draper, both of London. (Close Roll, 9 Ric. II.) The prisoner also owed for rent, £23 8s. 8¼d. to the Prioress of Dartford, and 6s. to the Prior of Bermondsey. (*Inq.* 8 Ric. II. 77.)

John Blyton was the first of the condemned group to whom favour was shown. On the seventh of November, he was delivered from prison, John, Abbot of Colchester, having undertaken to be his bail in £100: and on the 8th of December a similar favour was granted to Robert de Comberton, William Earl of Salisbury being his surety, in a like sum. (Close Roll, 8 Ric. II., *dorso.*) On the same day a grant was made of Northampton's lands at Tottenham, to John de Beauchamp, a prominent Lollard, for life. (Patent Roll, 8 Ric. II., Part 1.) The grant was soon over, for Beauchamp was beheaded by the traitorous Lords Appellants, May 12, 1388.

Petronilla de Northampton and her children were now left penniless. On the 20th of December she received a grant of fifty marks per annum (£33 6s. 8d., equivalent to £600 in the present day) "from the Stillyard, which lands are of her inheritance, for her sustenance and that of her little children," for which she was to pay no fine nor rent to the Crown. (Close Roll, 8 Ric. II., Part 2.)

Richard Norbury, and John Norbury, of the county of Chester—they were not improbably relatives—were also remembered a little later. John received a pardon on the 15th of March, 1385; and to Richard, though he remained in prison at Corfe, the King granted on the 31st, "of his special grace, in reverence of God and the passion of Jesus Christ, this Good Friday, of his alms, twenty-six marks per annum for his victualling, and ten marks for clothing and other necessary expenses, of the moneys which were owed to the said Richard on the day of his conviction." (Patent Roll, 8 Ric. II., Part 2.)

For six years John de Northampton was a banished and

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outlawed man, if not also a prisoner in Tintagel Castle. But during that time, some of his enemies had appeared before a higher and more just tribunal than the one which condemned him. Among the numerous hapless loyalists—mostly Lollards—done to death by the Merciless Parliament and the Lords Appellants, were two men who seem to have deserved their fate—Robert Tresilian, Judge of the King's Bench, executed at Tyburn on the 19th of February, 1388, and Sir Nicholas Brembre, the ex-Mayor, who suffered at the same place on the following day. I speak with some hesitation in so saying, for all the accounts that we have of these men come from hostile pens, and they really died not for their injustice, but for their loyalty. But the alleged horrible cruelties of Tresilian, if the allegations be true, show that he merited his fate; and the part taken by Brembre against Northampton assuredly does him no credit. I was at one time under the impression that Brembre was a Lollard, and have elsewhere given him that appellation: but I have subsequently seen reason to think it very doubtful.

In May, 1389, by a *coup d' état*, King Richard dismissed the tyrants who held him in thrall, informing them that having now attained the age of twenty-two, he would henceforth govern for himself. Extreme moderation marked his opening actions. He did not attempt to recall his banished friends—though one of them, the Duke of Ireland, had been the very brother of his love—he pardoned all done by the Merciless Parliament which had wrung him to the soul, exiling and murdering his best beloved:—he even permitted to be paid when they fell due, the enormous sums which the Lords Appellants had disinterestedly granted to their gracious selves in consideration of their arduous labours for His Majesty's benefit. (Issue Roll, Michs., 13 Ric. II.) On July 28, 1390, "at the supplication of divers peers at present with us" at Leicester—and as the King was then guest of the Duke of Lancaster, there can be no doubt at all who headed and probably initiated the petition—he conceded "to John de Northampton, late Mayor of our City of London, all lands and tenements which have

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not been otherwise given or conceded by us, and that he at his pleasure may go, pass, and return, throughout our whole realm, notwithstanding the said sentence or exile, only that he shall not come nor dwell in the said City, nor be elected to any office therein." (Patent Roll, 14 Ric. II., Part 1.) Two days later, John More received his pardon, with leave to dwell in the City or elsewhere; and on the 20th of October, at the petition of the Duke of Lancaster and Aquitaine, Richard Norbury was similarly favoured. But this was not enough. The House of Commons—usually the most Protestant item of England—entreated for a full pardon to John de Northampton. So on the second of December, 1390, the sentence against him was "totally annulled and revoked in our present Parliament, by the assent of our Parliament," and the prisoner was free to go whither he would, and to return if he chose to his old home in the City. (Patent Roll, 14 Ric. II., Part 1.)

But the House of Commons was not satisfied with this scant measure of justice. A second petition followed, in November, 1391, wherein it was prayed "that all lands may be restored to John de Northampton, which restitution he has not yet had, to his great damage." The King replied to this that "having regard to all the damages, losses, and inconveniences, suffered by the said John through all the sentences, he commanded all his lands to be restored,—to whomsoever they might have been granted notwithstanding—to hold as before his attainder; and he might do everything as if the said attainder had not existed; saving to the King the forfeiture of goods and chattels for which he is at present answerable." (Parliament Rolls, III. 292.) Similar petitions were presented for Richard Norbury and John More, and received the same answer.

The effect of this appeal was to cancel the grant of the Shoreditch property to the Duke of York, the mandate for which is dated Mar. 6th, 1392, £100 per annum being granted to the Duke in compensation. (Patent Roll, 15 Ric. II., Part 2.)

It may be gathered from circumstantial evidence that Northampton did return to his old home in the City. He

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survived his release about seven years, for his will was enrolled upon the Hustings Roll of the City on the eleventh of February, 1398. He therefore apparently outlived his clerical persecutor, Courtenay, who died on the 31st of July, 1396. (*Inq.* 20 Ric. II. 17.)

The will of John de Northampton, as referred to in his son's Inquisition, is a singular document. He makes no mention of his wife, who perhaps had predeceased him, nor of any child but one, his son James, to whom he bequeathed his tenement called The Hood, in the parish of All Saints, and two tenements in Pentecost Lane, which seem to be all left of his estate, for the rest of James's property was held by other tenures. If James die without issue, the Pentecost Lane property is to remain to "the Church of the Salutation of the Mother of God of the Carthusian Order,[1] in London, and to the Prior of that convent, in perpetual alms"—namely, the Charter House—while The Hood is to revert, first, to William, son of William de Comberton, brother of the testator; secondly, to Joan, Petronilla, and Agnes, sisters of his said nephew; thirdly, to John their brother; and lastly, to the right heirs of the testator. This remarkable provision, by which the sisters were to inherit in preference to the brother, is a most extraordinary arrangement for the Middle Ages, and raises the strongest suspicion that young John de Comberton must have seriously offended his uncle. (*Inq. Jacobi de Northampton*, 10 Hen. IV. 44.)

The Lord Mayor was buried in the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, commonly known as the Elsing Spital, on the west of Guildhall, at the north-west corner of Gayspur Lane, and almost close to Cripplegate. In this church his monument was extant in the time of Stow. (Survey, p. 110.)

Of the subsequent career of his son James, very little can be discovered. He sat as M.P. for Middlesex in the Parliament of 1402, to which he was summoned for fifty-seven days, and his expenses amounted to £22 16s. for travelling costs, as well as the sum usually paid to borough members, two shillings per day. (Close Roll, 4 Hen. IV.)

[1] Many Lollards favoured the Carthusian Order, which was not one of the four so strongly denounced by Wycliffe.

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He was among those who received the shortest summons of any. He married a lady named Amie, not improbably a daughter of John de Branghyng, who settled land upon him in 1403 (*Inq.* 10 Hen. IV. 44), and who appears to have been a mercer. (Close Roll, 8 Hen. IV., *dorso.*) James de Northampton died without issue, aged probably about thirty-five, on the 16th of May, 1409 (*Inq.* 10 Hen. IV. 44), leaving his wife the survivor, to whom livery of dower was granted on the 25th of September following. In the mandate granting this, he is described as a tenant of the Crown in chief, and the mandate is addressed to the Sheriffs of Middlesex and Northamptonshire; which, as showing that his son held property in that county, affords an additional presumption that John de Northampton had originally come thence. (Close Roll, 10 Hen. IV.)

At the time of James's death, his cousins William and Petronilla had also died issueless. Joan and Agnes, therefore, whose respective ages were 28 and 16, inherited The Hood, and the rest of James's lands not otherwise bequeathed in reversion by his father, passed to a little boy of six years old, William Comberton, son of the offending John, as heir male of James de Northampton. (*Inq.* 10 Hen. IV. 44.) He was consigned to the care of William Coventry and Lawrence Hampton. (Close Roll, 10 Hen. IV.)

An undated entry on the dorso of the Close Roll for 11 Hen. IV. gives some curious details of the dower assigned to Amie de Northampton, with the assent of Henry Somer and Thomas Burton, the next friends of young William Comberton. She was to have "seven messuages, 144½ acres of land, fourteen acres of park land, and 7s. 3d. in money, by the tenure of three and a half hens and one hundred eggs per annum, and the service of harvesting for one day in autumn in the towns of Shoreditch and Hackney, also in Iseldon [Islington] and Newton: thirty acres of wood in Tottenham, of which ten are in the park and manor of Daubeneys, and twenty in Tottenham Wood, next to the wood belonging to Helmingo Leget; and twenty acres of park land, of which ten are in Wildenissh next to Wildenissh Bridge, with all the works there, and

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ten in Baillesbrook; and the third part of the Grange in the manor of Daubeneys in Tottenham." At the same date, pardon was granted to Amie for having without royal licence married Thomas Rolf, on her paying a fine of ten pounds. This Thomas Rolf, as we learn elsewhere, was a citizen and furrier. (Close Roll, 14 Hen. IV.) Nothing was more common in the Middle Ages than for a widow to marry without royal licence, since the fine for so doing was usually reckoned at a lower rate than the cost of the licence.

The other children of the Lord Mayor must have predeceased their brother James, and we have no means of ascertaining their names, unless we find one of them in William de Northampton, priest, who is joined with the Rector of St. John Walbrook in a deed in 1404; or in William Northampton of London, spicer, whose name occurs under date of Mar. 24th, 1406. (Close Rolls, 5 Hen. IV., Part 2; and 7 Hen. IV., *dorso.*) In either case, the other children must have died without issue, as their descendants would have been heirs of James.

Nor is much more known concerning the brothers of the Lord Mayor. "William Cobarton, skinner," buried in the Church of St. John Walbrook in 1410, and Robert Combarton, in that of St. Mary Aldermanbury in 1422, are apparently the persons in question. Of Robert I have not met with any other notice; but in 1394 we find William in serious trouble, having been charged by Ellen Badcock with the murder of John her husband. When the case came on for trial the prosecutrix failed to appear, and evidence was given to show that William Comberton had acted in self-defence only. He was therefore pronounced innocent. (Close Roll, 17 Ric. II., *dorso.*)

B.

Roger Astelyn.

This worthy is a real person, so far as his name, residence, and calling, are concerned. The account which he

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brought against John de Northampton for work done during 1384, occupies the longest membrane in the Inquisition of the prisoner. A few of its items will be interesting to some readers.

"Sixteen pounds of iron, at a penny farthing per lb., 2s. 4d." (This is Mr. Astelyn's reckoning, not mine.)

"One pair of hinges and hooks for the house in the Ropery, 14d. One iron hinge for the door of the cellar in Heywharf's Lane, 9¼d. . . Five new locks and as many keys, for *Shordich*, 3s. 4d."

New locks and keys run from eightpence to a shilling each; a new key for an old lock costs 3d.

"Six *metes* [?] of *candelstykkes* for the Hood, 6d. . . One new stock-lock for the house which belonged to Richard Lyons, 8d. . . One hanging lock [padlock] for the door of a cellar in the Ropery, behind (*après*) the Stillwharf, 8d. . . A clyket lock [spring lock, probably opened with a letter-key, as described at p. 179], with six new keys, with the harness [appurtenances of any kind], for the door of the Prince in Wandegoes Lane, 20d. . . Pikes [pivot?] and cylinders for two querns for the brew-house, 4d."

The quern is the ancient and primitive grinding-mill, consisting of upper and nether mill-stones, the former being turned by a handle in the midst.

"An iron staple for the house of the dyer living in Wantgoes Lane, 3½d. . . The heure [?] of a well-bucket for the brewhouse at the Church of St. Owen, 12d. A gudgeon [iron pin] for the crane, 14s. 2d. A bolt for the crane, 11s. 8d. . . An iron band for the crane, with the nails, 4s. 8d."

This bill is written in French "of Strattèford atte Bow:" and one or two of its sentences in the original will show what a curious language that was.

"Vn pair heng et hokis pur la maison en la Roperie, 14d.; vn henge de fier pur le hoeux de le celer en Heywharfslane, 9¼d. . . Nouel cerure et clef pur la place de Bowes, 8d. . . Vn garnet et vn lacths pur vn hoeux del maison du dit brouderer, amonte 3d. . . Vn grate de fer fait pur vn goter a la place del hood sur le hoop," etc.

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C.

Nicholas de Hereford.

This eminent man was probably a native of Hereford. When at Oxford he was a Fellow and Bursar of Queen's College, and later in life he became a canon of Hereford Cathedral. He brought out a translation of Scripture, from the Book of Job to that of Canticles inclusive, before Wycliffe's was issued.

From an anecdote recorded by Walsingham, we see that he must have been well acquainted with the great Lollard chief, "the most pestilent of all that sect," Sir John de Montacute, if not actually a member of his household. On the rebellion of Jack Straw in 1381, the seditious agitator Ball, who tried to implicate the Lollards in his confession, named Hereford as well as Wycliffe in his accusations. Of all the Lollard priests, we are told, Hereford was the boldest and most extreme, going even beyond Wycliffe himself; and he was complained of to the Duke of Lancaster by the four claustral Orders. Lancaster seems to have taken no notice of the appeal: but two sermons preached by Hereford in the following year, one in Lent, the other before the University on Ascension Day, roused the active wrath of Archbishop Courtenay. Hereford was inhibited, after three monitions, and proclamation was made through the University that any person harbouring him in Oxford was to be expelled. Search was also made for his works, which were declared contraband. In vain Hereford appealed from the order for suspension to the Duke of Lancaster; he was only advised to submit. On the 14th of June, 1382, he appeared before the Archbishop, having been summoned along with Wycliffe, Repingdon, Ashton, and Bedeman. His reply to the charges brought against him was judged unsatisfactory, and he was examined further on several points, which he declared that he would maintain even to the death. Cleared from the mists cast around it by the priests and their subservient chroniclers, the special item on which Hereford stood out beyond others, appears to

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have been the duty of the priesthood to submit to state control. Refusing to append his signature to the decrees of the Council of London, he was condemned on the first of July as a heretic along with Repingdon. The two appealed to the Pope; but the appeal had to go through the Archbishop, who cast it aside as "frivolous and insolent," and excommunicated the applicants. Repingdon submitted himself and abjured his "heresy" on the 23rd of October; his patience and fortitude could not last four months. He afterwards became an abbot and a bishop, and some twenty-five years later was one of the bitterest persecutors of the Lollard Church. Hereford, who scorned to copy such an example, succeeded in escaping to the Continent, where he carried his complaint to the Pope. At Rome he quickly discovered that the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. Pope Urban sentenced him to imprisonment for life, placidly assuring him that his real desert was death, but that he graciously suffered the milder penalty to be inflicted out of respect to the Church of England, and from personal regard to (Hereford's bitterest enemy) Archbishop Courtenay! It is said by Knighton—a most prejudiced writer, whose statements concerning the Lollards are usually to be accepted with many grains of salt—that after Hereford had been imprisoned for three years, the prison of the Vatican was thrown open, in a popular riot, and Hereford made his way out and returned home. These items are probably true, since it is certain that Hereford's translation of the Bible was abruptly broken off, and never finished; and that he disappears from English society after 1383, when Archbishop Courtenay presented a petition against him, because "he was still setting the ban pronounced against him at defiance." But in 1387 he was back in England, and at the head of the Lollard itinerant preachers; in 1392 he appealed to the King for protection against his enemies, being then according to their own admission a "pestilent Lollard." In 1393 he sat, as Canon of Hereford, on the trial of Walter Brute, himself a Lollard; but he was present only on one occasion. In 1395, an order is issued to deliver to Nicholas

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Hereford, Canon of Hereford, six trees called Rotheres, for firewood, per annum, which the King had granted to him from the forest of Haiwode, at the time that he was resident there, and dwelling in the said church. They are to be delivered to him for the time of his residence, and a receipt taken from him.[1] In 1401 he was a prisoner in Saltwood Castle, Kent, with John Purvey, where he was "grievously tormented and punished." He was alive in 1407.

So much for facts. We now come, as I believe, to fiction, or at least to a considerable admixture of the two.

The Register of the Bishop of Hereford contains a letter from "a certain Lollard," appended to the examination of Walter Brute, and termed a remonstrance with Nicholas Hereford for his apostasy from the Lollard cause. Walden (a bitter enemy of the Lollards) asserts that he recanted, with Purvey, at Paul's Cross, in 1401. And Archbishop Arundel took every opportunity of publishing abroad the delightful fact of the complete recantation and reconciliation of Nicholas Hereford, which was not denied by some Lollards to whom he announced it.

These statements prove three things:—that the Papal party were excessively anxious to obtain a recantation from Hereford; that they spread far and wide a statement that he had recanted; and that some of his Lollard brethren believed it, or at any rate were not in a position to deny it.

But do they prove any thing more? In justice to one of the most eminent and faithful Lollards that ever lived, let us look for a moment into these various items.

First, the letter from a certain Lollard in the Bishop's Register. It seems to me to bear on its face the marks of forgery. Who is this "certain Lollard," and why does his name not appear? How did the letter ever come there? If the object of its insertion were falsely to discredit Hereford, it is as plain as possible how it came there; but if it were a genuine document, how could it get entered on the episcopal Register? Would Hereford present for enrollment a private letter to himself, which did him no credit whether as a past Lollard, or as a present Papist? More

[1] Patent Roll, 18 Ric. II.

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over, the internal evidence is against it. The charge brought therein is not apostasy, but simony. The unknown writer is quite as much concerned for the false quantities in Canon Hereford's Latin as for the fact of his supposed derelictions. That any Lollard should have written this, considering their well-known opinions on the vanity of human scholarship, is something beyond probability.

Secondly, the asserted recantation at Paul's Cross. The proceedings against Purvey are extant. But where are the proceedings against Hereford? Not a line of documentary evidence is forthcoming.

Thirdly, his sitting as judge upon Walter Brute the Lollard, in 1393. He had only just requested royal protection against the orthodox party, and if he had changed his opinions, he must have done it with rapidity. Moreover, in 1401 we find him in prison for these very views which he is supposed to have changed; and that, let it not be forgotten, without the pretence of a recantation in 1393. But why should his appearance on the trial be held to indicate any such thing? Sir John de Montacute sat as judge upon John de Northampton, without any slur upon his fidelity to Lollardism. We do not know how Hereford voted: and we do know that of all the sittings he is only named as present at one, and that he does not appear among those canons of the Cathedral who bore evidence against Brute.

Fourthly, the statements of Archbishop Arundel and his subservient followers. The most decided of these are found in the examination of William Thorpe.

"And then Malueren and another clerk came nearer me, and they spake to me many words full pleasantly. . . . And for the pity of Christ, said they, bethink thee how great clerks [learned men] the Bishop of Lincoln [Repingdon], Hereford, and Purvey were, and yet are, . . which have also forsaken and revoked all the learning and opinions that thou and such other hold. . . And one of the Bishop's clerks said then there, that he heard Nicol Hereford say, that since he forsook and revoked all the learning

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and Lollards' opinions, he hath had mickle greater favour and more delight to hold against them, than ever he had to hold with them, while he held with them."[1]

I have recounted here the strongest piece of evidence against Canon Hereford. And what sort of evidence is it? Hearsay evidence, such as would not be received in any court of justice. What can it be said to *prove*, except that the clerks were very desirous to make Thorpe believe that Hereford had recanted, and that Thorpe did believe it, as he has elsewhere shown?

Fifthly, the chronological evidence is entirely to the contrary. We are required to believe that Hereford, who had stood firm through the bitter persecution of 1382, recanted in the far milder persecution of 1392, when the Bishops were much less powerful than ten years before:—that after this submission and subsequent obedience in 1392 and later, he was cast into prison and required to recant again in 1401:—that in 1407 he was not only orthodox, but actively and warmly orthodox. If this were so, how is it that he did not share in the honours and rewards heaped upon other men who thus conducted themselves? Why was this orthodox follower of 1392 imprisoned in 1401? (According to their own showing, he must have recanted his reconciliation.) Why does he never show himself, nor speak a word in the hearing of the Lollards themselves? *Where was* Canon Hereford during all these years of Papal subservience? These questions, if not unanswerable, are at least unanswered.

Lastly, let it be noted that the same, or a greater discrepancy exists with respect to John Ashton. According to the assertions of the Papal party, he submitted to the Church, and was "reconciled," in 1382. According to the uniform statement of the Lollards themselves, he remained faithful, and died in prison. The recantation of Hereford in 1382 has been proved false. For any recantation in 1392–3, no evidence is even offered to us: and had any been forthcoming, this would not have been the case. If any real evidence exist for the asserted recantation of

[1] Foxe's Acts and Monuments, iii. 279.

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1401, let it be brought forward. It has not been seen yet. Canon Hereford might answer from his grave, as his Master did from the judgment-hall of Caiaphas, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?"

One other assertion respecting Hereford is made by the chroniclers: that he died a monk in the Carthusian convent of St. Anne at Coventry. This may or may not be true: but, true or false, it does not prove him unfaithful. The Lollards and the Carthusians, as I have pointed out in a previous note, were always friendly to each other. That Hereford should have sought one of their monasteries wherein to end his days, if it prove any thing in respect to the matter, rather tends to show that he kept his faith than that he denied it.

D.

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