

THE  
BLACKSMITH  
OF BONIFACE LANE

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&c. &c.

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=



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## Preface.



MY tale has a historical basis, and the fiction in it is but as the wild-flowers and moss which may gather at the foot of some ancient landmark. We can still read the inscription upon it. What that inscription is, and in what direction the finger-post points, will be seen in the course of the story.



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THE  
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LANE.

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CHAPTER I.

THE SIGN OF THE WHITE HART.

IT is to London that the reader is introduced ; but a very different London from the vast metropolis at the end of the nineteenth century was that which bore the name at the beginning of the fifteenth. Instead of the enormous labyrinth of streets stretching in every direction as if to absorb and swallow up everything green for miles upon miles, London was then of moderate size ; a morning ride might take a horseman round it. What now are crowded thoroughfares were then villages divided from each other by field or common ; the wild boar might roam where now the omnibus bears its passengers along roads bordered by neat rows of suburban villas. The Fleet was then a stream where we can imagine the bulrush growing and the trout swimming. In Henry the Fourth's

days carriages had not been invented, and the cab was unknown. Ladies rode on pillions behind their servants, or were borne along in litters. The incessant roll of wheels, the rumble, the racket, the flow of busy life from west to east in the morning, with an evening ebb back to more fashionable quarters, was then in the undreamed-of future. There were no lines of yellow gas-lamps at night to dispel the darkness; retainers in gay liveries carried torches before their masters.

But London was a busy place under the first Lancastrian king, though utterly unlike what it is now. If the city occupied a far smaller space, that space was crowded with buildings and swarming with life. London had no theatres, but it had its mummeries and miracle plays acted in the streets; amusements which our ancestors may have deemed pious, but which we should deem profane. The narrow streets were made to appear more narrow by the upper stories of some of the houses projecting beyond the lower, so that the residents on either side of the way could exchange greetings with each other from the latticed casements. There was more of picturesqueness in ancient London than in the modern, though certainly less of comfort. The passengers seen in the thoroughfares were very unlike those who now make our city resemble a swarming ant-hill. There throng the noisy apprentices, bent on mirth and mischief. They have tried their strength ere now against gallants from the court, and are ready for a row. With jingling



bridle, yonder rides a fat abbot on his ambling palfrey, scarcely noticing the bare-foot friar who tells his beads as he walks along. Beggars with sores sit by the wayside, praying for alms in the name of Mary; a minstrel is gathering a crowd around him to listen to some ballad of Robin Hood, *Rhymes of Sir Tristram*, or the *Romaunt of the Rose*. It would be as difficult to recognize the London of to-day in that of the reign of Henry the Fourth, as to trace a resemblance between some portly banker of Lombard Street, with bald head and spectacles on nose, and the portrait of himself taken fifty years before, representing the merry urchin just emerged from pinafores and red-strapped shoes.

Turning from one of the largest thoroughfares of London as it was under the first Lancastrian king, we enter a narrow street called Boniface Lane. It is chiefly inhabited by well-to-do artisans and shopkeepers. Signs or quaint devices hung over the entrances of shops show the crafts pursued by the citizens within. Over one, which we shall have frequent occasion to visit, hangs a big painted yellow boot, in size meet for a giant, but gay with tassels and gilding, as if meant for some fop of the day. Under the sign, in large gold letters, appears the inscription: *Peterkin Paton, Bootmaker to the Prince of Wales*. This shop, though it would certainly not now hold its own in Bond Street, is rather a favourite resort of merry courtiers, and has been so since the days when Richard the Second was surrounded by a gay, giddy

train, who fed on his bounty and deserted him in his need. Grave history smiles to record the absurdities of fashion in his reign. "A fine gentleman did not then think himself well dressed unless his clothes were literally made of patchwork. One sleeve was blue, the other green; one stocking red, the other white; a boot on one foot, and a shoe on the other.

" Long beards, thriftless,  
Painted heads, witless,  
Gay coats, graceless,  
Maketh England thriftless."

So rang the rough rhyme of the day.\*

There was still a great deal of folly and extravagance in apparel. Peterkin Paton was said to have won patronage amongst the gay by his invention of the tasselled and spangled boot, though some averred that his pretty daughter, Maid Marian, had something to do with bringing idle gallants to the shop, above which she resided with her widowed aunt, Dame Marjory Strong.

On the opposite side of the irregularly built lane, but lower down, is a smithy, with the name of *John Badby*, in black letters, above it. Thence from morning till even comes the sound of the clink, clink, or the thud, thud; and the red glow of the furnace and the sparks from the forge are seen, as the smith, a fine powerful man in the prime of life, pursues his heavy labours. Occasionally John Badby pauses, perhaps to rest his

\* Markham's "History of England."

siney arm, perhaps to glance in the direction of the latticed casement above Paton's shop, where there is "metal more attractive" for him than the iron which glows on his anvil. The smithy is a not infrequent resort of horseman or squire, as John Badby is an armourer as well as a smith, and can rivet buckler or hammer basinet for a knight as well as shoe his charger.

Almost opposite to the smithy is a tavern, very unlike the flaring gin-palace of the nineteenth century, more resembling the modern village inn, with *Good Accommodation for Man and Beast* on the sign which swings over the entrance. That sign bears on either side the device of the *White Hart*, the well-known cognizance of the ill-fated Richard the Second. It formerly displayed a gay prancing stag, with golden branching horns and gilt hoofs; but the chalky white is now dulled and darkened by smoke and rain, and the gilding so tarnished as to be almost black. In the rough January wind the sign swings and creaks with a dismal sound, as if, like a hatchment, it were placed as a memorial of the dead rather than as an invitation to the living.

"I marvel, Master Host, that you do not have that wretched cracked daub repainted, and made more suitable to the time."

This observation was made by a man in a buff jerkin, with a handsome hilted rapier by his side, and on his head a velvet cap with a long drooping black feather. He, with a blunt, ruddy-faced yeoman, formed the only

customers sitting within the sanded parlour of the tavern, to enjoy the warmth of a blazing fire, and a dinner of savoury bacon and beans, washed down by a cup of sack as regarded the speaker, and a tankard full of brown ale quaffed by Bob Bolton the yeoman.

“I had thoughts of doing so, Master Guy Dunn,” quoth the dapper little host, who in informal style had seated himself on a bench opposite to his customers. “Says I to my missus”—the host pointed over his shoulder with his thumb towards the kitchen from whence the sound of angry rating told of the wrath of mine hostess towards the maid who had let the cat get at the whey—“says I to my missus, ‘We have a new king, so we’ll have a new sign.’ But ye see, Master Guy, we two couldn’t agree as to what the new device should be. I wanted a plume of feathers, in honour of our merry young Prince of Wales; my wife she stuck up for a golden mitre, as the Bishop of Arundel now rules the roast. Well, Master Guy, we were getting warm over the matter, so says I, ‘We’ll refer the choice to honest John Badby, the smith on the opposite side o’ the way.’”

The brow of Guy Dunn darkened. He was a man of bold presence and handsome features, but when anything displeased him a kind of lurid glare came into his eyes which reminded beholders of that in some savage wild beast’s. Almost every sentence uttered by Dunn was rounded by an oath far too profane to be here recorded.

He seldom removed his cap, but wore it alike in summer and winter, in the street or by the hearth, save when in the presence of those who would have regarded a covered head as a sign of disrespect. This cap was perhaps worn to hide a blemish, for the dark hair, thick and bushy in other places, refused to grow over an ugly scar on the left side of Dunn's head.

"And what said the smith on this weighty matter?" asked Guy.

"He said that if the tavern were his he would only have the old sign burnished up new," was the host's reply. "Says John, 'Why show scorn to the gallant White Hart because he was pulled down by the blood-thirsty hounds?'"

Guy Dunn started, and his dark eyes flashed with a dangerous light as he uttered an oath deeper and more profane than usual. "The fellow had better keep a wiser tongue in his head," he exclaimed, "unless he wishes to be hanged like his father."

"His father—Bill Badby—I knew him well. He was out with Wat Tyler some twenty years gone past," observed Bolton, who was rather an elderly man.

"And his son with him," said Guy Dunn. "It's pity that they did not string up the two together."

"Why so?" asked the yeoman sharply; "the urchin was not ten years old. It would be hard to hang a curly-pated child as a traitor for going with his dad to see the fun."

"Badby will be hanged yet," muttered Guy Dunn; "he's a pestilent fellow—a Lollard!"\*

"If all such are to be hanged," observed mine host with a chuckle, "ropes won't be had for love or money. Nigh every third man or woman that you meet is a Lollard; the last king, it was said, and assuredly his queen, favoured the new opinions."

"That was in a reign that is past," said Dunn; "the tide runs another way now. Our present king—here's a health to him—holds by the Pope and the prelates, and will trample heresy out of the land. You've heard of the statute against heretics?"

"What! has that been passed?" cried mine host.

"What does that mean?" asked the yeoman.

"Why, it means that there will be no more dilly-dallying about dealing with the followers of Wicklif" (a curse and coarse epithet followed the name); "it means that bishops can catch—as we would catch foxes and other vermin—all heretical preachers, schoolmasters, or writers of pestilent books, and force them to abjure their vile errors."

"And if they won't do so?" asked Bolton.

"Hand them over to the civil officers, to be burned quick," was the savage reply.

"Has the king signed this?" inquired the host of the White Hart gravely.

"Signed—sealed; and he'll stick to it too," cried Dunn.

\* The name given to those who held opinions like those of Wicklif.

A short silence followed; to burn men for their opinions was then a thing unknown in England. The honest yeoman pushed from him his yet unemptied plate, rose, and walking towards the fire, gazed vacantly into it. Bolton did not utter his thoughts aloud, but they were something like what follows:—

“Henry of Lancaster has stains—he knows best what stains—on his soul, and he wants Rome’s whitewash to hide them. The king believes in papal absolution, and that kind of thing, as being almost as good as the blood of slaughtered Paynims to quiet a troublesome conscience. It’s hard for Bolingbroke to settle his affairs with Heaven, unless he threw in the burning of a few Lollards to be put to the credit side of his account. Maybe Heaven reckons in a different way from the king.”

“So Badby the smith had better look to it,” continued Dunn, after the pause. “I’ll be sworn he has not been to confession for many a year, nor has burned a farthing rushlight in honour of any of the saints.”

“John has one saint at home whom he serves devoutly,” quoth Willis the host, resuming his naturally lively tone. “Badby treats his crippled mother as if she were a princess of the blood and he her squire-in-waiting. He carries her up and down stairs every day.”

“How came Dame Alice to be crippled?” asked the yeoman, turning from the fire, taking again his seat at the table, and addressing himself to finishing his plateful

of bacon and beans. "She was active as a squirrel when I knew her, but that was many years ago."

"She got crippled with rheumatism from going from house to house, and sitting up night after night in the bitter winter," quoth Willis. "It was a twelvemonth last Candlemas since Dame Alice was taken with rheumatic fever—we thought she would die—and since then she has never once set her foot to the ground, nor been able so much as to lift her spoon to her mouth."

"A heavy burden on John Badby," said Bolton.

"Love's labour is light," observed Willis. "Dame Alice is so patient, so cheerful, so thankful, in spite of her helplessness and pain, that if there wasn't a saint in the calendar already for every day in the year, the Pope need not look farther than her home to find one to fill up a blank."

"About whom are you gossiping?" asked Mrs. Willis, a red-faced woman, half a foot taller than her husband, who came bustling in from the kitchen to get a drop of something hot from the bar. "Who is the saint of whom you are talking?"

"We were not speaking of you, my dear," replied the merry little host, with a sly twinkle in his eye.



## CHAPTER II.

### BLOWING BUBBLES.

WE will now turn towards the tenement first mentioned in my story, the quaint gabled house over whose entrance, overlapped by the projecting upper story, hangs the gay tasselled boot, the sign of the craft pursued within. In the lower part of the building, warehouse, workroom, and shop, sit cross-legged half-a-dozen apprentice lads, stitching, or rather chattering away, by the dim light of oil cressets ; for the youths, even in winter, have not the luxury of a fire. No particular description need be given of Tom the tough, Sam the sloth, Dan the dolt, Mat the monkey, Ben the bold, or Lubin the lubber ; the nicknames given by young Dickon, their master's son, are sufficiently characteristic. Nor need the gossip of the apprentices be detailed at length. There is grumbling at being kept at hammering of soles and stitching of top leathers beyond working hours, merely because of the spree of the evening before, of which Tom bears the mark in a bound-up head, and Ben in a black eye. They are a wild set, these apprentice boys of old London ;

not one of them knows his letters, or could count up to a hundred. There is much talk about a bear-baiting at which Dan and Mat had been present, and a calculation of the chances of being allowed to go and see the mummeries to be exhibited on the birthday of Harry, the Prince of Wales.

"I trow when that boy comes to the throne we shall have more fun and merry-making than even in King Richard's time," observed Mat; "young Hal is a deal jollier than his father. Our master Dickon will come in for everything going. It's a grand thing to be court jester to the heir to the throne."

"I shouldn't care to be any one's fool," quoth Sam the sloth.

"No, you would not part with any of your folly for love or money," cried Mat the monkey; "and yet you've no lack of it either."

"I don't see what a boy not thirteen years old wants with a jester of his own," observed Dan in a grumbling tone.

"He won't ask you to pay for his cap and bells," said Mat.

"Not so sure of that," muttered Dan. "Whence comes all the money squandered at Ely House?"\*

"Not from your pocket," laughed Mat. "I'll be bound there's nothing in it better than a brass farthing, and that a crooked one too."

\* The palace of the Lancastrian dukes, as mentioned by Shakespeare, after the burning of the Savoy by Wat Tyler's mob.

"Ay," said Tom the tough, the lad with the bandaged head, "we prentices are poor enough, badly fed, and lodged in a den only fit for rats. But when Prince Hal comes to the throne we'll have stirring times! We'll over the Channel, and have a set-to with the French. I'll go to the fighting, I will! I'll throw away my last—"

"It will be the *last* of you," quoth Mat, who was ambitious to be a jester. At the stale pun the merry apprentices burst into a general roar of laughter.

"You'll leave off hammering English soles, and take to hammering French crowns," cried Mat. The mirth was renewed.

"Hist!" said Sam the sloth; "I hear Dame Marjory's step above. She may hear our laughing, and get us into a scrape with the master."

This turned the conversation on Master Paton's elderly sister, Dame Marjory Strong.

"She's a prosy, precise, stuck-up old poplar!" cried Mat.

"A good old soul too," observed Tom the tough. "She bound up my head yestere'en with her own hands, and tore up a linen kerchief to stop the bleeding."

"And gave you a lecture on street-brawling, I warrant you, to make the cut heal the faster," said Mat. "That's a plaster the dame is always sticking on."

"She swears by Wicklif," observed Sam.

"She never swears by anything," retorted Tom. "Why, yestere'en she rebuked Master Dickon himself for swearing!"

"She did, did she!" exclaimed Mat. "And how did the young jester take it?"

"With marvellous good-humour," was the reply. "Dickon blushed up to the rim of his fool's cap, and said, 'It's hard, aunt, to be different from all the rest of the world; at court swearing is as common as eating.' 'It was an ill day when you took up with the court folk, my boy,' said the dame. I heard no more, for I had only gone upstairs because I'd been called—I was not supposed to have ears."

"Unless they were asses' ears," suggested Mat.

"Was the Pink, Mistress Marian, present to hear her brother chidden?" asked Sam the sloth.

"Ay, and she looked vexed, as I thought. Mistress Marian thinks a mighty deal of the court and court folk, I take it. Besides, the Pink always would take the part of her twin."

"How like they are to each other!" cried Mat; "just like a pair of cherries hanging from one twig."

"I s'pose Master Paton and Dame Marjory are twins too," observed Dan the dolt; "they are wondrous like each other."

The luckless remark brought on the stupid lad a shower of gibes from his companions.

"Where are your eyes? in your pocket?" cried Ben.

"The dame is more than half-a-dozen years older than master."

"Where are your wits? in your heels?" said Mat. "Dame Marjory is as straight and stiff as a spear, and Master Paton has a round back; he has just escaped a hump."

"And the dame looks right before her—straight into your eyes," observed Tom the tough; "while master—"

"Seems as if he were always peering for pins dropped on the ground," said Mat, "and grumbling because he can't find 'em."

"The brother and sister have both high noses, and are both given to scolding," cried Dan, making an attempt to justify the comparison which he had drawn between them.

"They don't even scold after the same fashion," said Mat; "the dame sometimes snaps, but she never snarls."

"And she does not even snap unless she has something to snap at," quoth her champion, Tom the tough; "something mean, or bad, or—"

"Hist! the master's a-coming!" cried Lubin. Conversation came to a sudden stop, and vigorous stitching and hammering began.

We will now ascend the narrow oak staircase which leads to the upper rooms of the house. The largest one, which is called the parlour, is strewn with rushes, the substitute then for a carpet. A log-fire is crackling and throwing out sparks in a very large fireplace, adorned

with tiles on which are rude representations of Scripture stories. There is space, in the recess for a seat on either side—a coveted place in winter, as being the warmest in the low and draughty room. On the right-hand one, with a bowl of soapy water on his knee and a pipe in his hand, sits the bootmaker's only son, Dickon, court-jester to the boy Prince of Wales. Dickon's dress is so odd and quaint that it requires a little description.

A very well-favoured face, with the bright bloom of the white-heart cherry to which the youth had been compared, is disfigured by a large clumsy cap of gay and costly material, rising on either side so as to represent asses' ears, with a fanciful peak between them. This peak is adorned with a glittering bell; one hung in front, and another behind, jingle with the wearer's every movement. A party-coloured tunic, very quaint in shape, with two bells suspended from each of the long pointed sleeves, adds to the tinkle and the fanciful appearance. This tunic is worn over a kind of short skirt. Dickon's stockings are tight-fitting, and of different colours; of different colours are also the shoes, unlike each other in everything save the extravagant length of both. The young jester, who has seen but eighteen summers, is amusing himself by blowing bubbles.

In the warm chimney-corner, opposite to her twin brother, sits Marian, Paton's daughter. She is indeed strikingly like Dickon in outward appearance. The

height of the two is the same; the delicately formed nose, the bright complexion, the blue eyes, are characteristic of both, but there is more of laughing fun in Dickon's glance than in his sister's. Marian's dress, though in the extreme of the fashion of the time, would excite some amusement in the present. The skirt is of violet silk, full, flowing, and graceful, with a broad border of fox-skin at the bottom. The strange parts of the pretty maiden's attire are her immensely long sleeves, ending in pouches used as pockets, and the ridiculous head-dress which she wears. This looks like a long slender extinguisher or steeple, rising above a broad band, which quite conceals Marian's beautiful hair. Fashion takes little account of the becomings. Long wide violet ribbons stream from the extinguisher's top, almost reaching to the maiden's girdle, on which a serpent is figured in spangles; the girdle has been a gift from Guy Dunn.

Almost beyond reach of the kindly warmth of the fire sits a girl, some fifteen years old, quietly dressed in sad-coloured taffeta, with a plain girdle of the same. Lilian has no pretension to beauty—she has been too often reminded of that fact to have any doubt on the subject; though from the girl, still growing fast, it is difficult to tell what the woman will be. Lilian is not related to the bootmaker's family, where her present position is that of general drudge. The poor girl is of gentle birth and gentle breeding. She, the orphan of a knight, has

been adopted in pity by Dame Marjory, who when present lets no one scold Lilian but herself, and who teaches her to be generally useful—a valuable lesson meekly learned by the young maid, though sometimes a little sharply taught by the dame. Lilian, who can read and write like a clerk, has hopes of, at some future time, earning her own living by copying and illuminating manuscripts. The girl is bending over the first piece of clear parchment with which she has been intrusted, very carefully, with the help of ruler to keep her letters straight, pursuing her labour of love. Lilian is copying from an illuminated scroll belonging to Dame Marjory, and greatly prized by her as a wedding gift from Wicklif himself. The young maid is so absorbed in her delightful occupation that she hardly hears a word of the tattle going on in the room.

“You are too old to blow bubbles like a child, Dickon,” was Marian’s observation.

“It is what all are doing, each after his own fashion,” replied Dickon, giving the slight jerk to his pipe which sent a brilliant ball mounting towards the smoke-blackened rafters. “Kings and conquerors blow bubbles with blood instead of water, and black powder for soap: up they go”—the jester’s eye followed the bubble—“and then where is it? not a trace of it left. The Pope and his red-hatted cardinals blow bubbles—and big ones; their swelling words give absolution or excommunication; folk stare open-mouthed to see how they



rise ; and then—an honest man touches them—and they burst !”

“ Come, come, Dickon ; father says these are dangerous subjects,” said Marian.

“ And to turn to yourself, Maid Marian, what are you doing but blowing bubbles—bubbles of vanity, bubbles of pleasure, amusing yourself by playing with others’ hearts ! I’ll dip my pipe again for you.” Dickon did so, and blew out a bubble, but it disappeared before it had risen a foot from the bowl.

“ Nothing left—but a tear !” said Dickon.

“ You are not much of a jester if you can say nothing more pleasant than that !” cried Marian. “ You ought to talk nonsense, and not take to moralizing, or you had better throw away your cap and bells.”

“ I’ll throw away my cap when you throw away your preposterous steeple,” said Dickon, giving a shake of the head which set his little bells jingling. “ You only wear it to make believe that you are taller than I, when there’s not a thread’s difference between us. I’ve a mind to stick a few peacock’s feathers in my cap ; and then I’ll look down from their eyes upon you, for I shall have reached a still greater height of folly.”

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Dame Marjory Strong, not in the best of tempers.

“ Here’s a kettle of fish !” she exclaimed : “ here’s your father just come home, and he tells me that he has invited Guy Dunn to supper. He ought to have told me

afore, and I'd have got a pasty or collops ready ; there's nothing but cold pork and cakes of beans and bran in the cupboard."

"Quite good enough for Guy Dunn," said Dickon. "I don't like the fellow, nor trust him."

"Nor do I," rejoined the dame ; "but when a man who is admitted at court is asked to a shoemaker's supper, we must think of the credit of the house."

"By what back-door key Dunn got entrance into Ely House, ay, and the Tower, passes my understanding," said Dickon.

"Well, he comes by the front door here, and the shop," said Marjory, "and we must prepare a good supper for him.—Here, Lilian, go to Ford's round the corner, and see if he has not a capon left, with parsley, cabbage, and leeks. Maybe you'll have time to cook them, while I keep the guest in play by talking. Paton has never a word to say, except when rating the prentice lads."

"There is no need for you to talk," said saucy Marian ; "Master Guy Dunn does not come here for you."

Marjory gave her niece a sharp and scrutinizing look. "Marian, look to it," she said sternly, "or you'll burn your fingers with your folly. I shall talk to Guy Dunn, and an old woman's words may do him, perchance, more good than the gossip which court folk exchange with silly girls.—How now, Lilian, why do you tarry ? are your feet made of lead ?"

The girl was putting a delicate border of red round a capital letter ; she started at the rebuke, and from the effects of that start a drop of paint from her brush fell on one of the words in the precious scroll.

“ Oh, I am so sorry ; forgive me ! ” exclaimed the poor girl in distress.

Dame Marjory did not reply ; she gazed almost sadly down on the scroll. She was more free from superstition than most of her neighbours, but in the beginning of the fifteenth century what woman or man was without it ?

“ A drop like blood over the word *death*,” she murmured. “ ‘ Be thou faithful unto *death* ’—a *red* death, such as our brethren abroad are suffering now.\* We have had the Black Death in England : that was a judgment from God ; maybe the Red Death is coming from the cruelty of man.”

“ O Aunt Marjory, you are always thinking of horrors ! ” cried Marian. “ Do mind something more pleasant now, and send off Lilian to buy the capon.”

“ It’s a pity to send out a girl on a cold night,” observed Dickon, quitting his warm nook in the chimney. “ I must be off to Ely House, and I pass Ford’s shop on the way ; I’ll tell him to send a fat capon, cabbage, and leeks.”

\* In the year 1400 the Waldenses, who resided in the valley of Pragela, were, at the instigation of some priests, suddenly attacked by a body of troops, who plundered their houses, murdered the inhabitants, or drove them to the Alps, where great numbers were frozen to death.—*Foae’s Martyrs*.

"We'll get out some nuts and comfits," said Marjory: "here, Lilian, take the keys." The dame fumbled in her pouch to find them, then turned it inside out. Out came scissors, thread, thimble, nutmeg-scraper, and a medley of other things, but the keys were not to be seen.

"I trow Maid Marian has hidden them," said the jester.

"I! what should I have to do with old rusty keys?" cried the girl.

"Look in her sleeves!" exclaimed the merry lad; and sure enough the bunch was found in one of the pouches formed according to the extravagant fashion of the day.

"You mischievous imp! you put them there yourself!" said Marian.

"Good hiders are good seekers," quoth Dickon, as laughing he turned on his heel and quitted the room.

## CHAPTER III.

### REBUKE.

LILIAN went off to the kitchen to fulfil the humble duties which always devolved on her, as Marian took care never to roughen her slender hands by hard work, or blacken them by taking a kettle from the fire.

"I wish that you would take off that trashy belt," said Marjory abruptly to her niece, as soon as they were alone. "You have a very good violet one to match your dress."

"I happen to like this best," said the spoiled girl in a flippant manner. Marian was the idol of her father, and in the bootmaker's establishment reigned as a little queen. The only one who would not bend to her whims was her resolute old aunt—a clear-sighted woman, with shrewd common sense, and a clear view of right and wrong. Marjory strongly disapproved of Marian's wearing the gift of Guy Dunn, and she was wont to express her opinions strongly.

"It is unmaidenly in a girl to take presents from a man for whom she does not care enough to give him

a heart in return," said the dame, as she took the warm seat in the chimney-corner which had been vacated by Dickon.

"Who told you that I did not care for Master Guy?" asked Marian Paton.

"Guy Dunn with all his pranking is not worth the little finger of John Badby, who has known you from childhood, and loves you well, though he can't flatter and befool you with the glib tongue of a man of the court."

"John Badby is only a blacksmith," said the girl.

"And you are the daughter of a bootmaker; you are not so mighty tall, Maid Marian, though you choose to wear a steeple on your head, to make you look six feet six instead of five feet five!" The dame closed her rebuke with a little emphatic snort, the well-understood sign of her being displeased or indignant.

"I'll never mate with a man who would come grimy from the forge, with sleeves rolled up, showing muscles like bell-ropes," quoth Marian.

"Then why do you not tell John so plainly, saucy minx? It's worse than robbery to accept true love only to throw it away."

"John is too old for me—he's nigh thirty," said the girl.

"A giddy wife needs a sensible husband," quoth the dame.

"I mean to be a lady; I'll never wed one who wears not a rapier and a hat with a feather."

“Fiddle-sticks!” cried Marjory, with a snort. “A feathered hat may cover a fool’s head, and a rapier may hang at the side of a rogue! Gold is gold, though it be a little begrimed, and a brass nail, however brightly burnished, is but a brass nail still. A good son makes a good husband: look at what Badby is to his mother.”

Marian knew that her aunt was right, but the girl was in a perverse, contradictory mood, and determined not to be guided. Marian was by no means devoid of either heart or conscience; if she loved any one it was the smith, with whom were linked the sweetest, holiest remembrances of her early days. The child Marian’s spirit had been like some bright, clear little lake, that reflects back the smile of Nature and sparkles in the pure sunshine. But after the death of her mother, and a too brief time spent with Dame Alice, Marian had been under the care of a weak, indulgent father, who had never even made an attempt to clear the lake of the weeds of folly and vanity that grew and spread so quickly. Marian might have been a different girl if she had been reared by her aunt, who was quick-sighted and shrewd; but the little maid was fourteen years old ere Paton’s widowed sister had come to share his home. Marjory had brought with her Lilian, the orphan of a poor knight who had spent all his substance in fitting himself out for the wars, and, dying abroad, had left his infant child a beggar. Marian, after having had her own way so long, was little inclined to relish advice or

brook control. She was like a child who has been so pampered with unwholesome sweets that she has lost relish for wholesome food. No talk pleased Marian that was not sugared with flattery. The girl feasted on admiration, and accepted it from whatever quarter it came. It gratified her to see the stir amongst the apprentices whenever she passed through the room where they worked. Marian put on the gracious air of a princess, and would accept with a condescending smile little posies of half-withered marigolds, though only to throw them away. Dame Marjory's high indignation had been excited by overhearing Mat singing a wretched doggerel rhyme which he had made in honour of Maid Marian; but the giddy girl was not ill-pleased when she heard the refrain rising from below in merry chorus when the elders were out of the way—

“ Bonny face, bonny face !  
She's the Pink of Boniface Lane ! ”

Thus it was that the affection which the girl had felt for John Badby in earlier and happier days had almost died away. He could love deeply, but he could not flatter. John had even taken the privilege of one who had loved Marian from her childhood, to give her a gentle rebuke for some special act of folly. This was resented by the spoiled girl. Marian might indifferently well bear Dame Marjory's chiding or Dickon's sarcastic jests, but for one who sought her hand to think her



short of perfection was what Marian resented as treason. She resolved to punish Badby for his presumption, and it would be only too easy to cause him pain; for the deepest, most sorely aching wounds are given by the hand that we love. Marian had no intention of setting her suitor free, she was too selfish for that, and in spite of her folly had a conviction hidden in some corner of her heart that no other man on earth would make so faithful and true a mate as the Lollard smith. But Marian, fond of admiration and amusement, disliked the idea of the dull, sober life which John's wife would be likely to lead.

"I could never abide living in Bird's Lane, in a house behind a smithy, with an old-fashioned outside stair! I could never bear seeing after the washing and mending of grimy smocks, that a smith might look dapper and clean, at least on Sundays. I should hate having to wait on good Dame Alice, though I love the dear, kind woman; but I'd sooner have Aunt Marjory's chidings than those gentle words which make me despise myself for being so selfish and silly. I'd rather be a galley-slave tied to an oar than lead such a life. John must not look to win me—till I'm forty at least, and have got a few gray hairs and wrinkles, and learned to be sober and sad. I'll have my fling of amusement now."

Poor Marian was blowing her bubbles, as some girls do even in this enlightened age. She knew not how soon her gaily tinted bubbles would break in tears.

## CHAPTER IV.

### DAME MARJORY'S TALE.

DAME MARJORY kept to her intention of taking the lion's share in the conversation which should keep the guest amused till Lilian's deft fingers should prepare dainties to make the supper-table do credit to the house. Paton sat very silent. His hatchet face and high nose did certainly give him some resemblance to his sister, but he was very unlike her in manner, bearing, character, and way of thinking. Peterkin Paton stooped, Marjory was erect to stiffness; he was silent by nature, his sister conversed with ease. His view of life was like that which a man working in a tunnel has of nature; Marjory took such a survey as is gained from an elevation. Marjory could read—even write; Paton, the well-to-do citizen, was content to make his mark. Peterkin was also a cautious man, avoiding politics and polemics,—one who, if he was obliged to give an opinion, took care that it should never compromise his own credit or safety; Dame Marjory cared not if all the world knew what she thought. She gave Dunn not a minute's opportunity of talking nonsense to Marian, making her guest take

one of the seats in the chimney recess, and her brother the opposite corner, planting her own high-backed chair next to Dunn, so that he was kept in a kind of dignified imprisonment, with the dame for a vigilant jailer. Marjory bade Marian take to her spinning-wheel, which the girl did with no good grace; she was a little afraid of her aunt, and unwilling in the presence of a courtly guest to act the part of a spoiled, disobedient child. Dunn was little pleased at Dame Marjory's arrangement, but he was a man of the world, and entered into conversation, as he had done at the White Hart, on one of the leading topics of the day.

"Your log burns brightly and well, Master Paton: there are some, I trow, who will find the fire a bit too hot for comfort. You know, of course, what the Parliament has decreed in regard to heretics."

"I don't meddle with such matters," said Paton, and closing his thin lips he relapsed into silence.

"Our king is a pious Catholic," observed Dunn. Paton made no remark, but Dame Marjory gave an emphatic snort. The affections of many of his people still clung to the hapless Richard, the son of the famous Black Prince, and a king once deemed to be a model of chivalrous courage as well as of personal beauty. Marjory was one of those who more than suspected that Bolingbroke had murdered his royal captive and cousin; that the once gay and thoughtless young monarch had come by foul means to his end.

"It is said," continued Dunn, after a pause, "that there is already a warrant out against Sawtre, the Lollard priest."

"Heaven forfend that they should harm the good man!" exclaimed Marjory. The hum of Marian's wheel suddenly ceased, and an expression of fear came into her face.

"He'll burn!" cried Dunn, with an oath; "he's one of the worst of the followers of that cursed old heretic Wicklif."

"No man shall speak so of the holy Wicklif under this roof!" exclaimed Marjory; "no, not King Henry himself!"

"Don't you mind her, Master Dunn; old women will have their say," observed Peterkin Paton, noticing the fierce start of his guest at the words. "Dame Marjory owed something to the Lutterworth parson, and can't stand hearing anything said against him now he's dead."

"Owes *something*—owes everything!" cried the dame. "No one knows better than you do, Peterkin, what is our debt to Father Wicklif.—Listen to a tale of old days, Master Dunn; I've told it often enough, I trow, but it will be new to you. You were not born in the year 1348; fifty-three winters have passed since then, but it is a year that this country will never forget, and our gray-beards talk of it yet."

Marian resumed her spinning, and her wheel went

faster than before; she knew her aunt's story by heart, and it was one which she never wished to hear again. Peterkin Paton was well pleased to have conversation turned from the subject of burning heretics, a new thing in England; for even Wicklif, though persecuted, had been suffered to die in his bed.

"I was ten years old in that winter of '48," continued Marjory; "if I live to be a hundred and ten, I will remember that gruesome time. We—my parents, brothers, sister, and myself—lived merrily enough in a pleasant house at Monk's Corner (there's no trace of the street now). My father had been across the Channel with King Edward, had fought and conquered at Creçy, and brought back not only a few scars as tokens of triumph, but handfuls of French gold pieces, caskets of jewels, chests for dainty spoils, lace-damask—I know not what more; for there was a lot of plunder, and a franklin's wife in those days could dress as a baron's does now."

"Fine days!" observed Guy Dunn.

"There was no blessing on it all," said Marjory. "The frippery turned the head of my poor silly sister, and the notion of glory turned the heads of my thoughtless brothers. They had no fancy to learn an honest trade when wealth could be had by plundering poor wretches who had earned it by the sweat of their brows. I was pleased enough then at our spoils won by blood, but now I see that the just God's curse was upon it. It was in

'48 that the Lord sent the Black Death, that swept through England as if the destroying Angel were riding on the wintry wind, and mowing down men as the reaper cuts down corn. It spared not village, it spared not town—it is said that in London fifty thousand corpses were laid in one field; there were not enough of the living to bury the dead.”

“I've often heard of that plague,” remarked Dunn; “were any of your family smitten?”

“My gay, pretty sister Marian was the first victim in our house. She had been Queen of the May in the spring of that year, and even knights with gilt spurs had been proud to dance a measure with her on the green. I saw her but once after she sickened; she was a ghastly sight. My poor mother hurried me out of the room, and shut herself up to nurse the sick. She hoped that the contagion would not spread; but the breath was scarcely out of poor Marian, when first one, then another of my bold brothers sickened and died. I did not see them suffer—my mother would not let me come near; even if she had not had fears for me, I, little as I was then, could not have been spared from needful work, for both our servants had fled from the plague-smitten house. Had I not been able to go hither and thither (though I was nowhere welcomed), there would have been no food to eat, no water to drink, no one to do anything in the home. I had to chalk the red cross on the outside of the door, to make the death-cart stop

for the bodies. I made it crookedly enough. I mind me that my hand trembled as if with ague, for I was only a child. I think that winter made me a woman before my time."

"What had become of your father?" asked Dunn.

"If father had not been upstairs helping mother, who would have carried out the bodies? for we did not want the rough cart-men to come in," replied Marjory Strong. "It was a terrible time. I prayed to every saint that I could think of to save us, and promised my puppet and my little pearl brooch to St. Catherine if she would only keep the plague from spreading in our house. I know better now than to suppose that any saint would hear my prayers or want my puppet, but I was then only an ignorant child. One of my chief cares was to look after my brother Peterkin there. He was then only four years old, having been born long after the rest of us; so my parents thought him a prime gift from St. Thomas of Canterbury, on whose day he was born.—Peterkin," continued Dame Marjory, addressing her brother, "even you remember the Black Death."

"I remember the whipping which you gave me," quoth Paton. "You had a pretty hard hand, Marjory, even when you were but a child."

"I was forced to beat you," said Marjory; "I could not get you to stop crying and roaring after mother, and thumping with both hands at the closed door of the room, which we were forbidden to enter. I thought

that your howling would drive poor mother mad, for it almost crazed me to hear it. Whenever mother had to speak to me from her terrible watch in the sick-room, she always closed with the words, 'Keep my darling away, Madge; keep my darling away!' I had to put outside the door the food which I brought. I hungered for a sight of mother, but day after day I saw her not. She was always thinking of others. But one morning at dawn, when I brought a pitcher of water, the door slowly unclosed, and I caught a glimpse of the dear pale face, for mother had opened it herself. She was perfectly calm, terribly calm, but the first glance told me that the plague was upon her!

"'Father's gone! the good Lord have mercy on his soul,' she faintly said. 'I'm smitten; only you and the darling are left. Don't tarry here, my child; take the babe (she always thought Peterkin but a babe), and fly with him to your aunt at Chelsea. Don't stop here—you cannot save me; I am going after those I have lost.'"

There was a pause of silence; the spinning-wheel's whir was not heard, and Dunn listened with some degree of interest for the end of the story. With a sigh Dame Marjory then went on.

"It was the first time, I ween, that I had ever disobeyed my mother; but I could not leave her to die alone, and I'm glad that I stayed, little as I could do. After a few minutes I do not think that my mother



knew me ; she had even forgotten my father's death, and spoke as if he were still beside her ! But there was one thing which she could not forget, for she was a mother : she passed away with the words on her lips, 'Save my darling ! oh, save the babe !' Then, when nothing more could be done for the dead, I roused myself to care for the living ; my mother's charge was upon me. There was poor Peterkin again drumming on the outside of the door, which I had happily had the wit to close behind me, and crying as if he would choke. To save him was mother's dying charge ; but for that I believe that I should have lain down and died by her side. I came out of the room, seized the boy by the wrist, and dragged him downstairs. He was hungry ; there was nothing to give him but a morsel of stale oaten cake, for I could not have got milk from any one for love or money, even had I had a single groat left, but I had spent the last copper. As I went out of the house I saw the death-cart turning the corner of the street ; *that* quickened my steps, for I could not stop to look on what the men must do. I had just one wish left—to get the child to Chelsea. I went in what I thought the right direction, but my head was all in a whirl ; for the life of me I could not remember the turnings. Very few folk were in the streets, and those that I met were afraid of me, afraid of everything, as if the Black Death were at their heels. No one would tell me the way. Twice I tried to carry my brother, so as to get on faster, but I had to put him

down; my strength was almost worn out. At last I came to a dead stop, for I could not go one step further. I fell over a heap of bricks, and there I lay, I supposed to die, yet with a kind of determination not to die till my duty was done. I mind me that I thought, 'I have prayed to the saints, nigh a dozen of 'em, and none of them help me a bit; maybe when there are so many sick and wretched folk in London, all praying at the same moment, though there be hundreds of saints, they can't attend to everybody at once, they can't be in every place. I'd better ask the good God to help me, for He is everywhere, and is great enough and high enough to see and hear all that is going on down here.' So I prayed to God as well as a poor child could do who was just desperate with her woe; and," Marjory naively added, "I have never since asked a boon of any one of the saints, and never will, for they can just do nothing at all."

"The monks at their shrines would not approve of that doctrine," observed Dunn with a grin; "they get fat on the prayers and merits of saints."

"And so do jugglers on the folly of those who believe on their tricks," was Dame Marjory's caustic remark. Whereupon the brother, the cautious Peterkin, said: "Finish your story, Marjory, or it won't be done before supper comes in." Marjory thereupon took up the thread of her tale.

"I don't know how long I'd been praying, when I was startled by hearing a voice above me, 'My poor

child, what dost thou here?' I almost thought that God must have sent an angel. I raised my eyes; there was a young priest looking down on me with a kind, pitying face—an angel in the form of a man. I mind me that I roused myself to say, 'Oh sir! father, mother, and all save Peterkin here, are dead of the plague, and I want to get him away to my aunt at Chelsea.'

"You did not count yourself as one of the living," observed Guy Dunn with a grin.

"I could not bother about myself," cried Dame Marjory, snorting impatiently at the interruption. "I had enough to do to think of the boy," and she resumed her narration.

"'Chelsea is a far way off,' said the priest, 'and my mother's house is at hand. She is there to take care of you till I can find out your aunt.'

"'But, sir, I may have the plague upon me; would she take a stranger in?' said I. I mind me it was hard work to get those few words out.

"The reply was softly spoken, but I heard it, though strange noises were clanging in my ears, and I was almost losing my senses. '*I was a stranger, and ye took Me in,*' said the priest, but not as if speaking to me. I mind me of nothing after that but that I felt myself lifted up gently in strong arms and carried somewhere; and I felt safe, for he who cared for me would look after Peterkin too. My work was over; I could do no more, only lie still."

"You were a brave little wench to have done so much," cried Dunn, with extorted admiration. "I hope," he added with an oath, "that such horrible times will never come again!"

"It's like they may, for there are sins enow to bring down God's plagues upon us—specially the sin of swearing," was Dame Marjory's fearless rebuke.

Guy Dunn looked more surprised at it than pleased, and both Marian and her father said to themselves, "Why does Lilian take such an age in getting the supper ready?"

"And now I'll tell you, Master Dunn, who it was that received two poor orphans, and hunted Chelsea to find out their aunt, but in vain; for she had fled away from fear of the plague. I will tell you who was as a father to the fatherless," pursued Marjory, raising her voice as she went on: "it was he whom you dared just now to call 'a cursed heretic;' it was that blessed saint now in heaven—John Wicklif himself!"

"Well, he did you a good turn," muttered Dunn; "but he might be a heretic for all that. Go on with your story, old dame; if your aunt had run away, what became of you and your brother?"

"Master Wicklif, after long search, hunted up a cousin of my father, but that was not till the plague had well-nigh died out. This man, who was a shoemaker, adopted Peterkin, and brought him up to his business, but would not be hampered with a girl, espe-

cially one who was sickly, for it was many months before I got over the effects of that horrible time. So I remained with the good kind parson and his mother; indeed, I stayed till I was grown up, and never left them till I married. Everything that I knew I learned under their roof. I learned to cook and clean, to wash and to mend. I was even taught to read and write in our own honest mother-tongue, for I knew not a word of the mincing French which at one time was all the fashion. And I was taught better things besides. I learned to confess my sins to God, and not to a priest; I learned to 'flout the wallet of pardons hot from Rome;' I learned that 'God gave His sheep to be pastured, not to be shaven and shorn;' and that Piers Plowman\* did well to denounce fat abbots, hunting bishops, and—"

"Here comes supper at last!" exclaimed Marian, starting up from her wheel.

\* A satirical poet of those times. (See Green's "History of the English People.")

## CHAPTER V.

### THE PEASANTS' INSURRECTION.

LILIAN, with face flushed by her late employment, brought in the smoking savoury supper, assisted by Ben, who was sometimes allowed to help on such occasions, glad to get some of the scraps left as his reward. First came the capon, intended specially for Paton and his guest; cold pork and a pile of coarse cakes were meant for the rest of the party. The table was soon spread, and all sat down except Ben and Lilian: the former had to fill the drinking-horns with ale or water; the latter retired for a time to take off her apron and wash her hands previous to herself partaking of the meal which she had prepared. The short grace had scarcely been pronounced (but for his sister's presence Paton would have omitted it altogether), when a footstep was heard on the creaking wooden stair. Well did Maid Marian know that step; when she had been a child how often she had run to meet her "big brother," as she then had called John, with noisy pleasure, expecting a ribbon or a comfit.

In early maidenhood Marian had called John brother no more; another and softer word was in her thoughts though not on her lips. Badby had been in all the girl's day-dreams, and John being rather a prosaic name, Marian had given him the more fanciful one of St. George; for though he had never killed a dragon, she, in her fond pride, believed him capable of the feat.

But Marian was now drifting away from her first love, as a vessel with its cable cut drifts almost insensibly with the tide. John Badby might be—was a brave man, but even a foolish girl's fancies could not make him a hero of romance. To call him St. George would be too absurd. Marian, intoxicated by flattery, had made up her mind to regard a smith as below the regard of "the Pink of Boniface Lane," and was now persuading herself that Badby, by daring to intrude his advice, had given her cause of offence.

The smith entered the room dressed simply in gray home-spun cloth, on which not a stain nor a speck told of work at the forge. John was a fine tall artisan, with the native dignity of one who never feared to look any man in the face, for he had incurred no debt, and bore a character unstained.

"John is as goodly a man as ever trod on shoe-leather," was Dame Marjory's silent comment on his appearance; "how Marian can ever compare with him that low-browed, evil-eyed Dunn, I wot not, save that idle butterflies are ever attracted by glitter and sparks."

Badby came in bearing on his broad shoulder a specimen of his artistic skill in his craft. Marian had complained in his presence of the fuel lying here and there in unsightly heaps of sticks. These were too near to the fire, she had said, to be perfectly secure from sparks from the half-dried log which would sometimes crackle, sputter, and cast forth like fireworks an angry shower of sparks. Marian's lightest wish was a law to one who tenderly, although not blindly, loved her. Badby had bent his mind to contrive a light iron frame-work to hold the wood, and many an hour after his day's work was done had the tired artisan given to make his fire-fence a graceful ornament, fitted to adorn a lady's bower rather than a bootmaker's dwelling.

The smith was surprised to find the Patons about to commence supper, as he had calculated on the meal being ended, as it usually was, at that hour; he was also annoyed at seeing Dunn seated by Marian's side. However, the unexpected visitor was not taken aback. He told simply why he had come, and setting down his gift on the rush-strewn floor, asked Dame Marjory whether it would be useful. Badby addressed the aunt, but his eyes sought the niece for whose sake he had wrought at this labour of love. Marian, in a wilful, teasing mood, looked down at the plate before her; she gave scarcely a glance to the gift; she did not even notice the M so skilfully wrought into the pattern



which John had devised. Dame Marjory praised and accepted the graceful present; then, with her wonted hospitality, pressed the friend of the family to sit down and share their supper.

Badby had already taken his homely meal, but he would not decline the invitation, nor miss such an opportunity of being close to Marian Paton. On the bench on which she sat with Dunn on her right side there was ample space on the left, so Badby went to occupy the vacant seat.

"This is not for you; it is Lilian's place," said Marian sharply: "go over there, where there's plenty of room by my father."

John's sunburnt face flushed slightly, but he said not a word; he went to the opposite side of the table, and seated himself between the two elders. The smith was of too manly a spirit to betray the deep mortification which he felt at Marian's open slight. Badby caught sight of Dunn's insulting grin, but the smith did not choose to take notice of it.

Dame Marjory skilfully carved the capon, taking care that John should have his fair share of the dainty dish; but he scarcely touched the food. There was little conversation at first, for the dame had had her say, and, John excepted, all the party were hungry. Lilian quietly stole into the room and took the vacant seat by Marian. No one but Badby noticed the shy, pale girl; but he greeted her kindly, rising when she

came in, and thanking her for some little warm wrap which she had made for his suffering mother. Lilian's attempt to give pleasure should not, like his own, have been made in vain.

Dunn having finished his portion of the capon, made a vigorous onslaught on the pork, meditating, as he ate, how he might best annoy the smith, whom he affected to despise, but whom he regarded with dislike not un-mixed with fear. Presently Guy addressed John across the narrow table.

"Squire of the hammer, is it true that your father, some twenty years ago, was out with the mad priest Ball and the rebel Wat Tyler?"

John gave a monosyllable of assent. Dame Marjory, who had no mind to have a quarrel at her table, with her usual tactics dashed herself into the conversation.

"Yes, Master Dunn, our friend Badby was then little enough to be perched on his father's shoulder, and so had a good view of all that passed as it impressed the memory of a child who knew nothing about poll-tax or Statute of Labourers, but who could describe well enough what passed just before his eyes.—John, eat your supper, it is getting cold; I will tell your story.—There were thousands and thousands of peasants and artisans, like a swarm of buzzing, angry bees, assembled at Smithfield,\* and Tyler himself at their head, when

\* See account in Green's "History of the English People."

the young King Richard, mounted on horseback, with London's Mayor at his side, came suddenly upon them. I wot 'twas a sight to have feared many older than the gallant boy, when he saw scythes and poles, hammers and knives, raised up and brandished on high, and heard the roar of the multitude like that of waves dashing up on the Dover beach on a stormy day. But the son of the bold Black Prince carried himself as his father, at little more than his age, had done at Crecy. Richard's proud charger, arching his neck and pawing the ground, seemed to know that he carried a Plantagenet, and that the King of England. John could never tell exactly what caused the scuffle which followed, for he was not close to the spot, but he heard the loud, fierce cries around him. 'Wat's down! our captain is slain! Kill, kill, kill!' and there was a forward rush—the rush of thousands eager for slaughter, mad for revenge!"

Though the tale was by no means a new one, it was never tedious on the lips of Marjory, who herself vividly realized the whole scene.

"Then Richard Plantagenet shook his rein and urged his steed—not to flight; oh no! He rode forward with his plumed cap in his right hand, and the breeze blowing back his light curly hair. He did not flee from danger; he met it as became one of his race. The king rode up so close to the place where our friend here was perched on his father's shoulder, that

John could hear his clear young voice as well as he now does mine. 'They have slain our captain! kill, kill!' yelled the furious mob. 'What need ye, my masters?' cried the royal boy; and even the fiercest stopped to listen as he went on. 'I am your captain and your king; follow me!' Then caps by the hundred—the thousand—were flung into the air, and 'Bless him, bless our king!' was shouted from hoarse throats that but two minutes before were yelling for blood."

"We've heard all this fifty times before!" cried Dunn, with undisguised impatience. "The sun rose fair, but all its brightness faded with the morning."

"Ay," observed Peterkin Paton, "no one knew then all the folly, the extravagance, which was to blacken the day."

"It is not for us to judge our king," said Dame Marjory severely. "If he grew giddy, poor youth, looking down from his height, who can say, 'In his place *my* head would not have been turned'? There was no more loyal subject to King Richard than yourself, Peterkin, when you gave his name to your first-born son, and tapped a cask of brown ale, that any who chose to come here might drink to his health. It pities me to remember the change when I last saw the poor king, drooping and broken-hearted, riding a wretched jade, and brought into London like a captive in the old Roman days, made to grace a conqueror's

triumph, and then die, with no one to say, 'God bless him.' " \*

"He brought it on himself," muttered Guy, his dark face growing livid as he uttered the words. That face was not shaded as usual by his feather, for courtesy had compelled Dunn to doff his cap at supper-time, and the unsightly scar on his head was no longer hidden from view.

"When did you last see King Richard?" asked Marian of Guy. The girl was weary of sitting silent, and desired a share in the conversation. Marian wished, however, that she had not asked the question, Dunn looked so startled and annoyed: he only replied by grinding his teeth. As Marian had evidently begun conversation on a wrong tack, she tried another which she thought would be certain to gratify her admirer, and probably give him an opportunity of recounting some exploit of his own.

"Where gat you your token of prowess, Master Guy

\* I cannot forbear quoting the touching description given by Shakespeare—

"No joyful tongue gave him his welcome home:  
But dust was thrown upon his sacred head;  
Which with such gentle sorrow he shook off,—  
His face still combating with tears and smiles,  
The badges of his grief and patience,—  
That had not God, for some strong purpose, steeled  
The hearts of men, they must perforce have melted,  
And barbarism itself have pitied him.  
But Heaven hath a hand in these events."

History has drawn a veil of mystery over the death of the dethroned monarch. I have taken my view of Richard's fate from the drama of Shakespeare.

Dunn?" asked the maiden, glancing up at his scar; "scarce as far back as the French wars. Was that blow given by Irish kerne, or one of the wild Welshmen who follow Glendower? Or maybe a marauding Scot put his sign-manual upon you. I warrant me your good steel paid the blow back with interest."

Even though the remark was playfully made, and by a fair young maiden, it called up no smile on the compressed lips of the stern man-at-arms, rather the wolf-like gleam in his eyes that has been mentioned before. Dunn pushed back his plate, emptied his horn of ale at a draught, and rose from his seat.

"I forgot—I've an appointment with my Lord of Northumberland," he said in a strangely altered tone; "he will take it ill if I overpass the time fixed. Good-night, Maid Marian; good-night, all." As Dunn glanced round the table he met the stern, questioning eyes of the smith, which seemed to be reading him through and through. Dunn would not quit the room without sending a parting shot at his rival, a shot which went deep as well as direct. "Look to yourself, Lollard! a warrant is out against William Sawtre, the heretic priest."

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE HOUSE IN BIRD'S ALLEY.

WE will now enter another and humbler dwelling, just behind and connected with the smithy which stands in Boniface Lane. This is the small house which has belonged to the Badby family for several generations, descending from father to son in a long unbroken line. The tenement was at first very small, merely consisting of two rooms, afterwards thrown into one. The smithy was a comparatively modern addition, made by John's father, who also, on his marriage with Alice, the daughter of a well-to-do farmer, had built an upper story to the tiny house in Bird's Alley. The skill of the architect had not sufficed to manage an indoor staircase to connect the old part of the dwelling with the two rooms added above, so a wooden stair was placed on the outside, somewhat resembling a broad commodious ladder. There were three entrances to the little house—one through the smithy in Boniface Lane, which, as the reader knows, was almost opposite to the White Hart; a second through a low-browed, rather

worm-eaten door, which opened into Bird's Alley, and gave admittance into the parlour behind the smithy; and the third, the outer staircase which led to the rooms on the upper story, used as sleeping apartments. The house is an old-fashioned one, even in the days of Henry the Fourth. It is very dear to its mistress, who has not slept away from it one night either during her happy wedded life or the widowhood which had followed about twenty years before our story opens.

The staircase in Bird's Alley being on the outside, and visible from the White Hart, Willis and his wife can see John Badby carrying his mother down to the parlour every morning, and every evening carrying her back to her upper room. So regularly is this done that the merry little host of the tavern avers that the smith is as good as a sun-dial, as one can always calculate on his keeping correct time. It is a great enjoyment to Dame Alice to pass most of the day in the parlour, whence through the doorway connecting it with the smithy she can watch her son at the forge. The sight of the strong man wielding his hammer warms the mother's heart, as the kindly heat of the smithy warms her poor afflicted frame. It amuses the invalid also to see and hear all that goes on, when folk passing along Boniface Lane turn into the smithy either for business or to have a gossip with the smith. Narrow Bird's Alley has scarcely ever a passenger, save when Dame



Marjory, Marian, or Lilian go along it to visit the widow, without passing through the smithy.

A very rare visitor is Dame Willis of the White Hart; and when she comes she invariably makes her entrance through the smithy, declaring that Bird's Alley is too narrow and confined for one of her portly dimensions. Dame Marjory's visits are more frequent, and she takes many a little dainty with her for the helpless cripple—fruit, vegetables, or a confection of her own making. Marian Paton in former times had turned down little Bird's Alley well-nigh every day in the week, partly to see Dame Alice, but more to have a glance from the parlour at John at his forge, and to give him the smile which cheered him on at his work. But of late the maiden's visits have been few and far between; for which her conscience pricks her a little. Lilian, whose affectionate heart clings to her suffering friend, gives to Dame Alice all the time that she can possibly spare from labour at home. And even the bells on Dickon's fool's cap are occasionally heard in narrow Bird's Alley, as he goes in merrily to make the invalid laugh with his jokes, coming back from her room perhaps a graver and wiser man.

The most welcome visitor of all in Bird's Alley has been the poor devout parson, William Sawtre, and joyfully has his gentle tap at the low-browed door been heard by the widow, and her face has brightened as, stooping his form, he has entered the parlour. William

Sawtre, a man of fiery zeal when denouncing the errors of Rome, has been gentle as a shepherd tending a sick lamb, when ministering to the afflicted members of his flock. Sawtre might have been described in the words of his contemporary Chaucer,—

“ Christ's love, and His apostles twelve, he taught,  
And first he followed it himself.”

To most people Dame Alice's fate appears a very hard one, its only change being from lesser to greater torture, from nights disturbed by pain to nights with no sleep at all. Willis's wife declares that death would have been a deal better than such a life; she herself could never endure to be such a burden to herself and to others. But worldly outsiders see the trial without its rich consolations. Dame Alice, on her bed of pain, unable even to turn without assistance, is far less to be pitied than King Henry upon his throne. The *Grauth* (the religious book of the Sikhs) has a curious proverb, “The world has the buttermilk, the saints the butter;” and the quaint saying conveys a beautiful truth. What is sweetest, richest, and highest is the portion of the soul which finds its rest in God. Those who look at the sugar-cane growing behold its hard, tasteless, flinty rind; the store of sweetness is within, and a crushing, grinding process but draws that sweetness forth. Alice, during long, waking hours, draws more honey from a single text of the Bible, meditated on in the darkness,

than votaries of pleasure can from the sumptuous banquet. She feasts on thinking over scenes recorded in Scripture, until such vivid realization of them follows that her little room no longer seems dark; she is standing by Gennesareth or Jordan, and all sense of loneliness is gone. Especially Alice likes to think of herself as the woman bound down by infirmity, who could in no wise lift herself up, yet she managed to creep to the synagogue, perhaps because she knew that the Master was there.

“That poor woman could hear His voice,” thinks the sufferer, “and so can I—in my heart. In sooth, she could only behold His blessed feet—no more can I; but the time was coming to her, and so it is to me, when the blessed Lord would bid her arise and stand erect; and I too shall rise up and look on His face, and shine in the light of His smile for ever and ever.”

Let us enter the parlour in which Dame Alice spends the greater part of her day, and look at her humble surroundings, for her little treasures are around her. Opposite to her, on the wall, are memorials of childhood's days—the sampler with the Lord's Prayer in scarlet letters, laboriously worked, holding a central place. To Alice in her meditative moods that sampler is an emblem of life.

“How that sampler seemed as if it would never be finished!” says Alice to herself; “how much trouble my little fingers had in forming the more difficult

letters! how often I had to unpick, and my foolish tears fall on the canvas! But the work was completed at last, and with all its faults my father praised it; and he said, 'Well done, my little child!' and put into my hand a silver groat, the first money which I ever possessed. I shall never forget my delight at the prize, and still more at the praise! Ah yes! that sampler minds me of life: its tasks often seem weary, but the end comes at last; and then, even to God's poor, silly little ones, come the praise and the prize!"

Above the sampler is fastened up the bow which John's father had often drawn, and three arrows in a metal quiver deftly fashioned by Badby the smith. The feathers are hidden by the quiver, the sharp heads are pointing upwards. These also give frequent food for thought. The memorials of one dearly loved are fondly prized by the widow.

"That bow is at rest," muses Alice; "I shall never again hear the twang of the string, nor see those arrows whiz through the air! But my Will aimed right at the mark, and the good words which he spake to me and his little son were as pointed shafts which never missed their aim. Master Sawtre wrote a little verse about it,—

'When shall instruction's feathered dart  
Most surely reach the hearer's heart?  
When love's still tightening cord supplies  
The impetus with which it flies.  
Pointed by truth and winged by prayer,  
It finds the heart, and fixes there.'

On a little table close to Dame Alice are other things telling of thoughtful kindness: a plate of cates, made by Dame Marjory after a recipe learned at the house of Wicklif; a glass brought by Lilian containing water and a little piece of carrot, a thing in itself not lovely,—and yet from that carrot, on that cold wintry day, is springing an elegant plant of the most delicate green. To Alice it is beautiful as a rose, for it tells of hopes springing up afresh in life's winter even from what seems common and only fit to be thrown away. There is also a precious manuscript on that table containing the fourteenth chapter of St. John. The invalid cannot, indeed, lift it up to read it; but that matters little, as she knows it by heart. The soft cushion behind Alice, on which the sufferer rests her weary head, was deftly worked by Marian some two years ago, with a pattern of lilies and pinks. The lilies are a little soiled by the smoke, the pinks somewhat faded by the sun. That cushion often reminds the widow to pray for Paton's poor silly child. "God grant that our sweet Marian may not be stuffing her own pillow with thorns! May the Lord give her wisdom and make her His own by whatever means He sees best!"

There are many other little family treasures about the parlour which give it an aspect of comfort. Dame Alice knows that on the wall behind her is a picture given her by Dickon some years ago, and bought with his pocket-money as a birthday present for the widow in

return for many an act of kindness. The picture is a coarse chalk drawing, in bad perspective, representing King Richard the Second on horseback, and his good queen Anne beside him, mounted on the side-saddle, which the Bohemian princess is said to have introduced into England. The boy Dickon never forgot that he had been named after the king, and a loyal little fellow had he been. Though the drawing is rude it has been executed with spirit, and the likeness of Richard on his prancing steed gives no false idea of the manly beauty of the unfortunate monarch. Dame Alice can only see this picture when she is carried out of the room in the evening, for it is behind the place where she sits in her easy-chair, but she likes to know that it is on the wall.

“Yes, I like to think that our king and queen are now both of them in a high place, though I cannot see them. Queen Anne was a saint of God, and had she lived mayhap her husband might have been reigning still, instead of lying in the cold grave. I cannot pray for his soul, for that would be superstition; but he is in God’s hands, and they are more merciful than man’s. King Richard never persecuted God’s people; he never cringed to the Pope. In our king’s time that statute was passed\* which hindered, as far as might be, the

\* The famed *Statute of Præmunire* was passed in the reign of Richard. It enacted that whosoever should procure from Rome or elsewhere excommunications, bulls, or other things against the king and his realm, should be put out of the king’s protection, and all his goods and lands be forfeited.

Bishop of Rome from meddling with English affairs. If our poor king, like Manasseh in old times, committed follies and sins, God gave him time, in his miserable prison, to repent, to weep, and to pray. I hope—from my soul I hope—that King Richard's soul is with God! I dare not wish him back; though had he been on the throne that cruel *statute against heretics* would never, I trow, have been thought of."

Such are Dame Alice's frequent musings, which have brought peace and rest to her gentle spirit.

Her love for her son is also a source of intense pleasure to the afflicted woman. How good had God been to give her such a treasure in John! It is not only his filial affection in which she rejoices, nor even his high moral character, on which no one could fix a stain. It seems as natural to Badby to scorn deceit and lies as it is for the eagle to soar above the fens and sloughs of earth. Folk said that John could no more tell a falsehood than he could play a juggler's tricks with those strong muscular hands which wielded the hammer so well. Badby is emphatically a man and an Englishman; but he is something more, or his mother's heart would not rest on him with such thankful delight. John from his early days has received gospel truth with the simplicity of a child. There is nothing between him and the Saviour of whom he had heard when yet sitting on the knee of his mother. The artisan's mind is troubled by no

doubts; and as for the superstitions prevailing around him, they are as cobwebs to be brushed away when revealed by the clear daylight. The smith's faith is of that kind which a well-known preacher\* has described in a few vigorous words: "We want workshop faith as well as prayer-meeting faith. We need faith as to the common things of life and the trying things of death. We could do with less paint if we had more power; we need less varnish and more verity—a sound commonplace faith which will be found wearable and washable and workable through life." Such is the faith of John Badby.

Yet the strong man has his weakness, the brave man his secret fears. His mother knows well the cause of his trouble, and keenly sympathizes with him, though too delicate-minded to touch the wound, as good Dame Marjory, had she been in the place of Alice, would often have done. To the mother's heart Marian's unkindness to John is not a source of unmixed regret. Dame Alice has never felt sure that the girl is really a Christian, and if Marian does not value her John, she is surely unworthy of him. "It is better that his heart should be gradually weaned from a thoughtless flirt. The Lord has something better in store for the best of sons. John will have a sweeter, wiser, holier bride." So reflects Dame Alice.

Only once has the widow even alluded to John's

\* Mr. Spurgeon.



trouble ; it was by repeating to him a significant jest uttered by Dickon.

“ My dad has been new painting and gilding his big boot, and it can be seen all along the lane. But the poorest beggar would not care to have it for daily wear ; were it garnished with all my bells, 'tis but a painted bit of wood after all.”

John made no observation in reply ; he understood the jester's meaning but too well. But the smith's love is, like his own nature, too firm and strong to be lightly turned from its object.

“ If Marian has left off caring for me,” he silently thinks, “ I will go down to my grave unwed ; I will never woo maiden again.”

## CHAPTER VII.

### SNOW AND FIRE.

ON Dame Alice's life of pain, patience, and peace, as described in the last chapter, the news of William Sawtre's arrest burst like a fearful explosion. Her own personal sufferings were forgotten in the distress which she felt for her pastor and friend. Alice prayed for his deliverance with a fervour which it seemed must draw down an answer from heaven. Alice thought and spoke of the pleading church of early Christians, whose prayers brought an angel to deliver Peter from prison, till she felt sure, quite sure, in her hopeful heart that the Lord would save His servant as He did the brave three from the fiery furnace.

Ah, how little can even the wisest and best understand the mysterious dispensations of God! His way is in the sea, His path in the deep waters. If prayers and tears could have availed to defeat the plan of divine wisdom, would not the pleading and weeping of Mary and the apostles have averted Christ's death on the cross, and so have stopped the offering up of the one

great sacrifice for the sins of the world? It is only in another state of being that we shall fully understand why God permits for awhile the wicked to oppress the just. It is not here that our feeble intellects can grasp the truth that *all* things, even the most painful and terrible, work good, by God's wisdom, to them that love Him.

" Good when He gives, supremely good,  
Nor less when He denies,  
E'en trials from his sovereign hand  
Are blessings in disguise."

John did his utmost to keep evil news from disturbing the mind of his mother. He offended Dame Willis by shutting the door between the smithy and parlour: he stopped Marjory from calling to give an account of the trial, at which she had managed to be present. John bribed a crier shouting, "*Sawtre's sentence!*" not to come down Boniface Lane; but he shrank from himself breaking the news of what that sentence had been. "Mother will know only too soon," thought the smith; "and while there is life there is hope. We are not in Spain or in Rome."

On one snowy morning the meek patience and endurance of Dame Alice were heavily tried. The weather had increased her pain to anguish; she had not slept the whole night, and wearied and longed for the morning. A char-woman called Betsy had been hired by the smith to attend regularly to his mother's comforts; but on that morning Betsy, from some unknown

cause, had never appeared. The sun rose, but brought little light into the narrow alley. Alice had lain all night on her left side, and now no one came even to give her the slight relief of being turned round on her bed. Even John had not brought, as he usually did, a warm bowl of porridge for his mother, or given a word of kindly cheer. There was no sound below of any one lighting the fire in the smithy, nor even the usual noises which were wont to rise from Boniface Lane. Not the shout of a boy, or a street vender's cry, nor voices from the White Hart, broke the weird, unnatural stillness. In cold, hunger, and pain the weary woman kept watch hour after hour. Alice could see nothing outside the house, on account of her prostrate condition, except the big falling flakes of snow; for the window of the room commanded not even a view of chimneys, unless to one going up close to the dim leaden-framed panes. The widow lay still, praying for deliverance for William Sawtre, and the grace of patience for herself. Occasionally she called out for Betsy, but no reply came. Never since her illness began had Dame Alice been so sorely tempted to give way to misery and gloomy forebodings.

Gloomy forebodings indeed, for in Sawtre's peril, which so troubled her soul, Alice saw the shadow of what might to her bring more terrible anguish still. The wolf of persecution once let loose, who could tell who might be its next victim? There was another

follower of Wicklif, brave and true as Sawtre himself; and that man was her son—her joy, her stay, her sole earthly delight, in a world in which Alice had found much to suffer and little indeed to enjoy. The idea of any danger threatening John sent a chill through the widow's frame far more painful than any caused by outward cold. Alice reproached herself for her fears, but they clung to her still. The widow asked her own heart, "Is it want of faith that makes me thus tremble?" But even her sensitive conscience did not convict her of this.

"Our Lord, our blessed Master Himself, was *sorrowful even unto death* from the thought of a terrible trial before Him. Christ did not murmur nor resist God's will, but His soul was bowed down within Him. But then Christ knew to a certainty what He *must* suffer. His people *may* be saved from what they most dread. When the Saviour said, *My hour is not yet come*, He knew that it would assuredly come at last; He had not the hope of escape that we have. What a constant trial that knowledge of the future, that certainty of coming anguish, must have been! I have often thought," thus mused the lonely invalid, "that perhaps when the Lord was a youth, when His hour was yet many years distant, and He thought on saving a world by His death, there was more of joy than of fear in the prospect. The winning of His great aim, the finishing of His grand work, would look to Christ as one of the calm stars which shine but do not twinkle look to

us at night. But when the Lord began His ministry, and met bitter opposition and scorn and shame, then His coming trials would be rather like a very black object in the sky, swelling and widening every day as the awful hour drew near and nearer. Christ would know it to be the weight of God's anger for a whole world's guilt, coming gradually, hour by hour, closer and closer, larger and larger, till, at Gethsemane, it covered the whole sky above Him as with a horrible pall. It was coming—a weight beyond that of a thousand rocks—ten thousand mountains; a weight that, falling on Him, would crush out bloody sweat, yea, life itself, from his mortal body; a weight which, falling on a world, would have hurled it down to the nethermost hell! Oh, what love—what love to endure all this, and for us! We can never have to bear for the Saviour one-tenth part of what the Saviour suffered for us!”

Then Alice turned her weary eyes towards the window; she sought to draw a lesson of comfort from the falling snow. What ermine could form a fairer mantle than that with which the Great Father was covering the dark-stained earth! Again and again the sufferer repeated and took to herself the sublime prayer of King David: “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” Alice saw by faith the spotless robes worn by the blest above, and by prayer and holy musings was strengthened to suffer and be still.

Welcome, most welcome, at last was the sound of John's step on the outer stair, though Alice could not turn to see him enter, for the door was to her right. The widow heard that door unclose, not quietly, as might have been expected, and John came up to his mother's bed, silent, and with a slow, heavy tread. He bent over his parent, kissed her brow, and gently moved her round. Badby was annoyed at Betsy's evident neglect; for his mother, in that cheerless, fireless room, without food or help, had, he saw, been left to loneliness and pain. But at that moment the smith had no voice for words either of anger or greeting. Alice was alarmed at John's deadly paleness and the deep gloom on his face. A foreboding fear seized her; she dreaded to ask the question which was trembling on her tongue. John sat down; his head drooped lower and lower, till his broad brow was hidden on his crossed arms. Not a word had been spoken either by mother or son. Some emotion too strong for words was agitating the strong man's frame; he was struggling to command that emotion, so as to speak in a calm voice; but it was in strangely altered tones that Badby said at last, as he raised his bowed head, "All is over! he suffers no more."

The words were scarcely needed; John's appearance and manner had told the worst. Tears gushed from the eyes of Alice as in a choking voice she sobbed forth: "The prophet went up to heaven in a chariot of fire!"

then she added more calmly, "and returned to earth to appear with the Lord in glory; *and so will he!*"

John made no reply, he could not; but he dried his mother's eyes and her tear-stained face, and kissed her again and again. The smith had resolved that on this dark day he would light no furnace, strike no anvil; chill silence and solitude should be his tribute of respect to the martyr whose form he had seen consumed at the stake. But the sight of Dame Alice's pitiable state changed the intention of her son: he must exert himself for her, he must live for her; much work was on his hands, and work must be done, or she would suffer. Mastering his reluctance to turn to any common employment, John went to the head of the open staircase, after shutting the door behind him, and shouted to his apprentice-boy, who was gossiping with some one at the point where the alley joined Boniface Lane, to light the furnace at once. John then went himself to get things ready, and met the char-woman Betsy, who had deserted her post, and who was coming in an excited manner up the alley. John knew that Betsy, like himself, had just come from the fearful scene at Smithfield.

"Not a word to my mother of what you have seen," he said sternly, "or you never cross her threshold again."

Not long afterwards Badby reascended the stair with a bowl of something warm for his mother. He himself had been unable to touch any food. John fed the



shivering, starving invalid slowly, as he might have fed a helpless babe. More than once the smith paused to wipe away the tears which coursed down the meek pale face.

“Mother, Betsy must light a fire here; or would it please you better to go down to the parlour?” he said. “I fear me that you could not bear the movement to-day.”

To Dame Alice anything was better than to be longer apart from her son; so wrapping her up in a scarlet blanket, John bore her gently down into the room into which the furnace fire in the smithy had already brought genial warmth.

“Bless my soul! how heartless some folk are!” cried mine hostess in the tavern. She had just come from Smithfield herself, and had cheered herself after its horrors by a double potation of ale. “Those Badbys seemed to tender the heretic parson as dearly as if he’d been one of their kin, but they take his burning mighty easy! There’s John carrying down his mother to her snug parlour, just as if nothing had happened; there’s the fire going, and the bellows blowing. Dear heart! how it minds one of the roaring faggots! No doubt it’s right that heretics should burn; but I can’t forget that sight so easily—not I!”

As Dame Alice sat in her parlour, she could hardly think of anything but the martyrdom of her pastor; yet she tried hard to keep her mind from dwelling on

his terrible pain and the cruelty of his foes. The widow exerted her remarkable faculty of memory to recall portions of his sermons heard when she could yet attend his preachings, and words of counsel and comfort afterwards spoken by her sick-bed, when he knew that the sufferer could never again kneel in the house of prayer. Alice gathered up, as it were, what she could of the gold-dust from the sand of the past. Words long forgotten now came back to her mind; Lilian would write them out from her dictation; they would be precious memorials of the departed, and through them William Sawtre, though dead, would speak to his people still. Wonderful comfort came to Dame Alice from this thought.

“The monks show bits of bone and fragments of rags, and call them relics of saints,” said the widow to herself. “I trow that the best relics of saints are their holy words, that, like themselves, will never wholly die.”

But if such soothing consolation came to Dame Alice's spirit, it did not so come to John's. He worked indeed with might and main, and an energy which was almost fierce, but he thought little but on one subject, and that one of keen pain. A good many people came to the smithy that day, some for business, more for gossip; for it was widely known that John was a Lollard, and that he had witnessed Sawtre's death. But Badby resolutely closed his lips, and not one word on the subject could any one draw from the smith. His soul was boiling

over with such fierce wrath that John could not trust himself to speak. His only answer to unwelcome questions were fiercer blows on the iron that glowed red on the anvil before him.

“I say—how John Badby swings about that hammer!” was the observation of mine host of the White Hart to his portly spouse. “He deals mighty lusty blows, as if a foe’s head were on the anvil, and he would smash his skull like a nut!”

When evening came, Badby, as usual, after wrapping up his mother carefully, carried her up the wooden stair, slippery as it was with snow. As usual, he laid her gently on her bed, to await the coming of Betsy. Not a word had been spoken between mother and son, for the effort and the pain caused by being moved, however gently, had tried the sufferer so much that for some minutes Alice would not utter a sound, lest that sound should be a groan. John Badby then said, “Good-night, mother,” and turned to depart.

“What, my son! without our reading; without one prayer!” exclaimed Dame Alice.

Then the fire which had been smouldering all day in the smith’s heart burst out into fierce flame.

“I cannot pray—it would be a mockery; I cannot ask God to forgive me, for I can never forgive! I hate my enemy—I hate Guy Dunn! I should like to strike him dead!”

Alice uttered an inarticulate exclamation of distress;

she had never seen such fierceness of passion in her son since the day when, as a mere boy, he had heard of the execution of his father.

“How can I but hate him?” pursued John, clenching his strong muscular fist. “He has robbed me of my earthly happiness, he has insulted me to my face, and—and he was present to-day—present at that atrocious murder on which the sun would not look! *He* looked—he could smile—it maddened me! Had I been nearer to him, Guy Dunn should never have smiled again!”

“Oh, my boy!” began Dame Alice in a pleading tone; but John was in no mood to listen.

“There is no use in speaking to me, mother. There is something within me hotter than a furnace. I feel as if I were possessed by a devil.”

“But there is One who can cast out devils, One who *has* cast them out!” exclaimed Alice. “Christ saw one of His redeemed even in the poor demoniac who came running and fell at His feet, but had no power to pray for mercy. O John, John, down on your knees! you shall kneel and I shall pray—pray that God, with whom all things are possible, may give us grace even to forgive. This is the dark hour of temptation, this is the wrestling with the power of evil of which our dear martyr so often spoke; down on your knees. Oh, my son, you will be given the victory yet!”

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A SUDDEN CHANGE.

THE winter of that year had been bitter ; but the spring-time came early, and before February was quite over Nature wakened to joy. The peasants who came with butter and green cheese from Kent brought also bunches of violets and primroses culled from the lanes, and Dame Marjory bought a huge basketful of fragrant cowslips to make into wine. The larch "hung her tassels forth," and birds feeling the breath of the sweet south wind burst into early song. The sun smiled even on smoky London, and its citizens talked of sports, jousts, and merry-makings, as if no terrible crime had been so lately on that snowy, wintry day. Specially were the revels and mummeries which were to celebrate the birthday of young Prince Harry the theme of almost universal gossip. Little did the Badbys care to hear of what was almost an all-absorbing topic, their memories of the past were too vivid and sad. Dame Alice now saw Lilian daily ; the girl came early and stayed late, and her presence was a solace to the widow. Lilian

felt as little weary of writing down the martyred Sawtre's words as Alice did of dictating them to her companion. The girl wondered at her afflicted friend's remarkably retentive memory, and accepted with lowly joy the holy task of gathering what the widow called "gold-dust" from the ashes of the sainted dead.

"I can't grudge Lillian to Dame Alice in her trouble," observed Marjory to her nephew Dickon, who had come, as he not unfrequently did, to pay a visit to his home. "I wot that Lillian's is a blessed task; but her absence throws almost all the work of the house upon me—the dusting, the cooking, the mending, the marketing. Lillian *is* a good, useful girl, and will grow up in time to be a capital housekeeper; but Marian, with the follies and fripperies, will never so much as wipe out a dish!" As Marjory spoke, she lifted up a caldron of something very savoury from the fire; for she and Dickon were in the kitchen, which was not on the ground floor, but directly behind the parlour.

"Why don't you make Marian work?" asked the jester.

"Work!" repeated Dame Marjory with her indignant snort; "why, she'd have to tuck up her enormously long sleeves, and put off her ridiculous fool's cap, as I call it, though it has ribbons instead of bells. Her father spoils the girl; the fine folk talk nonsense to her. Marian will never work; she thinks all are born to work for her."

"I'll make Marian work," quoth the young jester, merrily shaking his jingling bells. "Promise me six of the dainty little pork-pies which I see that you are going to make, and I'll set my twin to good steady work ere the day is an hour older."

"You may get her to sew some fine kirtle for herself if you give her grand silk and fanciful trimming," quoth the dame, as she stirred vigorously with a wooden spoon the savoury brown mess which she had poured into a large bowl. "I would give you a dozen pies instead of six if you would make Marian turn her hand to anything that would either bring money or save it."

"A bargain!" cried Dickon eagerly. "I'll get Marian to work like a tailor, and earn money, yes, as much in one day as our six prentices together could get in a year if they cobbled from morning till night."

"This is one of your jests, silly boy!" said Marjory. "You will never get Marian to prick one of her dainty fingers with a needle."

"She shall use up needles, scores and scores o' them," cried Dickon, laughing. "I've got a parcel of work for her here, and I'll see that she does it, and does it well. I'll be as sharp after the Pink as if she were a starveling prentice. If I don't make my word good, I'll fling cap and bells into that kitchen fire, and never crack another joke nor eat another pie in my life."

Dame Marjory was little given to laughing, especially after all that had happened, but she could not resist

giving a chuckle. "Then there's some chance of your feather-brain getting some wisdom at last," quoth she.

"But there are conditions to my bargain," said Dickon, as he cleared with his finger what was left of the tempting concoction in Marjory's wooden spoon. The jester was rewarded for this by a sharp rap over his knuckles inflicted by his aunt.

"But there are conditions to my promise," repeated Prince Harry's jester. "You must let me manage Marian entirely in my own way. You must let her sit behind the old tapestry screen in the parlour, and never peep to see how she gets on with her work, nor ask a single question about what she is making. If you break my conditions, I'll just throw up the whole affair: I can get pies enough and to spare at the palace."

"I accept the conditions," said the dame; "I'm too busy to go peeping behind screens. But will you warrant me that the work is honest work?"

"Of course it is," was the jester's reply. Dickon looked a little hurt at the question being asked, but in a moment the shadow of displeasure passed away from his comely young face. "I hear Maid Marian trilling her Robin Hood lay in the parlour; I'll go and stop her song, and set her lazy fingers to work!" After turning heels over head as a graceful way of quitting the kitchen, the light-heeled and light-hearted youth opened the door between it and the parlour, and in another minute was seated beside his twin sister. Dame Mar-



jory heard nothing of the conversation which passed between them, as Dickon took care to close the door behind him. Before relating that conversation, I will make a little digression in order to inform the reader how Dickon came to hold his strange position of jester to the prince.

About two months before this story commences, at nearly the close of the preceding year, Peterkin Paton, his family, and his six apprentices, had been put into a state of excited expectation by a tall fellow in gorgeous royal livery approaching the sign of the tasselled boot. Such an apparition had never before been seen in Boniface Lane, and mine host of the White Hart and his buxom dame watched with curious eyes to see whether the royal serving-man would stop at Paton's door. The messenger entered the shop, and pompously, as if he carried the dignity of an ambassador from royalty on his gilded jerkin, gave command that an assortment of boots, suited to the size of the foot of the heir to the throne, should be taken to Ely House. This was the mansion of the Lancastrian dukes, in which John of Gaunt had lived and died after his palace of the Savoy had been burned by Wat Tyler's mob. Ely House, as a more cheerful residence than the Tower of London, was at this time used as a royal palace.

Great was the exultation of Paton on finding that the fame of his tasselled boots had reached royalty itself, and great also was his perplexity in obeying the order.

It was doubtful whether his store contained a single pair small enough to fit the young prince's foot; but, of course, one could be made to order. But who was to go to Ely House to take the measure? There was much discussion in the parlour upstairs, much conjecture in the workshop below, as to who should be the privileged individual who should carry the boots to the palace and try them on the young prince. Paton himself never stooped his back or bent his knee to a customer; but then he never before had had one who was royal.

"Send Dickon with the boots," cried Marian. "I only wish that I could go myself. Dickon will make his way with the prince, and tell us all about the court when he comes back."

Accordingly Dickon, the blue-eyed, beautiful youth, set forth in high glee for Ely House, one of the apprentices following him as far as the palace to carry the bag of boots. Dickon went gaily enough, but returned with a curious expression on his face, partly pleasure, partly pride, partly perplexity also.

Of course the youth was eagerly questioned, especially by Marian: "What said the prince? how did he look? was he gracious and condescending?"

"So gracious," returned Dickon, smiling and blushing, "that in return for my putting tasselled boots on his feet, the prince wants to adorn my head with—a pair of asses' ears!"

"Talk sense, if you can," said Dame Marjory. The words sound sharp, but they were spoken with a grim smile. The good dame was rather fond of her nephew.

"Tell us all that passed," cried Paton from his warm seat in the chimney-corner. He had just cast a thick log on the fire, and now leaned back to listen.

"I need not describe trying on of boots—we all know something about that," said Dickon; "and there's no mighty difference between a prince's foot and another's. But as I knelt before the king's son, and looked up in his face to see if he liked the fit, Prince Hal smilingly said, 'Methinks you were hardly made for the cobbling craft. Do you like your occupation, fair lad?' 'If I don't, what boots it?' quoth I."

"O Dickon! did you dare to jest before the prince?" cried Marian.

"Why not? he's a boy, and likes fun. Prince Hal smiled, and that made me go on, for I was in a right merry mood. Says I, 'I look on a boot, your grace, as an honourable emblem of kingly power.'"

"Well, if you are not the most brazen-faced urchin!" began Dame Marjory; but Marian, in a fever of curiosity, cried out, "Go on! go on!"

"'How make you out that?' asked Prince Hal. 'May it please your grace, the boot is the *sole* ruler, and tramples down everything in its way. Moreover, it keeps the toes, big and little, in order; it protects them'

(‘Not bad,’ muttered the prince; but I could not help adding), ‘and sometimes *squeezes* them too.’”

“O Dickon!” exclaimed all present, in varied tones of surprise, reproof, and amusement. Marian added, “How did the prince take that?”

“He threw himself back on his velvet chair and laughed, and all the courtiers laughed too, for they follow the prince’s lead. I warrant me if he sneezed there would be sneezing all round the room. When Prince Hal had had his laugh, he said, ‘Do the squeezed toes ever take to rebelling against the royal boot?’”

“‘There’s a break-out every now and then,’ said I, for I thought of Wat Tyler’s rebellion, ‘specially if there’s any *corn* in the question.’ That made the prince and courtiers laugh again, they seem to be so easily tickled. ‘And what comes of such outbreaks?’ asked the prince. ‘Matters are usually patched up,’ replied I; ‘otherwise government would be *bootless*.’”

“And what came of all your pert folly?” asked Dame Marjory, more amused than angry.

“The upshot of it all was that the prince declared that I was born to be a jester, and his jester I should be, if it cost him twenty marks i’ the twelvemonth. He wanted to order a suit of motley at once; but I felt so dazed and bewildered at the thought of being turned from a bootmaker into a fool, that I begged for a day to think over the matter, and so I came here.”

There were very various opinions in Boniface Lane

regarding the advisability of accepting the prince's offer. Marjory, no friend to the Lancastrian line, strongly objected to Dickon's taking service under the grandson of John of Gaunt; Dame Alice feared that the boy's principles would be corrupted and his character degraded by such a way of earning his living. Lilian did not presume to advise, but she was greatly distressed. Paton's desire for court patronage for himself and his son, Marian's eagerness for any kind of connection between Boniface Lane and the palace, and Dickon's own fancy for the fun and amusement which would fall to a jester's lot, before very long turned the scale. It was thus that the bootmaker's son became jester to Harry the prince.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE PRINCE'S DRESS.

"MAID MARIAN, I've just come from Ely House," said Dickon gaily, but in a subdued tone, to his twin sister. "We're having rare fun in preparing for the *fête* that is to take place on Madcap Harry's birthday."

Marian was fond of her twin, and Dickon had perhaps as much influence over her as any other member of the family possessed. She loved his mirth and his jests, though the latter were often cuts at herself. Marian owned that to hear anything about the court was to her like nuts and honey. Marian tried to draw out from her brother everything about the princesses and princes, what they wore and what they ate; Thomas, John, Humphrey, and their sisters—their names were to her familiar as household words. With such a willing listener as Marian, Dickon's tongue rattled on merrily enough.

"We're all laying our heads together, wits and wooden pates alike, to invent something new and curious for our merry young prince to wear on his birthday. Says he,

'I'm tired of all the old fashions, and I hear that Harry Percy will come in a rare new suit, which has just arrived from the court of France. I must have something cunningly wrought, and perfectly different from anything worn before. I'll give my glove full of gold pieces to any one who will invent a quite original dress for me to wear at the birthday banquet.'

"And what said the courtiers?" asked Marian, with more than the usual curiosity which is attributed to her sex.

"One proposed this thing, another that," quoth he with the cap shaped into asses' ears: "stuffed birds to be worn on the head—wreaths made of feathers, or shells—horses' tails—I wot not what else. But nothing pleased Prince Hal; he said that nothing was new. I let all have their say, and then I burst forth into a poem! I can rhyme like Chaucer or Longlande, and when I'm too old to be a fool, I mean to set up trade as a poet. There's a kind of connection between the two crafts."

"You giddy goose!" laughed Marian. "Let's hear what you said to Prince Hal."

Dickon waited for a few seconds, with his finger raised to his downy lip, in a comical attitude of reflection; for he had not yet written down his doggerel (that task was reserved for Lilian), and to repeat it fluently required an effort of thought. But when the jester's lips unclosed his words came out readily enough, as he

himself remarked, "like mead out of an uncorked bottle." This was the poem of Dickon :—

"I promise Prince Harry a dress neat and tight,  
Graceful and light, fit for a knight,  
With hundreds of weapons glittering bright;  
Full of holes as a beggar's rags,  
Yet spruce and spry, with tassels and tags;  
Full of eyes as a peacock's tail,  
Glittering steel, like a warrior's mail,  
Fashioned by maiden's snowy hand,—  
The quaintest dress in merry England."

"O Dickon, you promised what you could not perform!" cried Marian, laughing.

"I can perform. And you shall make the surcoat, Maid Marian; and, what is more, I have the materials there in yon bundle. If you do my bidding, you shall have the boy prince's gloveful of golden bits."

Marian arched her eyebrows and drew in her cherry lips at the idea of winning such a wonderful mine of wealth. She was very impatient indeed to see what the bundle contained, and could scarcely wait to let Dickon unfasten the wrappings.

"Soft and slow, Maid Marian, or you'll crumple the dainty satin. What do you think of this?" he asked, holding up the material to view.

"It's a pretty bit of satin, blue as forget-me-nots or your own merry eyes, but there's nothing very novel in that. There is gold-coloured silk to work it with, a good deal more than is needed; but oh, you knight of



the asses' ears! what made you bring all these packets of needles, enough to last for a lifetime?"

"The whole point of the matter lies in these needles' points," quoth Dickon, sinking his voice to a whisper, and glancing suspiciously towards the closed door, though he could hear Marjory's heavy tread in the kitchen. "Look you, Marian, I've marked out all the pattern myself; every dot shows the place for an eyelet hole, to be worked with the gold-coloured silk, and from each hole, suspended by its thread, must hang the needle which worked it. Graceful and light."\*

"You can never mean that I am to make an eyelet-hole over every one of these dots?" interrupted Marian.

"Every one; not one dot to be missed. I meant to mark out a thousand, but my patience failed me, and the pattern comes short of that number by a hundred or more."

"I'm sure that *my* patience will fail me," cried Marian; "I should be months making so many holes."

"Only about a hundred a day: you've almost nine days for the work, not counting the Sundays. But you must set about it at once, and never get off your seat, save to snatch at a meal. See, I've threaded the first needle for you; you'll get sharp at threading by practice. Here's your little boring sharp-pointed bodkin;

\* For a description of this very original and fantastic dress see Markham's "History of England."

stick it in bravely, Maid Marian—stick it right through the satin ; deem it a spur, and off and away !”

Marian was exceedingly amused and somewhat flattered by being chosen to work for the prince. But she was alarmed at the length of the task assigned her. “ I shall get in a couple of tailors to help me,” quoth she.

“ Not for the world—not for the world !” exclaimed Dickon the jester ; “ the tailors would be certain to blab, and the whole secret would ooze out. You must work every stitch yourself ; not even Lilian must help you, or even look at the dress. Quick ! don your thimble, Maid Marian ; go at the work briskly, as a knight tilts at the ring, or no gloveful of bonnie bright pieces for you.”

The bribe was large, the work attractive, and Marian plunged with girlish eagerness into her new employment. She stitched as if stitching for life. Marian grudged the time for meals ; hardly spoke a word at table, that she might eat the faster ; and before any one else had finished, she rushed back to her corner behind the screen. “ Dickon has worked a miracle,” said Dame Marjory, with a grim smile : “ he has set Marian to working like mad ; but this new freak will not last.”

“ I think that my girl has gone crazed !” cried Paton ; “ she has worked till her finger is rough and bleeding !”

“ She'll oversleep herself to-morrow ; she usually does,” quoth Marjory. “ I'm up, and Lilian is up for hours, before Marian leaves her pillow. She's a lazy lass to want a pillow at all.”

But on the following day Marian was up and at her work before even the apprentices came yawning into the room below to begin the labours of the day. No apprentice worked so hard as the Pink of Boniface Lane. When, after breakfast, Dickon dropped in to see his sister, she greeted him with bright though aching eyes, and held up the blue satin in girlish triumph. "I've done ninety-nine eyelets!" she cried.

"After a fashion," quoth the jester, examining the work with critical eyes. "You've not half worked round these holes, Marian; and look here! these stitches are already coming out. These holes are not round, the last three are crooked; one can't do such scamp work for a prince. This row of eyelets must all be worked over again!"

"Oh, nonsense!" cried Marian with impatience; "who cares for a little eye being a trifle awry?"

"If it were one of your eyes you would mind it," said Dickon the jester; "anyways, what you do must be neatly done. I'll keep one of the gold marks for myself for every hole that you leave so untidy as this."

Dickon proved a pretty strict overseer, and Marian's working skill improved by practice. Every one was astonished at the perseverance which she showed day after day. Visitors were not admitted to see her; even Guy Dunn when he called was astonished to hear that the bootmaker's daughter was too busy to let any one in. Dame Marjory rubbed her hands in satisfaction at this.

"Here *is* a change!" she observed to Lilian. "I should have as soon expected a jackdaw to turn into a sober domestic fowl as Marian to become a steady seamstress. Wonders will never cease! I almost think that I can venture on the journey which I've long been wanting to make to Greenwich, to look after the cottages left to me by my husband, which, I hear, are falling out of repair. Willis of the White Hart would lend me his horse, and I'd ride on a pillion behind my brother—no new-fangled side-saddles for me."

The many hours which Marian spent over her monotonous task were not entirely without profit as regarded her mind. It is true that the maiden's thoughts dwelt much on the vanities of high life, of which she so eagerly longed to know more; but plans for spending the money for which she was labouring so hard often occupied her mind. Marian had selfish projects indeed, but others that were not selfish. If Marian enjoyed the idea of buying for herself pretty trinkets and lace, she was also pleased at the thought of astonishing Lilian by a gift of gold paint for illuminations—a thing which the orphan greatly desired; and Dame Marjory should have a new brooch, the pin of her old one having broken away.

"I'll buy an hour-glass for father," said the girl to herself, "and a little round mirror for Dickon. I wonder how many gold pieces would go into the glove of a boy? I wish that the prince's hand were larger!"

Marian often changed her little plans, but there was one which she never changed—it was to purchase a soft warm hood for Dame Alice.

“It would be such a comfort to her,” reflected Marian, “and look so nice round the sweet pale face; and”—the maiden coloured a little at the thought—“my gift would so please poor dear John. I have treated him very badly, and he is troubled and sad at the loss of his friend. I know that John thinks that I flout him, and he never comes near us now. If I give the pretty hood to his mother, it will be an easy way of saying ‘I’m sorry,’ and I *am* sorry just a little for being unkind. I shall not be always so giddy and foolish. Perhaps a day may come when I will make amends—” Marian stopped to thread her needle; and even this trifling action sufficed to turn her thoughts in another direction, for the needle broke in her hand.

## CHAPTER X.

### OFF TO GREENWICH.

DAYS wore on, and Marian Paton was vigorously stitching still. The prince's birthday would fall on a Monday, and the preceding Friday had come. On that day Dickon came to Dame Marjory in her usual haunt, the kitchen, with a rueful expression of pain on his face.

"I've a horrible toothache," said the poor lad, pressing his hand over his mouth. "You've skill in healing-herbs: have you no lotion to stop this throbbing, maddening pain?"

"I'll do my best," replied his aunt. "You've caught cold from the east wind, I take it, and must tie up your face."

"I've asked leave to stay at home for a few days," said poor Dickon. "I can't keep out of draughts or wrap myself up at the court, and when I'm half crazy with pain it's hard to be cracking jokes. A jester is never supposed to have a commonplace ache like other folk; he's bound to be always wagging his tongue whatever be the state of his teeth. So I'm allowed to stay

here till Monday. At home I can overlook Marian's work, be glum if I like, silent if I like, doff my fool's cap and bells, and don a good flannel wrap round my mouth to keep out the cold."

"Well, if you are going to stay here till Monday evening, that removes all difficulty about your father and myself making a journey to Greenwich, which I have been so long wishing to do. I could not have left the two girls alone; but you'll be as good a guardian as—"

"As father and aunt put together!" cried Dickon, making a wry face as a keen pang shot through his fang. "I'll see that the prentices below don't go merry-making or brawling in the lanes; if they sing any of their saucy songs, I'll be down upon them in a twinkling. I'll keep the whole concern in tip-top order, and—but oh, this horrible tooth!" A grimace followed which excited as much mirth as pity, for Dickon made even his aches seem funny.

A journey to Greenwich in the days of Henry the Fourth was a more serious affair than one from London to York in our own. Dame Marjory had not revisited for years the home in which she had spent her married life; not indeed since she had left it after the death of her husband. Travelling at that period was even accompanied by a little sense of danger to give it zest. Peterkin must take his quarter-staff, for footpads might be encountered. The roads, seldom mended, were likely

after winter to be in a dreadful state ; but Dapple was sure-footed and up to weight, for had he not carried the host of the White Hart with his stout wife on a pillion behind him ? Dapple was indeed much like a modern cart-horse, and had often been used to bear heavy packs.

Dame Marjory felt the expedition before her to be quite an event in her life, but had some misgivings as to what might happen during her absence. On Saturday morning she went into the kitchen, where Lilian was busy in preparing the early meal which must be partaken of by the travellers before starting on their long ride.

“Lilian, my girl, you’re the only one left in the house with a head ; I’ll leave my keys with you,” quoth the dame. “You must keep special watch over Marian, and let no stranger into the house ; specially keep out that fellow Guy Dunn. I’ve no mind to have him come idling about whilst I’m away. To-morrow, you know, is Sunday ; none of the idle prentice boys must enter the shop below or the rooms above, they’ve their own den to bide in. Keep them out as you would keep rats ; they’ve their Sundays to themselves, and may go about and do as they list.”

“Sunday is a dangerous day to the poor lads,” observed Lilian.

“I don’t deny that,” quoth Marjory : “the rogues get into more trouble on their idle Sundays than in the six working days put together ; they ramble about, get into taverns, and endless rows and mischief. I’m taking



Tom with me to carry my bundle, on purpose to have him out of harm's way. I can't be tearing up my linen every Sunday night to bind up his broken head."

"Would it not be well if the prentices were under Master Badby's care on Sundays?" timidly suggested Lilian, as she prepared the hot porridge; "he did take two or more of them to hear dear Parson Sawtre."

"Peterkin Paton will not hear of the boys going near the smith," replied Marjory. "He says that John Badby is a marked man already, and is sure to get himself into hot water for not worshipping a wafer blessed by some shaven priest. My brother says that John Badby would be teaching the lads to sing Ball's rhymes, or something else to get themselves and their master into a scrape. Peterkin is mighty afeard o' scrapes," continued Marjory, with her little emphatic snort: "I believe he's taking me to Greenwich now because he wants me out of the way of those who prick up their ears if anything is said against the Pope or our cruel archbishop. Now mind you, Lilian, I look to you to keep matters right whilst we are away at Greenwich. Dickon is quieted down a bit by his toothache; but toothaches don't last for ever, and when his goes he'll rebound like a cork ball and be madder than ever. As for Marian, she has sobered down for a week or more: but I've no faith in a giddy butterfly being turned into a working bee at once; she'll flutter her wings, I'll be bound, as soon as my back is turned."

"I am the youngest of all; what can I do?" sighed poor Lilian, who felt as if a very heavy weight of responsibility were being placed on her weak little shoulders.

"Young! you'll be fifteen come Lammas tide, and for sober sense you might be fifty."

"I'll do my best," said Lilian humbly.

"No one can do better than best, my girl," observed Dame Marjory kindly. "I daresay that you won't find it easy to make two skittish colts like Dickon and his twin go quietly in the plough, to say nothing of the five prentice lads. But you'll do your best, as you say, and sure you'll be helped, my child."

Dapple was brought to the door over which hung the gigantic boot. For the master and mistress to go on a journey was a grand event in Boniface Lane; not one of the apprentices but dared a sharp word or blow rather than not watch the departure of Dame Marjory and her brother. Tom shouldered his bundle with a broad grin of triumph on his rough face; he looked on the choice made of him as a token of special favour, though it was really a sign of distrust.

"To go to Greenwich—what a lark!" cried Tom to his envious comrades. "Mayhaps I'll have some of the master's Sunday dinner—good fat pork, and one of the dame's mince-pies! It's not every day that such a windfall comes to a Lunnon prentice. I never before had such luck."

Marian and her brother watched the start from the latticed window of the upper story, which projected over the lower part of the house. Lilian, with a mis-giving heart, stood under the big boot below, ready to receive last orders. The poor girl's spirit was heavy with care. There were parting directions given regarding culinary and housekeeping matters, with cautions as to putting out fires at night, and seeing that the mice did not get at the cheese. Then Paton, who was mounted in front of his sister, shook the rope which served as a rein, and gave a kick to Dapple's shaggy hide which was intended to act as a spur. The hoofs, heavy and hairy, moved slowly forward, clattering over the rough stones which paved Boniface Lane. The apprentices gave a shout, perhaps with a hope of frightening the horse, but the sober old beast went steadily on its way. The boys re-entered the bootmaking part of the domicile, saying laughingly to each other, "When the cat's away the mice will play." They made rude jests at Lilian as she timidly hurried up the staircase. When the little maiden reached the kitchen behind the parlour, before beginning work she knelt down, and with simple childlike faith asked the Lord to help her to keep things straight while Dame Marjory stayed away.

The Saturday went over more quietly than Lilian expected. Marian had by no means finished her long, monotonous task, over which she gave many a weary yawn. Dickon, his naturally sweet temper a little

soured by pain, showed some spirit in keeping the apprentice lads to their duty. Our outward environments are not without their effect on our minds, and Dickon, minus motley, cap and bells, looked and felt an older and more sensible fellow than when wearing the livery of folly.

But difficulties came with the Sunday. There was no attendance at divine worship for the Patons and Lilian. Dame Marjory would never hear of the family going to mass at a popish church, stuck full, as she said, with idols, where folk must say their prayers in Latin instead of their good mother tongue. Peterkin was just as determined not to let any inmate of his house be seen at a Lollard meeting, at the risk of getting him into trouble. The martyrdom of William Sawtre had frightened away all such half-hearted members of his flock as Peterkin Paton.

Dickon came out of his little room on Sunday morning with his face considerably swelled. He declared that he had not had a wink of sleep all the night, so that now that some ease had come, he meant to doze the Sunday away, and awake on the prince's birthday as blithe as a cricket. So, after partaking of a hearty breakfast, the lad went off to his own little cell.

"I'll get on with my work," said Marian; "there's still ever so much to do."

"Oh no, dear Marian," gently expostulated Lilian; "it is not right to do needlework on God's day." To say so much cost her an effort.

"It's better than sitting with my hands before me!" cried Marian pettishly. The strain of hard work, to which she had been formerly quite unaccustomed, had paled her cheek, and not improved her temper. The girl was fretfully impatient to get her task done.

"The house is as still as the grave!" exclaimed Marian; "not even the prentice boys below to laugh and sing! Dickon is as deadly lively as a stuffed jay, and you—you're as dull as a sack of wool! What on earth can I do to make the weary hours go by?"

"Would you like me to read to you a little from what I've been copying out?" suggested Lilian.

"What is it? some ballad or romaunt?" asked Marian.

"Oh no; words of blessed Master William Sawtre, he who was burned for the faith," said Lilian, with tears in her eyes.

"He was a good man, whatever the monks and friars may say," observed Marian softly. "I mind me that he used to pat me on the head when I was little, and tell me that I should be one of the Good Shepherd's lambs, and follow His steps. I'm afeard that I've been a very wilful lamb," added the girl with a sigh.

"Then you would like to listen for awhile," said Lilian; "so I'll fetch the sheepskin roll at once."

This was not the first attempt that the orphan had made to influence for good her companion, one older than herself in years, but in character far less mature. Lilian's daily prayer was to be enabled to make some

return for Dame Marjory's kindness to a destitute child, and in some way, however humble, serve the family with whom she abode. Lilian had a very poor opinion of her own powers—she was accustomed to be chidden, laughed at, despised; but a word from Scripture once quoted to her by Dame Alice had become like a guiding-star to her life. It was the Lord's praise of a feeble, lowly woman: *She hath done what she could.*

"I can hardly do anything at all," thought Lilian. "But if one cannot give gold or silver, nor even a rose or a pink, one may give a poor little daisy. The dear Lord will not despise even such a tiny thing as that, if it be the offering of love."

Lilian brought her roll, and was agreeably surprised to find an attentive listener in Marian. The reading did not last long. When it was over Maid Marian leaned back in Dame Marjory's high-backed chair, with her slender hands folded before her. Was she reflecting over what she had heard? Lilian ventured to hope so, till a sound of soft regular breathing told her that the tired maiden had fallen asleep.

"I can do nothing more here," thought Lilian; "I will steal out quietly and pay a little visit to dear Dame Alice. John Badby will have gone to the meeting for prayer, and his mother will be all alone. I missed seeing her yesterday, I had so much to think of and do."

Dame Alice had had her own trying Sunday morning, not only from pain, to that she was accustomed, but from

a weight of anxiety on account of a son whom she loved with more than a mother's tenderness, for her very life was wrapped up in his. John came to his mother, after the morning meal, prepared to go out. Dame Alice knew that a few Lollards, in an obscure part of the town, were still wont to assemble for secret worship. The widow would not forbid her son to join them, yet felt that John risked more than others by going, for he had a deadly foe who would be on the watch to do him mischief.

"You look troubled, mother," said Badby, who read anxiety in the meek, pale face before him.

"John!" exclaimed Alice suddenly, "if you were to meet Guy Dunn, what would you do?"

"I know what I should be tempted to do," was the grim reply: "seize the caitiff by the throat, and tell him to his face that I think him a villain."

"Ah, my son, it is not for us to judge our fellow-mortals. Dunn may be merciless, cruel, a trifle, a—"

"He is more than all that!" cried John Badby fiercely. "Mother, I suspect him of a deed so foul that I would not before tell my suspicions even to you, but I brood over them night and day. You should have looked at Dunn's face when, one evening at Paton's table, he was asked the question, 'When did you last see King Richard?' The caitiff started as if a ghost had risen from the floor, and his face was like the face of a murderer."

Dame Alice shuddered, for she understood but too well what Badby meant. Dunn was known to be a creature of the false knight Exton, on whom dark suspicions rested.

Badby went on after a pause: "I trow that the ugly mark on Dunn's head, which he tries to hide, was given by no soldier's sharp blade in any fair fight; it is rather what any rude weapon—some staff, nay, stool—caught up in haste by an unarmed man might have inflicted in a struggle for life. Mother, I believe that Dunn can tell us, if any man can, how King Richard came to his end."

"Hush! oh, hush!" exclaimed Alice, with a terrified glance towards the door. "Even if your suspicions be well founded, you are utterly powerless to bring the bad man to justice. If Dunn struck the traitorous blow, he was but as a dagger in Bolingbroke's hand. Any one who breathed such words in the king's presence as you have spoken just now, instead of avenging our much-wronged king, would but bring on himself certain death whilst Henry of Lancaster sits on the throne."

"That is true enough," was Badby's reply. "My mouth would be speedily and very effectually stopped."

"Then be silent now, my John; you have no assurance of what you suspect, and to break your mother's heart would not benefit our unhappy master. Promise me that if you chance to meet Guy Dunn you will not speak to him—not even one word."



"But if he speak to me—" began John.

"Do not—oh, do not reply, but silently repeat to yourself the Lord's Prayer. *That* will rouse no hatred, and keep your own spirit calm." As John hesitated, with passionate pleading the poor mother went on, "Oh, my son, for my sake, for your own sake, for the Lord's sake, only promise me this!" and Dame Alice, overpowered by her anxiety, burst into tears.

John could not bear to see her weep. "Well, mother, I promise," said he: "I'll not speak a word, good or bad, to Guy Dunn. But it will be no easy matter to keep my word should that wolf ever cross my path."

## CHAPTER XI.

### A N E N C O U N T E R.

LILIAN stole, noiseless as a shadow, through the empty workroom and warehouse below, with the large house key in her hand: on a Sunday, when Paton and his sister were absent, the outer door must be kept fastened. Lilian fitted the key into the lock, turned it, opened the door, and glided out, intending to relock that door behind her, that no one might enter during her absence. As she turned to do so, she heard a step: a hand was laid on her arm, and she heard the voice of the man of all men whom she most dreaded to see.

“Don’t shut the door, little woman; I’m going in,” said Guy Dunn, with a coarse familiarity of manner which made even the dove ruffle her feathers.

“You must not go in,” exclaimed Lilian.

“Who shall stay me?” asked Dunn with impertinent boldness. “Not you, little minx, little kitchen-scrub! I’ll be bound Maid Marian will be glad to see me; and the old dragon is out of the way.”

“Dame Marjory forbade my letting in any stranger,”

cried the poor young guardian, attempting, without turning her face from the foe, to retreat backwards into the house and then lock out the intruder. But the girl was no match for Guy Dunn. With an oath and a curse he snatched the key from Lilian's trembling hand. The next moment it was wrenched out of his own, and, turning his head, Guy saw Badby's tall powerful form close behind him. Guy, weakened by many an excess, could no more have resisted that strong indignant wrench than a dwarf could the grasp of a giant.

But Guy Dunn wore sharp steel at his side. With another oath he drew his rapier out of its scabbard; he was eager to plunge it into the man who had balked him: for Lilian, catching up the dropped key, had retreated into the house, and was locking the door from within. John, remembering his promise, had not uttered a word, but he saw the flash of the steel, and gave his foe no time to strike. Guy felt his weapon violently wrenched from his grasp; he saw Badby break the rapier across his knee, and then fling the broken fragments away. The courtier dare not close with his formidable opponent, whose stern silence had something in it terrible to the guilty man, as if the bold artisan had been sent forth as an avenger of blood.

"You shall pay for this!" exclaimed Guy Dunn with a curse and a look of intense malice and hate. Turning away, the courtier then hurried down the lane, painfully conscious that two or three passers-by had witnessed the

ignoble discomfiture which he had sustained at the hand of "a base mechanic."

But there was another spectator of whose presence Guy Dunn had not been aware. Marian had started from her slumber at the noise of the scuffle below, and had run to the lattice. Guy had drawn back a few paces before flashing his steel in the sunlight, and this retrograde movement had brought him within range of the sight of any one looking from the window of the projecting upper story. Marian had seen with terror that keen sharp steel, for John Badby was quite unarmed. She had uttered a faint cry of alarm, inaudible to those in the street below; but that cry had been changed into an exclamation of triumphant pleasure when she had seen that the unarmed smith was more than a match for his foe.

"Well done! bravely done, my bold John!" cried Marian, clapping her hands.

But the smile of exultation faded from Marian's fair face, for she heard Dunn's loud threat and curse; she saw the savage look which transformed his handsome visage into the likeness of that of a fiend. Marian had seen something of that evil expression once before; it had startled her then, but now it awakened a feeling akin to horror. Marian felt something like the maid in poetic story, when the False Prophet dropped his veil, and the deceiver whom she had well-nigh worshipped as inspired stood revealed as an agent of the powers of darkness.

As Marian stood, still gazing down into the street, though both John and his enemy had quitted it, Lilian entered the parlour, pale and trembling from recent excitement, though she had seen nothing of the episode of the rapier.

“O Marian!” she exclaimed, “how can you favour that man—that bad man—Guy Dunn?”

“Favour him! I hate him—I abhor him—I dread him!” was Marian’s passionate reply. “If there were no other man in the world, Guy should never, never be husband of mine!”

“I am so thankful to hear you say so,” said Lilian. “If John Badby had not come to my help, Dunn would have forced his way into the house. O Marian, John Badby loves you well.”

“He did once,” murmured Marian. She said no more, but the bitter thought arose in her heart, “He cares no more for a silly, giddy girl. John will seek a better mate—one who will be a comfort to his mother. I *had* the jewel of his true love once, but I threw it away to grasp a bubble. John did not so much as glance up to-day, to see if Marian was witness to his brave struggle.”

On this Sunday evening the family early retired to rest. Marian awoke with the first peep of light, before the last star had faded from the sky. The maiden had no small toil in getting a light; for modern matches were then undreamed of, and the task of striking sparks from flint and steel had hitherto always fallen to

Lilian. After hurting her delicate hands in various unsuccessful attempts, Marian had at last the satisfaction of seeing a spark settle on the tinder, and, carefully fanning it with her breath, was able to light a little lamp. Proud at being earlier even than Lilian, and forgetting her prayers in her haste, Marian carried her light to the little hiding-place behind the screen, and set to her work in good earnest. She scarcely allowed herself time to eat a bit of oaten cake to break her long fast before eleven, our ancestors' hour for dinner. So hard did Marian work that before that hour had arrived her tedious task was finished. When Dickon entered the parlour, Marian came forth from her retreat with delight to meet him, holding up the bright blue dress, complete with its many hundreds of golden eyes and fringe of dangling needles.

Dickon surveyed the work of his sister with admiration, and after critically examining the dress pronounced it fit for a prince. He then carried it off to his own little cell, that no one else might see it.

The dinner was a cheerful meal. Marian was reveling in thought over her glove full of golden coins. Dickon was quite free from pain, though still a little disfigured by the swelling in his face; he was full of jokes and fun, anticipating the pleasures of the evening revel. Lilian was happy in the expectation of Dame Marjory's return that day, and thankful that in a time of trouble she had been helped to do her duty.

Before the dinner was ended Tom appeared, very dusty and much heated by his walk from Greenwich.

"You come, doughty Tom the tough, as a herald to announce the near approach of the lord and lady of this Castle of the Royal Boot," was Dickon's greeting to the lad.

"No," was the rather surly reply. "Master sent me back to my work; and Mistress Marjory she bids me say that she has found so much to make and mend, holes in the fences, thistles in the yard, and tenants unwilling to pay up the rent, that, make what haste she may, she cannot be back till the morrow."

This was unwelcome news to Lilian, but not so to giddy Maid Marian, who was wont to feel her aunt's presence an irksome restraint on her folly.

"Now, Tom," cried Dickon, "you be off to your dinner in the den" (this was the name which he gave to the rudely built barn-like place behind the house which was assigned to the six apprentice lads for their eating and sleeping). "Be quick, or you'll find that Sam has gobbled up your portion as well as his own. Then you must all set again to your work. I'll come down and see that you're steady and busy; if I find any one gossiping or idling, I'll take my fool's staff and rap him over the head."

## CHAPTER XII.

### WHEN THE CAT IS AWAY.

DICKON and Marian were now alone together, for Lilian, carrying away what was left from dinner, had gone off to baking and sundry other household duties which fell to her lot. No apprentice worked so hard as the knight's daughter, the gentle Lilian. She, at least, had not forgotten her prayers; she had said to herself on that morn, "Prayer brings light for work; we only lose labour if we toil in the dark. It is no lost time by prayer to strike out a spark from our flinty hearts."

"I must be back to Ely House, Marian," said Dickon, "though I shall stay here as late as I can, as I'm your guardian and sage protector. But as soon as or before it is dark, I must be off to my duty."

"That is to say, to your fun," was Marian's reply. "O Dickon, what an enchanting treat is before you, to see all the royal folk and the grandees assembled, with glittering jewels and brocade of silver and gold! There will be dancing and feasting and music; it will be like a dream of fairyland! I am dying to be at the palace



and see the gallant Prince Harry in the dress which my fingers have wrought."

"Your wish must be your master, Maid Marian," laughed the jester. "I cannot take a bootmaker's daughter to shine amongst the stately dames and courtly demoiselles, albeit she is the Pink of Boniface Lane."

"Could you not smuggle me in—anyhow—if it were but for five minutes? Could you not hide me behind the arras?" cried Marian.

"I am no fairy god-mother to give you a spell to make you invisible, pretty maid. The place swarms with serving-men, courtiers, and pages, running hither and thither. Were you only a little white mouse, they would find you out; were you a tiny lady-bird, there would be some one to spy out and smash you."

"If you would only find me a hiding-place whence I could see the dance, I would give you my gloveful of gold. Dickon, dear Dickon, you are so clever I'm sure that you can find some device for letting me look at the sport."

Dickon put his forefinger to his lip, and remained for some moments in an attitude of deep thought; then suddenly he cried, "I have it!"

"What—how? tell me, oh tell me!" cried Marian in childish impatience, her face brightening with eager hope.

"You shall don my cap, tunic, and shoes, and play the fool if you list."

Marian's countenance fell. "I cannot play the fool," she replied; "I never made a jest in my life."

"Then you shall be a dumb fool," quoth Dickon. "Every one about the prince knows that I've been tortured with toothache, so if you tie up your mouth and shut up your tongue there's no one will wonder much."

Again the girl's face lighted up, but she saw other difficulties in the way.

"The folk at Ely House know you so well they'd detect the sham in a moment."

"Sister mine, we're just of the same height, and except my downy lip and dimpled chin we're as like one another as pea is to pea. If we changed eyes at this moment no one would see any difference, save that there's more fun in mine and folly in yours. Just try the joke upon Lilian; put on my tunic, 'tis gay enough even for you, and see if one who has been always with you for years does not take you for the prince's jester."

"Oh yes! we'll try, we'll try!" cried the eager Marian, intoxicated with the hope that she might, after all, behold the birthday revel.

Dickon ran to his cell and reappeared with the cap, mantle, party-coloured tunic, and long shoes which he was wont to wear at court. Marian, laughing, carried them behind the tapestry screen, and soon reappeared, smiling, blushing, and looking not a little awkward.

"Oh, this will never do! You must cover up your

mouth, all the lower part of your face," cried Dickon, producing a kerchief of white silk, which he proceeded to tie round Marian's mouth and chin. "You must have a toothache—a dreadful toothache, you know."

"Hush! here's Lilian coming," whispered Marian. "I knew she'd be back; she has forgotten to take her keys."

In a moment Dickon had slipped behind the tapestry screen, smothering his laughter as Lilian came in. Marian sat down on Dame Marjory's chair, slightly averting her blushing face.

Lilian was thinking of the keys, and not of Marian, whom she supposed to be still at her work. She scarcely glanced at the sham jester, except to notice that the dress was not that which had been worn at dinner.

"Dickon, I like much better to see you in your plain suit than in that gay one," observed Lilian, who thought that Dame Marjory's nephew was worthy of a nobler profession than that of a jester. The girl also felt that the youth's spiritual nature could not thrive in the atmosphere of the court.

Marian only smothered a titter at the observation of her companion, which showed that her disguise had been successful.

When Lilian had quitted the room Marian gave free vent to her mirth, and laughed gleefully at the idea of having so outwitted her sober friend.

"It will do—it will do!" cried Dickon triumphantly, as he came forth from his retreat behind the screen. "I doubt whether Aunt Marjory herself would find you out—that is, if you did not speak or laugh."

"Now you mention Aunt Marjory you frighten me," said Marian, sobered at once. "How angry, how horrified she would be if she saw me dressed up as a jester!"

"She'd snort like a grampus!" cried Dickon.

"I think—I'm afraid that this prank is foolish and wrong," said the girl in a tone of regret.

"I think so too," quoth her twin. "One fool in a family is usually thought quite enough."

"But—but I can't bear giving up the revels. It would be so delightful, so transporting, to see them!"

"O that fish would but swim on dry ground!" quoth the cat," exclaimed Dickon. "You're like poor puss eying the trout in the stream, but fearing to jump into the water."

"I could not possibly go without you," cried Marian, a new difficulty presenting itself to her mind. "If I am to appear as the jester, folk would wonder to see *two*."

It was Dickon's turn to burst out laughing. "Why, little goose, I should not go as a jester; I should leave all the folly to you."

"If you do not go to take care of me, I will not stir a step!" cried Marian Paton.

"I will go in the livery of one of the serving-men;

leave me to manage my own disguise," said Dickon. "I'm not so devoted to your service, Maid Marian, as to give up the banquet and fun for your sake. But before I lay my plans I must know decidedly whether you wish to go or not."

"I wish it with all my heart!" cried Marian; "but I cannot help being afraid."

"You're like a paper kite up in the air: the north wind of conscience blows you one way, then the south wind of pleasure another; anon a blast of fear from the east whirls you round, and—"

"Oh, won't you decide for me?" cried Marian.

"No indeed; you must decide for yourself."

"What would folk say if it ever oozed out that I had ventured into Ely House, and in so unseemly a dress?"

"Ah! what would John Badby say to it?" quoth Dickon. Marian blushed crimson at the idea. "Or Guy Dunn?" The colour fled suddenly from her cheek.

"I'll give the whole thing up!" cried Marian, ready to burst into tears with vexation and disappointment.

"Or suppose our frolicsome Prince Harry should come up to you in the midst of the revels, clap you on the shoulder, and say, 'Why, Dickon, I've not heard one jest from you to-night!'"

"Does the prince ever clap you on the shoulder?" asked Marian.

“Oh, doesn't he, when he's in one of his merry humours! And he'll be in high glee to-night in his curious new dress, with all the needles glittering and dangling about him.”

“O Dickon, I must—I *must* go!” exclaimed the girl, clasping her hands. “It would be a pleasure to be remembered all my life. I should like to be clapped on the shoulder by the future king of the land. Oh yes, I *will* go! I am sure there is not much harm.”

Not *much* harm! Whenever we say *that* regarding any doubtful kind of amusement, let conscience take it as *a signal of danger*. It is the old story, plucking flowers on the edge of a precipice; or like the moth, fluttering *near* the flame. Perhaps Eve murmured to herself “Not *much* harm” when she stretched out her hand to pluck the forbidden fruit. Poor Marian had of late been so accustomed to let *I like* take the place of *I ought*, that she too easily persuaded herself that in what she wished to do there was not *much* harm.

“Have you quite decided?” asked Dickon. “I see one of our serving-men coming down the lane, doubtless sent on an errand to me. I know the fellow well, and could arrange with him about a livery dress for myself. Will you go, or will you not go, Maid Marian?”

Marian gasped with excitement. “Yes, I will go,” again burst from her lips. Dickon, laughing, quitted the room, and running lightly down the staircase, met the prince's servant beneath the gigantic boot at the

entrance of Peterkin's shop. As the jester did not choose that his conversation should be overheard by the six apprentice lads, he took the serving-man to the opposite side of Boniface Lane, and thus Marian from the lattice could watch the twain as they stood talking together, though she could, of course, hear nothing of what was said.

After a conversation which lasted several minutes, the servant nodded his head as if in assent, and went away with a smile on his face. Dickon rejoined his twin in the parlour.

"What brought the man? what did he say?" asked Marian eagerly, going to meet her brother.

"He came, as I thought, with a message from the prince to bid me come to the revels without fail."

"And you replied?"

"That I would come if every tooth in my head were jumping out of my jaws; but that I besought my dread lord, whilst commanding my dutiful attendance, not also to command me to break silence or remove the bandage from my swelled face. I could only appear if permitted to abstain from talking."

"The prince may compel me to speak!" said Marian.

"Yes, and he may find out the pigeon dressed in jay's feathers by the voice, and I may be arrested, clapped into prison, and hanged too, for introducing into the king's presence an assassin dressed up as a fool. King Henry is a mighty suspicious man."

Dickon spoke chiefly to tease, but partly because his own mind was not quite at ease. But when Dickon saw the frightened expression which his jest had called up on Marian's face, he burst out into a laugh in which she could not help joining.

There were some other difficulties in the way of the twins carrying out their project, the principal being the sturdy resistance which Lilian would be sure to make to the silly adventure. Dickon and Marian arranged to start together soon after supper, when the darkness of the unlighted street would lessen chance of unpleasant recognition by neighbours in Boniface Lane.

"There will be no trouble from the prentices," observed Dickon. "I've given them a half-holiday in honour of the prince's birthday. The lads will be roving all over the town, drinking the ale that will flow freely, seeing the mummers and the miracle plays, and shouting and fighting to their hearts' content."

"But Lilian won't be roving about," said Marian. "After supper she always darns hose, or mends dusters beside us; and Lilian has the key of the house."

"Lilian can't be bribed?" observed Dickon; "you can't offer her a gold mark?"

"Ten thousand would not buy her silence," cried Marian, "though Lilian is poor as a mouse, and has never one copper to rub against another."

"Can you not coax her?" asked Dickon; "she loves you, and you've a winning way of your own."



"The better Lillian loves me the more determined she would be to keep me from anything that she would think dangerous or wrong."

"Well, quick! change your dress behind the screen," whispered Dickon. "I hear Lillian coming, and you'd better not give her a second chance of finding you out."

Marian hurriedly slipped into her retreat, and presently emerged in her ordinary costume, except that she had forgotten to replace the high slender extinguisher on her head.

Lillian was quite quick enough to guess from Marian's excited manner that something was in the wind. She saw from the glances exchanged between the twins that they had some secret between them which she, the household drudge, was not to be permitted to share. But this was too ordinary an occurrence for Lillian to give it much thought.

It still wanted two hours till supper-time, when Betsy, the woman employed by John Badby to cook and attend to his mother's wants, made her appearance.

"God-den, mistress," said Betsy, dropping something meant for a courtesy to Marian. "May Dame Marjory have returned? Master Badby sent me on an errand to her."

"My aunt is detained at Greenwich," replied Marian, "and will not be back till the morrow. You may tell your errand to me."

"It's that Dame Alice is a bit worse than usual to-

day, and han't been down to the parlour, but keeps to her room; and Master Badby has some business which must be done, and can't be back afore night. He thought as Dame Marjory or one o' the others would come and keep Dame Alice company while he be away." Betsy glanced first at Lilian, whom she deemed the widow's special friend, and then at Marian Paton.

"I would go most gladly," said Lilian; "but Dickon is returning to the palace after supper, and I could not leave you, Marian, quite alone."

"I like being alone!" cried Marian, with more eagerness than truth, for she heartily desired to have Lilian away.

"Let us both spend the evening with Dame Alice, dear Marian; it would so please her, and also—" Lilian did not finish the sentence, but Marian knew what she meant. Nothing would so gratify him who had for years been regarded as almost betrothed to Marian as kindness shown by her to his greatly afflicted mother.

"I do not choose to walk back at night," said Marian, seeking for some excuse to escape a duty. Did she not remember as she spoke that she was planning a far more extended night excursion?

"I'll see you back," said Betsy. "Besides, there won't be a soul in Boniface Lane; every one will be off to see the grand doings on the prince's birthday."

That unfortunate sentence turned the trembling scale, where duty, kindness, affection were on one side, love of

the world and its delights on the other. Marian would not give up her silly frolic for the sake of a woman whom she honoured and pitied, or that of a man whom, in spite of her wayward moods, she really loved.

"You had better go with Lilian," said Dickon, who had a substratum of kindness and good feeling underlying his giddy, frolicsome nature.

"I will not go!" cried Marian.

"But after what happened yesterday, Marian, I could not be easy leaving you alone," said the anxious Lilian.

"Nonsense!" cried Marian impatiently; "the door has a good strong lock. I'll be bound no one will enter after you've gone to Bird's Alley, and Dickon run off to the palace."

Lilian did not look satisfied yet; she could not trust her flighty companion, and yet was reluctant to say so.

"Listen to me," said Dickon gravely. "I'll promise—and you know that I do not break my promises—to keep by my sister, anyways till your return."

"How kind! how good!" exclaimed Lilian.

"Oh, you have no cause to praise me," said Dickon, colouring and smiling. He did not care to accept thanks which he knew that he did not deserve.

"Give me the house key, Lilian," said Marian; "I must lock the door behind you."

"And let me in when I return," observed Lilian as she gave it. "I will try not to keep you up late." She threw a light shawl over her head and shoulders, and

accompanied by Marian and Betsy went downstairs. Dickon was clad in the serving-man's livery by the time that his sister returned.

"How luckily things happen!" observed Marian to her twin, as she re-entered the parlour after locking the house door. "I never hoped to get rid of Lilian with such ease. She expects us to let her in, but I'll be bound she'll be back before we return."

"And what a fright she'll be in, poor little soul!" exclaimed Dickon: "she'll knock and knock, and call and call, and maybe get John the smith to break open the door."

Again Marian's conscience pricked her, again a feeling of fear arose in her heart. But the idea of being so near the goal of her ambition, of breathing the same air as the king and queen, of seeing what her fancy had painted as brighter than the rainbow, silenced conscience for awhile, and drove away fear.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### A DARING ADVENTURE.

THE sun had set, the veil of night was falling over dusky London, and a young moon shed a faint, uncertain light on the quaint gable-ends and latticed windows of Boniface Lane, when two forms emerged from the doorway and passed beneath the gigantic boot. One was wrapped in a horseman's cloak, beneath whose folds a jester's strange head-gear was hidden, for Marian did not choose to wear it in the streets, but concealed her rich tresses, closely fastened to her head, under an ordinary serving-man's cap.

"We must not forget your promise to lock the door carefully," observed Dickon, who wore the ordinary livery of the court. "It is well that I have a better head on my shoulders than that of my adventurous twin."

"Please do you lock it, and keep the key too," said Marian. "I have trouble enough," she added, "in preventing these bells from jingling under my cloak."

"Folly will betray itself," observed the jester, as he turned the heavy key in the lock.

"How dark and strange everything looks!" said Marian timidly; "the moon gives so little light."

"She will give none at all in another half-hour, so we had better be quick," observed Dickon.

"The lane is very still; there is not even a light in the White Hart to-night."

"No; mine host and hostess, the world and his wife, are off to see what they can of the fun. We shall not meet so much as a prentice boy in this lane; but it will be very different when we come to the streets near Ely House. I trow there will be a roaring tide of life in them."

"There is a little light up there," observed Marian, glancing up as she passed the entrance of Bird's Alley; "and listen—Lilian is singing a hymn!" Very sweetly on the ear fell that voice of praise, the only sound to be heard in the lane. Dickon and his sister paused for some seconds to listen.

"Lilian is a good girl," observed the former as he moved on.

"And I—a naughty one!" rejoined Marian, with an attempt at a giggle which was not very successful.

"There's many a true word spoken in jest," observed Dickon, who, like Marian, had his misgivings.

"Then it is you who have made me naughty!" cried Marian with childish petulance. "I should never have thought of going to the palace had you not put it into my head!"

"It is not too late to change your mind or your dress," observed Dickon, halting; "you can still spend your evening with Dame Alice."

"Oh, go on, go on!" exclaimed Marian; "only weak people change their minds."

The two walked in silence till they reached the end of Boniface Lane and entered a wider street, faintly lighted here and there by lamps burning before the image of some Romish saint. A few passengers were hurrying along, all in one direction, and sounds of distant laughter, yells, and shouts could be heard from afar.

"Step out, will you?" cried Dickon with slight impatience: "remember that for the nonce you are the prince's jester, who does not walk with such mincing steps. You must stride out like a man!"

"Keep close to me, Dickon," faltered Marian; "I do not feel at all like a man, and it's hard to walk in these awkward long shoes."

The twins passed through a labyrinth of narrow streets, Marian wondering to herself how Dickon could find his way. The twain passed several noisy groups, seemingly bent on fun and mischief, and were sometimes coarsely greeted and roughly jostled, which made Marian press closer to her brother. She longed to get to the end of what seemed to her an almost interminable walk.

At last the Patons emerged into a comparatively open place in front of a large building, brilliantly lighted up. A dense crowd of gaping spectators filled the space

before Ely House, to see the guests come in, gazing up at splendours which they could not share, and passing coarse jests, which elicited roars of laughter from such as could hear them through the babel of sounds.

"We shall never get through such a crowd," faltered Marian to her brother.

Dickon put his arm protectingly round his sister, and then skilfully and resolutely pushed his way through the throng.

"Back, back, my masters!" he cried; "don't you see that I wear the royal livery? Make way for the king's servants. We're on our way to the palace!"

Very breathless was Marian before she reached the broad steps leading up to the arched doorway which she had so desired to enter. The whirl, the noise, the dazzling lights, confused the maiden. She felt like one in a dream. But there was, mingled with her fear, a delightful consciousness that she had succeeded in her ambitious and daring attempt: the threshold was almost passed; she would stand in the palace at last.

"Off with your cloak and your cap!" whispered Dickon. "Put on your jingling head-piece before we pass under all these lights. Remember, child, that you are the prince's jester, and must act your part boldly and well."

The jingling cap was hastily donned, and brought the nervous wearer greetings from some of the court servants who thronged the hall which the Patons now entered.



"Dickon the jester at last! We thought that some elf had spirited you away! The prince has been calling for you!"—"Where have you been hiding, Sir Fool?" Such were some of the words addressed to the bewildered Marian.

Dickon excited no particular attention, as he wore the livery donned by many, not only of the king's servants, but some outsiders impressed for service on so grand an occasion. The lad had also ingeniously covered his upper lip and his young cheeks with a good deal of hair which had assuredly never grown there. The jester had contrived to make himself look at least ten years older than his actual age.

The twins passed through the hall towards stairs leading up into an apartment yet more brilliantly lighted, and filled with the king's noble guests.

"You and I can't keep together now," whispered Dickon. "You, as court-jester, are privileged to go where I, a mere serving-man, have no right to enter. Quick! up the steps; you will be amongst the royalties in a minute."

"I cannot; I dare not go by myself," whispered Marian, squeezing tightly the arm of her brother.

"You must; you are in for it now!" said Dickon, shaking himself loose from her hold. "I'll keep as near this place as I can; but I'm expected to look after the cloaks of the guests, and keep out thieves and intruders."

"Dickon! Dickon! come hither, you sluggard—you

dolt!" cried a voice from the top of the stairs. Marian dared not disobey, but with all her heart, at that moment, she wished herself back in her room above the bootmaker's shop.

The person who had called was a courtier who had been wont to be amused by the quips and jibes of Dickon. But nothing could be extracted on that night from the wearer of the motley dress and the cap and bells. Marian answered every question by putting her hand to the silk kerchief tied round her mouth and chin.

"You're muzzled, I see, and can neither bark nor bite; and, I do declare, tears are coming into your eyes,—as if no one had ever a toothache before! Shame on you!" cried the courtier in a tone of contempt. "You are more like a girl than a man! As well go a-hawking with a wooden falcon as keep a jester who cannot or will not speak, and looks ready to cry!" and the courtier angrily turned away.

"Oh, I do hope that no one else will address me!" said Marian to herself. "Where can I hide myself so as to pass unnoticed? I'll make my way, if I can, to yonder little recess over which that red curtain hangs; it will serve to hide me a little."

Timid as a hare, the girl made her way to this more obscure corner of the crowded and lighted hall. Music had struck up, and dancing would soon begin.

If Marian could have believed herself to be invisible,

she would greatly have enjoyed the brilliant scene before her. On a raised dais stands King Henry himself, with his crown on his head, his richly embroidered robes descending to his feet and resting on the marble-paved floor. A heavy chain of gold is round his neck, its massive links reaching as low as his knees. There is a heavier chain binding the soul of the son of John of Gaunt; and the crown pressing his care-worn, furrowed brow is a painful, oppressive weight. Yet the monarch smiles and bows as his proud barons and their jewelled dames pass before him and Mary his queen, paying apparent reverence to one whom some of them at least look upon as a usurper. With what gracious words the king now greets Richard Scrope, Archbishop of York, who, in satin robes trimmed with antique lace, a gold crucifix suspended from his silk girdle, bends low before his liege lord. Little kens the prelate that the day will come when, by that king's command, his own blood shall drip from the axe's edge!

Yonder the lordly Northumberland, still apparently favoured by the monarch whom he has helped to raise to the throne, laughs over an account of some fray on the Border with the marauding Scots. He sees not the shadow of Shrewsbury's coming fight darkening the future. Northumberland possesses not the legendary gift of second sight. He beholds not his Harry, his Hotspur, the pride of his house, lying a bleeding corpse on that fatal field. Percy himself, in the prime of his

youth, full of vigour and strength, and overflowing with spirits, is perhaps the merriest of the brilliant throng who appear at the birthday revels. Wherever his green and gold tunic is seen there is mirth. Hotspur is the admired or envied of all beholders. He has the brightest smiles of the ladies, the warmest greetings from those who in a few years will unsheathe their weapons against him. In these wild times, the hands clasped together in friendship to-day may on the morrow deal the death-giving blow.

Marian was beginning to forget her fears in the novelty and amusement of the scene before her, when a tall boy, apparelled in crimson velvet, slightly the worse for wear, with delicate features and glossy brown hair falling over a broad, fine brow, with an air of dignity which might have betrayed his princely rank to a stranger, suddenly advanced from the crowd directly towards the place where she stood. Marian knew that before her was the young Prince of Wales, his bright eyes flashing with indignant displeasure as he addressed the supposed jester.

“ You laggard, you loon, you dish of skimmed milk! well may you try to hide yourself! Where have you been dallying all this time?”

Marian visibly trembled all over; which increased the wrath of the fiery young prince.

“ You are no more a man than I am a hare!” exclaimed the future victor of Agincourt, with more

truth than he was aware of. "You make as much ado, yea, twenty times more, about one wretched tooth, than another, made of tougher stuff, would make of a mortal wound! And what did you mean by sending me a ridiculous dress fit only for a jester to wear? I pricked myself thrice in trying it on; and no lady would care to come near a porcupine bristling all over with needles! I had to change the dress before I could come into the presence. I warrant no gloveful of broad pieces shall you win from me; I'll rather give you a cuff with a steel one!"

This was a crowning mortification to poor Marian, who had pricked herself twenty times, and wearied herself so much in making that unfortunate tunic. But she could hardly think of her wasted work at that moment, so completely was she mastered by fear. To retreat, to fly, was the maiden's one fervent wish; but she could not do so without undergoing the dreadful ordeal of passing the prince, and then crossing the stately room in sight of the king, queen, and courtiers. Marian, to use a common expression, had a longing to sink through the floor; but floors will not conveniently open to give a passage to terrified damsels.

"The craven!" muttered Prince Harry, his lip curling with bitter scorn. "You may go make your fortune by spinning, for you shall be no servant of mine. A distaff would suit you better than anything more manly!" and thus saying, the prince turned on his heel, and was lost to sight among the gay throng.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### LED OUT TO DANCE.

MARIAN was drinking the bitter dregs of her cup of self-willed folly, but she had by no means drained them out. One hour of yielding to temptation to commit what may seem but a trifling transgression may tinge the whole of our lives. Did poor Eve ever lose the taste of the one forbidden fruit?

“Maid Marian, dance a measure with me.”

How Paton's daughter started at the sound of her own name, rather hissed than uttered almost close to her ear! No need for her to look up in fear; no need to raise her frightened eyes to the dark ones fixed upon her with such a serpent-like glance. Something akin to instinct told her that it was Guy Dunn who had recognized her through her disguise; that it was he whom she most dreaded who had penetrated her secret, and who had her now at his mercy.

“Maid Marian, dance a measure with me.” The invitation was repeated. The music was sounding for the dance, gay lords and ladies were taking their places, and

the crowd of lookers-on falling a little back on all sides to give them more room. Guy Dunn laid his heavy hand on Marian's. She would fain have freed herself from his hold, but had neither strength nor spirit to do so.

"Why should you not do what I ask? It is but a trifling matter. You know that you are in my power. I have but to speak a word, and you will be stripped of your strange disguise; perhaps be branded as an impostor, or flung into a dungeon on suspicion of an attempt to kill the king. I ask a slight boon. You must and you shall grant it, Maid Marian; refuse, and I denounce you at once."

Marian dared not refuse. Trembling in every limb, she suffered herself to be led out to the dance. It was not, indeed, such a dance as is seen in modern days. There was less of familiarity and more of dignity in the measures trodden in olden times than in the giddy whirl of the polka or waltz. But still Marian might well blush for her position—the unwilling partner of one whom she disliked and feared, herself dressed in attire so unseemly that she dared not raise her eyes from the floor.

A burst of laughter from all sides embarrassed the blushing girl more and more.

"You've chosen a strange partner, Master Dunn," exclaimed Percy, who chanced to be opposite to the pair. "Could you win the favour of no fair lady, that you must take up with a jester?"

But, as all readers of history know, jesters were privileged persons, and Dunn's action passed for a mere idle whim.

Marian got through that dance, she scarcely knew how. The room seemed to be swimming around her. She was scarcely conscious of anything but an intense desire to escape from the place which she had so ardently wished to enter. Dunn had hardly led his partner back to the recess where he had found her, when his attention was diverted from her for a few minutes by some question being put to him by a man of rank, who had a slow, verbose manner of talking. Marian seized the opportunity to fly. She hated the jingling of the bells on her cap, which might attract and direct pursuit. Down the broad flight of steps sped the maiden, most anxious to find her brother and make him take her away at once. Dickon was her sole protector, her sole friend in that gorgeous crowd. Oh to find him, to cling to him, to make her escape with him by her side! To the right and left looked Marian. There were too many dressed in the royal livery for it to be easy for her to single out at once the object of her wild search.

"Methinks Dickon has gone crazy," quoth one of the men.

"Nay, nay, he's acting a part," said another; "he has some new joke to practise upon us. I'll be bound the jester has hit on some new device to amuse his young lord."



To her intense relief, Marian at last heard the voice of Dickon himself.

"Where are you going? what are you doing? are you mad?" he asked of his twin in a whisper that reached no ear but her own.

"Take me away, oh, take me away! Where is my cloak? where my other cap?" cried the trembling girl. But in the confusion the cap could not be found.

"What has happened? why do you want to fly?" asked Dickon, alarmed at her frantic manner.

"Dunn is here—he knows me! I want to go home—I must go home!" cried Marian.

Dickon, seriously uneasy, and fearing that the girl's excitement would attract attention, bore his sister off with no further delay. Marian had no covering for her head except the hateful fool's cap, which, as soon as she gained the open air, she flung down and trampled under foot. Dickon, who did not choose that his twin should be exposed bare-headed to the gaze of the staring crowd, instantly replaced the cap by the one which he was wearing himself. He pulled it down over Marian's brow, so that between it and the kerchief little of her face could be seen.

The twins did not, however, make their escape without remarks and jests from the motley throng through which they had now with difficulty to make their way.

"Flying from the officers—stolen the king's spoons!" were suggestions to which Dickon made playful retorts,

though seldom in his life had the jester been less inclined to show off his wit. Dickon said not a word to Marian till they had passed through the crowd, and found themselves in a comparatively quiet street. Then he addressed to his sister one brief question—"Were you really found out?"

"Yes—by Guy Dunn," was her gasped-out reply.

Dickon uttered an exclamation of vexation. There was no man on whose forbearance and generosity he could place less reliance.

"O Dickon, I fear that I have ruined your prospects at court!" were the next words that burst from Marian's trembling lips, no longer bound by the kerchief, from which she had released herself in order to breathe more freely.

"I do not wish to stay at court; I have played the fool too long," said Dickon bitterly. "Before you threw away my wretched bells, I had resolved to wear them no more. Aunt Marjory is right: I had rather be a man than a monkey!"

The brother and sister moved on as rapidly as the darkness would permit. Dickon appeared to find his way by instinct rather than sight. Several groups of men and women, some carrying torches, and not a few the worse for the strong ale freely given, had to be passed, causing nervous alarm to Marian. Such interruptions, however, became fewer and fewer before Boniface Lane was reached at last.

Marian and her brother had not been the sole sufferers from her giddy freak. Lilian had had her share of the trouble though not of the folly. When she had made Dame Alice as comfortable for the night as she could, and received the widow's kiss and blessing, Lilian had made her way down the outer staircase into Bird's Alley, for she was anxious not to be too long absent from Marian. Lilian carried a small lamp lent to her by the widow, for Betsy, careless of her promise, was nowhere to be found.

"The street is wondrous quiet to-night," thought Lilian, as she emerged from the alley into Boniface Lane, "and I have not far to go." Not a single individual was met by the girl ere she reached the big yellow boot hanging over the entrance to Paton's dwelling.

Lilian knocked, then knocked again more loudly; listened; called, but no voice answered. "Marian is asleep," she said to herself. "But where is Dickon? he promised not to leave his sister, and I never knew him break his word." Lilian repeated her summons, but without any result.

Then Lilian's heart misgave her. She remembered Marian's ill-concealed impatience to get her away, and determination not to go to Bird's Alley. Lilian recollected the mysterious secret evidently existing between Dickon and his twin—a secret which she herself had not been permitted to share. Lilian bitterly re-

proached herself for having allowed even the claims of humanity and friendship to lure her from what she considered to be her post of duty.

“I have been faithless to my trust!” exclaimed the poor girl. “I should never, never have given up the key! Oh, what shall I do! what shall I do! I shall never forgive myself if any evil befall my poor Marian from my neglect of my duty!”

A torch glimmered like a star in the distance, then moved up the lane, till it disappeared down Bird’s Alley. Lilian knew that Badby the smith had now returned to his home. One whom she could thoroughly trust was then within reach. What a relief it would be to have John’s advice and assistance! Lilian moved several steps towards Bird’s Alley, then paused, reflected for a few seconds, and returned to the bootmaker’s door.

“To tell John that his Marian is lost would be like plunging a knife into that true, faithful heart. If Marian has acted a foolish part, it would be cruel to her and to him to expose her. In this wide, wicked city, how could John find her? Marian was under her brother’s protection; she will return, and I must wait. But it is terrible to wait in the street, shut out from my only home, and full of such dreadful misgivings and fears. I have nothing that I can do but pray. I think that trouble is the hard steel which strikes prayer-sparks out of our flinty hearts.”

Lilian prayed very earnestly, not only for Marian,

but for herself. To one of her delicately modest nature it was a thing most painful to be out in the street at night. Lilian knew that the quietness now prevailing in Boniface Lane would not last; the apprentices would come rollicking back when their sport should be over, perhaps excited by drink. They had not, indeed, to pass through the house, but by a very narrow passage beside it which led to their den; but to reach that passage they would go along the front of Paton's shop, by whose door, so thoughtlessly closed against her, the knight's orphan daughter stood trembling. What would the lads think, what would they say, what would they do, when finding her in such a strange, defenceless position? Their coarse mirth would be more intolerable to the girl than actual cruelty would be. It was very painful, indeed, to Lilian that waiting for Marian's return.

At length there was the sound of footsteps in Boniface Lane. It was not loud, nor accompanied by talking or laughter; the tread was like that of those who move on in anxious haste. Such hope sprang up in Lilian's heart that she called out, "Marian!" In another minute or two the girls were locked in each other's arms. Marian was crying hysterically, and tears fell fast from Lilian's eyes. "I am so thankful! so thankful!" was all she could utter.

Dickon opened the door as quickly as he could, for he was anxious to get his sister as soon as possible

under her father's roof, so that no stranger might see her.

"In with you, in with you, Marian!" he cried. When all had passed through the entrance, and the door was again closed, the youth added, "We have both treated Lilian very ill, and I, for one, heartily beg her pardon.—Lilian, are we forgiven?" Dickon frankly held out his hand; Lilian took it with sisterly kindness. The gentle girl had not even thought that she had a right to be angry.

"Now, Marian, give me that cap, as you've tossed off the other. I must be back at once to the palace."

"Not to-night, oh, not to-night," faltered Marian.

"I must go," said Dickon almost sharply, "and in that fool's garb of motley which I lent you, or I may be clapped into ward, and adorned with iron bracelets and anklets to match, if I give further offence at the court."

Marian reluctantly dropped the cloak which had hidden her unmaidenly attire, and so revealed to Lilian's astonished eyes the unseemly garb which she wore. That dress told the whole story. The knight's daughter blushed for her friend.

That night there were no explanations. Lilian saw that Marian was exhausted, and she herself was scarcely less so, so great had the strain of anxiety been. Lilian dropped asleep almost before she had laid her head on her straw-stuffed bed, and passed the remainder of that

eventful night in peaceful repose. It was not so with Marian: the poor girl was haunted by horrible dreams in which Guy Dunn followed her close as her shadow; wherever she turned she saw him, and his hateful voice seemed to be ever hissing in her ears, "Maid Marian, dance a measure with me."

## CHAPTER XV.

### THORNS AFTER ROSES.

MARIAN, almost worn out by a night in which, whether waking or sleeping, she had had no peaceful rest, dropped into slumber as the morning dawned, and it was very late before she left her little apartment. When she appeared in the rush-strewn parlour, the girl looked pale and weary, the rose had gone from her cheek, and her dress, without its usual ornaments, or even its pyramidal crown, betrayed that Marian's heart was too heavy to take pleasure in the vanities usually so dear. Lilian, when her companion entered, was engaged in dusting Dame Marjory's chair.

"O Lilian, I am so wretched!" exclaimed poor Marian Paton. "Leave off your dusting and sit down and listen to me, for I must have some one to hear what I have to tell; I can shut up my trouble no longer, and I know that you, at least, will not betray me."

Lilian sat down on a three-legged stool, her usual seat when she brought her work to the parlour. She



expected Marian to occupy the high-backed chair ; but the poor, conscience-stricken girl threw herself on the rushes beside her sister-like friend, and buried her face on Lilian's lap.

"I must tell you all—unburden my heart—make a clean breast, as the friars say ; but I can't look up in your face as I do so, I am too much ashamed of myself. Do not interrupt me, Lilian ; I know too well what you will think of my conduct."

Lilian remained perfectly silent while Marian poured forth her tale, though the orphan was much startled, shocked, even alarmed, when she heard of Guy Dunn and the dance. Marian concealed nothing from her friend ; it was a relief to tell all.

"Now you know the whole matter, Lilian, and can advise me what to do now," was Marian's conclusion to her tale.

Lilian lifted up her heart silently to ask for wisdom, for she felt that she had none of her own.

"I should like to go to confession," said Marian, who, though brought up as a Lollard, had naturally imbibed many of the ideas held by the majority of those amongst whom she lived. "If I did not think that Aunt Marjory would be angered if she found it out, I'd go to the church round the corner and get one of the priests to hear me, give me a penance and absolution. He would take the burden off my conscience, and I should not much mind the penance, even if he bid me eat no meat

for a month. I could steal away quite quietly to church now, before Dame Marjory comes back. I think that I ought to confess."

"Oh yes, but not to a priest!" cried Lilian; "*he* has no power to absolve you, dear Marian. *There is but one Intercessor between God and man, even the man Christ Jesus.* Those are words from the Bible. Tell the Lord Himself how you have sinned, tell Him how grieved you are, and ask Him—*Him only*—to plead for you with the Father."

To Marian's weak mind the Saviour seemed a more shadowy and yet awful Being than the saints whose images she saw at corners of streets, or priests who assumed to themselves the power which belongs to God alone. Marian wanted some earthly stay; hers was the nature which is peculiarly prone to superstition: too worldly to worship God in spirit and in truth, she was too timid not to need some outward forms on which to rest her uneasy soul. Marian, like many worldly girls of the present day, had a conscience, though a blind one; it was troubling her now, and she wanted to silence, or rather to deaden it, by some outward observance. Marian sought, as numbers like her still seek, to make a kind of compromise with Heaven: acts of supposed piety to be balanced against indulgence in doubtful pleasures; no full surrender of *self*, no loving, joyful obedience, but something to do, or something to bear, some yoke imposed by man—the penance, confession, or

fast—that might atone for follies and sins that might bring down some judgment from God.

“I shall never, never be so foolish again,” said Marian; “I am going to be wise and good from to-day.”

“You must ask for grace and strength, dear Marian, or you will be certain to wander again. You must pray to be helped, by God’s Spirit, to lead a new life.”

“I wish that I had some one to tell me how to begin it.”

“May I tell you what I think that you ought to do—this very day?”

“Yes; you will impose no hard penance if I make you my father-confessor.”

“I think that you should tell everything to your aunt.”

“Never!” exclaimed Marian with vehemence; “that is what I never could do. Aunt is so hard, and so dreadfully *proper*, she would be so indignant! She would scold me—despise me—perhaps she would beat me!” (Long after the days of Henry the Fourth, it was no uncommon thing for punishment to be inflicted on maidens by parent or guardian.)

“Whatever Dame Marjory may say, whatever she may do, take it meekly and patiently, dearest; and consider that she is one whom God Himself has set over you in the place of your mother, one to whom He bids you submit. Had you been frank and open with Dame Marjory, had you not set up your will in opposition to one so wise and true, you would never have been in this trouble.”

"I hate obeying! I choose to be my own mistress!" cried Marian, rising to her feet; "I like to have my own way."

"You have had your own way, and a hard way you have found it," said Lilian sadly. "Oh, hear me, dear Marian!" Lilian had also risen, and now put her hand pleadingly on the arm of her friend. "Dame Marjory may be stern, perhaps hard; but hers is the hardness of love, the sternness of justice and truth. She sees more clearly, judges more wisely, than we can, and you ought to give her your confidence, you ought to yield her obedience. This is the command of God: *Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.*"

"Dame Marjory is not my mother," said Marian.

"She has charge of you; I have heard your own father say so. Dame Marjory ought to know everything that happened last night."

"I hope that you won't tell her!" cried Marian in alarm.

"I do not think that it is my part to tell her, but I am sure that it is yours. Be as frank and truthful with your aunt as you have just been with me. No more concealment, no more deception, dear Marian. When we have wandered from the right way, as dear Master Sawtre taught, we should retrace every step; there are no short cuts in duty."

"I cannot submit myself to my aunt; she crosses me, she thinks me silly, she puts restraint on my will."

“As she put restraint on the will of her little brother, when the Black Death was in the house. Do you not remember how impatient the child was at being shut out from a place of fearful danger—how he angrily struck at the door, and cried, and doubtless thought the sister hard who was ready to risk her life to save him?”

“Aunt Marjory beat her brother; I’ve heard her say so herself.”

“And was she cruel when she did so? Did she not lift up the child in her arms and carry him when she was ready to drop with fatigue? Is it cruel to keep the door closed, however we may long to pass through, because we are seeking that which would harm us? If your aunt had known of your wish to go to the palace last night, and had sternly forbidden your stirring one step, you would have lost your amusement indeed, but you would have been far happier now.”

“I know that,” sighed Marian, as she sank wearily into Dame Marjory’s chair.

“Then you will confess all, dearest; you will be my frank and truthful Marian. Dame Marjory will soon be here.”

“But might she not speak to Dame Alice?” cried Marian.

“And if she did, would you not be the better for Dame Alice’s counsel and prayers?”

“But—but—John might hear; it would be dreadful!” exclaimed Marian, colouring up to the roots

of her hair. "I could not bear for him to despise me!"

It seemed to Lilian that her companion was letting out a little secret, and it was one which gave her joy. Very gently Lilian laid her hand on Marian's, and said, "If you care so much for Master John's good opinion, if he is to you as a brother—or more—surely he has a right to your confidence. He has a right to know—at least as much as is known by Master Dunn."

Marian gave a heavy sigh.

"Oh, do not put off doing what you feel to be right!" cried Lilian earnestly. She was so well accustomed to Marian's weak delays, that she knew that if the confession were postponed even to the morrow it would never be made at all. Some new pleasure would attract, some new folly would lure; the present impression would be weakened—lost—as marks on the sand are effaced by the tide. "You will be so thankful when once the effort is made; the displeasure of any human being is so much easier to bear than the anger of God. How can you address Him in prayer, how can you expect His blessing, when you are acting a false part, and concealing what you ought to confess? Marian, darling Marian, this may be the turning-point in your life."

Here the conversation closed. Lilian went to her work. Marian remained buried in thought, till her meditations were interrupted. By whom they were interrupted will be seen in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### CONFESSION.

DAME ALICE felt considerably better on the day succeeding the birthday revel. The morning was bright and warm, and her pain was less acute. When John asked her whether she felt well enough to be carried down to her favourite room, his mother's reply was playful.

"My dear boy" (to Alice the strong bearded man was still her *boy*), "think you that I would remain another day in my turret cell when the sparks are flying, and the music of the anvil clinking, and I've your song at your work to cheer me after yesterday's absence?"

"It was an absence which you'll have no cause to regret, mother," said John, lifting her tenderly in his arms, so that her cheek rested on his. "You know that I went to Sir John Oldcastle (folk call him Lord Cobham now in right of his wife). He lives in a right fair mansion, with a pleasance around it, where the trees look gay with their tiny green knobs, and the merry little crocuses and snowdrops are peeping above the brown

sod. Much I wished that I could have carried you there, to bless God for his beautiful world, and listen to the songs of the birds."

"There is a fairer world before me, my son," said Alice, as after descending the outer stair John bore his precious burden into the parlour, "and I wot that the songs of angels are still sweeter than that of the birds. But oh, the bonnie flowers!" exclaimed Alice in joyful surprise, for the room was bright with cowslips and primroses brought home by her son.

The smith placed his mother in her easy-chair, and beat up Marian's soft cushion behind her, then for a few minutes took his seat on a bench by her side.

"I must make you share my good news," said he. "Lord Cobham, the good knight, is trusting me with an order for a complete suit of armour—helmet, cuisses, gauntlets, and all! I shall have to employ skilled workers to help me; but Sir John has advanced me money for first expenses, and if I succeed my fortune is as good as made. A full suit of armour—think of that, mother! and to be worn by one of the noblest knights in the land!"

John Badby spoke with something of professional pride. His anvil and hammer were to him what his organ is to the musician, or his brush and palette to the painter. The smith threw his soul into his work when something worth his utmost efforts was to be wrought by his skill. Hard labour has its pleasant excitement



when the arm has strength and the hand has skill, and there is one whom we love to work for.

“I had good talk with the knight about other things than armour,” pursued the smith; “for Lord Cobham is a true servant of God now, though, men say, somewhat wild in his youth. He asked me about blessed Parson Sawtre, and how he bore him in his fiery trial. When I had told him all, ‘Methinks it is more honour to die for the Lord at the stake than for the king on the field of battle,’ quoth the good knight. ‘I would rather envy than pity the martyr whose pain is sharp but whose crown is sure.’”\*

“Those were brave words,” said Dame Alice.

“And spoken by one who can and will follow them up by brave deeds,” quoth the smith, little knowing how his prognostication would be fulfilled. “But I must not linger talking, for I have work for half-a-dozen hands if I had them.”

With a mother’s fond pride Dame Alice watched her son at his forge, and listened to the ditty which he hummed—one which in these days was often on the lips of artisans and mechanics; rough rhymes which the people loved—

“With right and with might,  
With skill and with will,  
Let might help right,  
And skill go before will,  
And right before might,  
So goes our mill aright.”

\* Every student of history knows how Lord Cobham was burned to death by a slow fire in the following reign.

John Badby was interrupted in his work and his ditty by a man, who looked like a knight's servant, entering the smithy, bearing a scroll tied round with silk thread, over which was a large red seal.

"This looks like another order for armour," said John with a smile: "good things or bad fly in flocks like pigeons or rooks. Fair fall him who taught me to read!" John broke open the seal, and was about to tell the messenger to wait for a reply, but when he looked up the man was gone.

Dame Alice was as usual watching her son when the missive arrived, and, like John, guessed that one with silken thread and heavy seal might bring some message of importance. Letters were not plentiful in these days, when comparatively few could read and still fewer write. Alice saw John open the scroll with something of curiosity on his face; but when he glanced at its brief contents, an expression of anger, indignation, fury, passed over that face as a black thunder-cloud darkens the sky. The smith ground his teeth and stamped on the ground.

"What is it? what is it?" cried his mother, in a tone of alarm.

"A foul lie! a detestable slander!" exclaimed Badby, striding up to his mother's side. "I will throw it into the furnace. He who penned it richly deserves to be thrown there too!"

"Let me read it first," said Dame Alice, who felt that

her calmer judgment was needed to control the fierce wrath of her son.

“Read it!” cried John, holding the scroll before her eyes, “and then tell me what the villain merits who has forged such a slanderous lie!”

Dame Alice read the brief missive, in which, in large straggling characters, was written:—“Marian Paton was at the Ely House revels last night *in man's attire, and danced a measure with Guy Dunn.* If you doubt this, *ask the maiden herself!*”

There was no signature to the letter; the seal was but the impression of a coin of the realm. Care had been taken that the writer should not be traced. The bearer of the missive had disappeared down Boniface Lane.

Alice looked shocked and distressed, but her countenance showed sorrow rather than surprise. When Badby exclaimed, “The thing is impossible!” his mother did not, as he expected, echo the word. Dame Alice had grieved over the declension of her whom when a child she had deemed a little angel; the widow had felt that the vain girl had been drifting farther and farther away from the point of duty, and had often fervently wished that her son had fixed his affections on one more worthy of his love.

“What would you have me do, mother?” exclaimed John, impatient at the silence which he had not expected.

"I would have you do what the letter suggests—ask the maiden herself."

Almost before the sentence was ended, John Badby, grasping the scroll tightly, strode out of the parlour, and through the smithy, into the lane. The smith did not even wait to wash his hands, wipe the toil-drops from his brow, or turn down the sleeves rolled up over his blackened sinewy hands. In such guise as he had never before appeared in when entering Paton's dwelling, John strode through the shop and went straight up the stairs leading to the upper apartments. He did not so much as notice the apprentice lads lolling about, doing more work with their tongues than their hands, as they chatted over the night's adventures.

"I say, what's come over the smith?" exclaimed Mat, as Badby tramped up the stairs.

"His mother must have died," suggested Sam.

"She must have been murdered then, for no quiet kind of death would have made Badby look like that."

John entered the parlour without knocking, and found Marian alone, still sitting on the high-backed chair in which Lilian had left her after their painful conversation. Traces of tears were on Marian's cheeks, and her paleness told of distressing emotion. John Badby went straight up to the maiden, whose heart was beating very fast, for she had heard his step on the stairs.

"Marian," said Badby hoarsely, "I know that I am

nothing to you, but your fair name is more to me than life. Tell me that this is false!" He held the scroll open before her.

"It is true—too true!" exclaimed the penitent girl, bursting into tears. "O John! I will hide nothing from you," she continued, struggling to keep down her sobs, whilst she hid her face with her hands. "I have been so foolish, but perhaps not so bad as you think. I set my heart on seeing the revels at the palace, and Dickon said that if I wore his jester's dress he could smuggle me into the hall. So I went—I saw all—but I heartily wished myself back. Then that hateful Dunn found me out; he threatened to betray me if I did not dance a measure with him: so I was frightened, and I danced; but I would almost as lief have died! I ran away as soon as I could, and Dickon brought me back here. I am so miserable, so much ashamed, I will never do anything foolish again."

The extreme simplicity of the confession, made with such evident pain and contrition, appealed to the heart of John more than any eloquence could have done. He sat down on a bench beside Marian, and when, averting her face, she held out a trembling hand towards him, with the faltered words, "Are you very, very angry?" John took the little hand between both his own, and gently pressed it to his lips.

"I am never angry with you, Marian," he said, in a strangely softened tone. "I am glad that you have told

me all. Dickon did very wrong when he led you into such danger."

"It was my own fault; I was determined to go. I mean to confess all to my aunt; it will not be so hard to do so now, since you have heard of my folly, and are not so very angry." Marian's hand was still in Badby's, and she ventured timidly to glance up into his face. Certainly she read no anger there.

The door unclosed; Lilian was about to enter, but with intuitive delicacy she at once retired back into the kitchen, smiling to herself as she did so. Marian had evidently confessed, and matters were not turning out so bad after all.

We will leave the reader to imagine what further conversation passed between Marian and John. He only rose when sounds from below told of the arrival of Dame Marjory and her brother. Then with the words, "Tell all, my own love, to your father and aunt, as you have frankly told all to me," John descended the stairs to meet the travellers. They were not a little surprised to see him in their house in working guise. But the smith had quite forgotten his own dress; he was happy, and he looked so.

Marian having made her confession once, had more courage to make it again—"The sooner the better," thought she. "Lilian was right: it is better to speak out at once, before the secret comes out, as it did to John. I wot wicked Dunn wrote that scroll himself."

Scarcely, therefore, had Paton and his sister greeted Marian and Lilian, and Dame Marjory had taken off the muddy hooded cloak in which she had travelled, than Marian, in a hurried manner, made a full but brief confession. It was easier to do so in the presence of her indulgent father than it would have been had Marjory been present alone.

"No more trips to Greenwich for us," observed Peterkin Paton, when Marian had finished her tale, "if we have to leave such a wild bird behind us."

"It ought to be caged and have its wings clipped as soon as may be," said Dame Marjory grimly. "Perhaps honest John Badby may save us this trouble; he'll make a good strong cage for the silly young bird."

Before the night closed in it was noised about in Boniface Lane that Marian Paton was to wed John Badby.

"I knew that it would end thus," quoth mine hostess of the White Hart: "John has loved the girl since she was scarce higher than his knee. But I did not expect the affair to come off so soon, or the giddy thing sober down to be the wife of an honest smith. I wot that John Badby has made a foolish choice."

"There's many a good fellow as does *that*," observed the merry little host, with a sly glance at his wife.

The news of the engagement was not long in reaching another hearer more deeply interested in the question.

"So—my first arrow has fallen short; but I've

another sharp one in my quiver!" muttered Guy Dunn, with malice and hatred written on his gloomy features. "The smith thinks that he has won his prize, but he has left me out of his reckoning. If he be made of the stuff that men deem him to be, his wedding-chimes shall be the toll of the big bell at Smithfield—John Badby shall be tied to a stake instead of a bride."



## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE BLOW FALLS.

It was not without some doubts and misgivings that Dame Alice heard of the betrothal of Marian and John. The character of Paton's daughter was so weak, and she had shown of late so much vanity, self-pleasing, and folly, that the mother could not but foresee that troubles might arise in the future.

"If Marian had only been like Lilian," mused the gentle widow, "how happy would this union have made me! But it is natural that my John should rejoice; he has loved the girl ever since she came to spend weeks with us during the illness and after the death of her mother. A winsome child she was; I loved her as if she were my own—the little blossom so sweet and fresh in its spring beauty, before the dust and mud of the world had spoiled its freshness. Well, well, there is One who orders our goings, and I am sure that He has a blessing in store for my dutiful son. Things may turn out very different from what we expect or fear."

Dame Marjory was pleased at the engagement, though

her brother thought that "the prettiest girl in London might have done better."

"Nonsense!" cried the dame with a snort, when the thought was uttered aloud. "Marian wants a *master*. She is like an unbroken colt that needs the curb, and maybe the whip. The smith is no love-sick boy: he will be a husband to whom Marian must look up, and whom she will learn to obey."

Dickon had resigned his office of jester; but he had a great dislike to taking up the boot-making trade, and was glad to be retained as an attendant on the young prince, with whom he was a favourite. This pleased Dickon's father, who was anxious that his only son should push his way at court; but Marjory, with her sturdy good sense, regretted the lively youth's continued exposure to a life of temptation. She always retained her loyal feelings towards the unhappy King Richard, and questioned the right of Henry of Lancaster to sit on the English throne. "If right went before might," she muttered to herself, "there's the boy Mortimer, shut up in prison, who would be wearing the crown. May the day come when the wheel will turn round, and one of his descendants, if not himself, bear rule in merry old England!"

Marian had regained her lively spirits, and thoughts of her wedding-dress and trinkets amused her mind. Marian built castles in the air, and blew new bubbles on the strength of Dickon's influence with the young

Prince of Wales. John, her John, should not long continue to be the obscure blacksmith of Boniface Lane. He should be armourer to knights and nobles; he should have royal arms over his smithy, wear a silken vest on Sundays, and dress his wife in brocade!

John also had his hopes and his plans, but of a less frivolous kind. He would enlarge his smithy by buying up the adjoining premises, which would also increase the accommodation for his home circle, now to be enlarged by his taking home a young wife. The two little upper rooms which had sufficed for him would not make his bride as comfortable as he resolved that she should be.

One morning a keen March wind was blowing the wild clouds over the sky: now the sun shone out bright and warm; anon his beams were blotted out, as it seemed, by a black curtain fringed with light. Smiling April was near; but on that cold, stormy day Winter was engaged in a wrestle to hold his own, and sudden blasts, sweeping down the lane, almost took unwary passengers off their feet.

"Mother, is it not too cold and windy for you to come downstairs?" said John, when, as was his wont, he appeared in the room of his crippled parent, ready to carry her down to her favourite seat in the parlour.

"Oh no," was the cheerful reply; "I cannot give up either my ride or my pleasant change of air and scene. But I am a daily burden to you, my John," added

Alice, as he gently lifted her up and bore her towards the outer stair. The blacksmith gaily laughed.

"I trow that my arms are better able to carry such a light burden than yours were to lift me when I was a boy," said John; "I was no light burden, I trow."

"You were the biggest baby in the parish," replied the dame, not a little proud of her bouncing boy.

"Mother's geese are all swans," laughed Badby, kissing his parent as he placed her in her easy-chair.

John then went to his work; little cared he for weather save on his mother's account. He was on Lord Cobham's suit of armour, which required exercise of mind and skill; but often his thoughts wandered to Marian. John was not using his heavy hammer, so noises in the street were easily heard. The sound of a crash immediately succeeded a wild rush of tempestuous wind.

"What has the tempest blown down?" asked Alice from her seat in the parlour. The door between it and the smithy was open as usual; for if closed to shut out the blast, it would also shut out from the widow the view of her son at his work.

John looked forth into the lane, and then entered the parlour to reply to his mother's question.

"It is the sign of the White Hart," he said; "it has been blown down by the wind, and smashed by the fall. Dame Willis will have her own way—we'll have a gaudy mitre swinging over the tavern."

"There will be nothing to remind us of our poor king, except his picture behind me," said Alice.

"We must have that picture freshened up a bit," observed John, raising his eyes to the coarse but spirited drawing of Richard the Second and his queen behind his mother's chair. "The dust has gathered upon it, and I think that we might now afford a gilt frame. What say you to my bit of extravagance, mother? I must consult Marian about it. I wish all to be looking so bright when I bring home my bride."

There was a smile on John's lips as he looked down to Dame Alice for a reply. But even the bold smith was startled to see the look of fear and terror on her usually placid face. John turned quickly to see the cause; it was but too evident at once. A party of men-at-arms in the livery of the ecclesiastical court, with tonsured heads and ropes round their waists, were entering the smithy. Their errand could not be doubted, even before the leader spoke.

"I arrest thee, John Badby," he said, laying his hand on the shoulder of the stalwart smith, who went forward to meet him.

"On what charge? by what warrant?" asked John.

"This is our warrant" (a parchment with a heavy seal was produced), "and the charge is that you have denied the doctrine of transubstantiation—a breach of the law which brings thee under the action of the new statute passed against heretics."

"I shall be allowed to face my accusers, to answer for myself?" asked the prisoner, as handcuffs were fastened on his wrists.

"The court is sitting now—this kind of business needs despatch; and as for answering for thyself, there is but one question which needs reply—'Dost thou believe in the doctrine or not?' Thine own mouth will clear or condemn thee."

"Then I am condemned already," thought Badby, "for I cannot speak the word that would be a lie." But he only said aloud, "Let me bid good-bye to my mother."

It was a terrible moment for Alice; the shadowy fear that had haunted her had become a fearful reality. She felt as a mother might feel who sees her child under the claws of a ravenous wild beast. Badby manacled, and with a guard on either side, went to the afflicted parent whom he might never again see upon earth; he knelt down and asked her blessing. The sufferer could not stretch out her crippled hands to lay them on the victim's bowed head nor command her voice to speak, but John knew that her soul was poured forth in prayer.

"Mother, tell her—" John's own utterance was choked; manly as he was, he could not finish the sentence.

A few minutes and the prisoner and the guards were gone; all had passed quickly like a frightful dream—

oh that it had been but a dream! Would John Badby ever recross that threshold? would he ever wield that hammer again?

The dreadful news of the arrest soon reached Paton's dwelling, and fell like a thunderbolt on the hapless Marian. She gave way to the wildest grief—she wept, she tore her hair, she flung herself on the rushes. Dame Marjory hurried off to Bird's Alley to comfort, or at least sympathize with, the widow. Lilian would fain have gone too, but she could not desert poor Marian, who was beating her breast in wild hysterics. The wretched maid listened to nothing that Lilian could say, nor found any consolation in prayer. The first thing that roused Marian from her state of despair was the entrance of Dickon, who looked alarmed and distressed, for he too had heard the dread news of Badby's arrest.

Marian threw her arm around her twin brother, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"I am bound to the judgment-hall," said Dickon in an agitated tone. "They will let me in, I trow, as I belong to the court. I wanted to see you first, my poor girl, and tell you that I will leave no stone unturned to save your John. Even if he be condemned by those heartless wretches, I may rescue him still, for I have the ear of the prince."

"Oh yes, he will be saved!—my love will be saved!" cried Marian, rebounding into hope. She could not imagine that anything could resist the influence of Prince Hal.

The time of Dickon's absence seemed terribly long both to Marian and Lilian. The threatening clouds had burst in rain so violent that Boniface Lane was almost flooded. It cleared up, however, before the evening set in, and again the sun shone forth, and a glorious rainbow spanned the sky. It was not visible from the narrow lane, but it cheered Dickon as he sped on his way back to his father's dwelling.

"What news do you bring of my John?" cried Marian, hurrying to meet her brother.

"He bore himself bravely; he answered like a man bold and true. John said that he could not believe in what is contrary to God's Word.\* Scripture declares that Christ died *once* for all—that the one sacrifice is enough."

"They could not condemn him for speaking the truth," cried Marian.

"They *did* condemn him," said Dickon bitterly; "but I cannot believe that a sentence so unjust, so inhuman, will ever be carried into effect."

"The prince will protect my love!" exclaimed Marian.

"I have been to the prince and awakened his warm interest in the case; that is what has detained me so long. He has spoken to King Henry himself."

"And obtained John's pardon?" cried Marian eagerly.

"Yes, a *conditional* pardon," answered Dickon slowly. "Poor John is to be released and forgiven *if* he publicly

\* See Heb. vii. 27, x. 14; Rom. vi. 10; John xix. 30, etc.



recant what they call his errors. I doubt whether anything will make him do that."

"Dickon, I must see John—now—at once!" exclaimed Marian. "You will procure me a meeting with him?"

"It might be difficult," was the reply. "John is to suffer to-morrow at Smithfield."

"I must go to him—I will!" cried Marian passionately. "If you will not take me to his prison, I go alone. The guards will not resist my tears; if they do, I will lie down and die on the threshold!"

"I will go with you, my poor, poor sister!" said Dickon, with deep emotion. "I myself would fain see my friend again, for John is dear to me as a brother.—Lilian, do you go to Dame Alice; she needs all the tenderness which you know so well how to show. I know not how the widow can endure life when her only son is gone."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### TEMPTATION.

JOHN BADBY had indeed borne himself bravely and well at his trial ; but when the manacled prisoner was led to his dreary cell, and was left alone—when he seated himself on the noisome straw, which was the only bed allowed him, there came a terrible reaction. The Lollard, in the strength of his manhood, the flush of his hopes, had no wish to leave life, and by so fearful a passage. Like Jonathan when, in the hour of triumph, he heard of his father's cruel vow, Badby, in bitterness of spirit, exclaimed to himself, "*And I must die!*" The smith knew the agony caused by a burn ; this was almost the only pain which he had ever had to suffer, for of illness he had experienced little or none. He was so full of healthy, vigorous life, his arms so strong, his mind so clear—must that powerful frame be so soon reduced to ashes ? Existence had lately become so sweet, so wonderfully sweet to John ! He thought of his Marian and the delight which had seemed just within his reach after years of weary waiting ; then he remembered his afflicted,

helpless mother, and felt that he could hardly bear to leave her to suffer and die alone !

Let it cast no shame on Badby if in solitude and gloom his spirit recoiled from the terrible fate before him. It was the Christian's hour of darkness, his hour of sore temptation, the martyrdom of the soul more agonizing than that of the body. In his anguish the prisoner could but repeat to himself the prayer of the divine Sufferer who had trodden the path before him : " If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, Thy will, not mine, be done."

It was when the condemned man was engaged in this desperate spiritual struggle that Marian and her brother entered the cell. The pitying jailer set down his lamp, and retiring, left the three in the prison together. Marian, her dishevelled hair falling over her shoulders, her blue eyes swollen with weeping, threw herself on her knees before her betrothed ; then, when he made an attempt to raise her, she sobbed on his neck, and with passionate earnestness implored him to accept the king's proffered mercy, to save himself by one word—to live *for her*. Dickon, standing a little aside, was a silent and distressed spectator of the painful scene, where a woman, fair and beloved, implored a condemned prisoner to have mercy on himself and on one who could not—would not live without him !

" Marian, Marian ! you should have spared me this !" was Badby's exclamation of pain. It was no strength-

ening angel that had come to his prison cell ; it was as if the tempter himself had appeared in the form of an angel of light.

“Take her away, brother, take her away!” cried Badby, when the anguish of seeing Marian’s grief and hearing her passionate words had almost passed his power of endurance. “Even for her I cannot—dare not—will not deny my faith!”

“Then you do not love me, you never have loved me!” exclaimed Marian, amidst choking sobs. “And you do not care for your mother’s helpless misery ; you are willing to leave her to starve—to die—unless others show to her the mercy which she does not find in her own son !”

Badby bit his lip in almost unendurable pain.

“Who will help her when her own son deserts her ?” cried Marian.

“God will help her,” faltered Badby, and he motioned with his manacled arm a mute entreaty to Dickon to end an interview which inflicted torture indeed. Dickon came forward and laid his hand on his sister’s shoulder.

“Marian, we must end this,” he said ; “you do but add to his grief. You must not unnerve him at a time like this.” Firmly though gently, whilst he himself was trembling with agitation, Dickon tried to unloose his sister’s clinging grasp.

Then Marian suddenly collapsed : her face, which had

been flushed with excitement, turned deadly pale, her eyelids drooped, and she fainted away.

Badby pressed one long passionate kiss upon Marian's brow, and then resigned her to the arms of her brother. "This must be our last meeting," he said, as he grasped the youth's hand; "I could not go through this ordeal again."

And yet that terrible interview had not been without its compensation; it had given John Badby a glimpse of a truth to which he had too persistently tried to shut his eyes: Marian, worldly in her joys, worldly in her sorrows, without fixed principles or deep-rooted faith, was not the woman to have made him happy.

When left again in solitude after the struggle in which grace had won the victory, a strange feeling of peace stole over the martyr's soul. The bitterness of death seemed passed; he could almost hear the Master's "*Well done.*" The prisoner could now lay himself down on the straw and take his rest, conscious of the presence of a protecting wing above him. His pains would soon be over; how brief they would seem when he should, on the morrow, behold the face of his Lord! Verse after verse of comfort crowded on the memory of John, as if whispered by unseen angels. It was with the words on his mind, *I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me*, that the weary, but no longer unhappy, victim of Rome's cruelty fell into a long, deep sleep.

There was no such sleep that night for Guy Dunn.

He too, like his rival, had been smitten in the hour of his success ; but not by man. A fell disease which, not for the first time, had laid the wicked man low had again suddenly come upon him. It was when he seemed to triumph in the fulfilment of his evil designs that the murderer was arrested in his career. Guy Dunn lay that night, and for many nights more, writhing on a luxurious bed, from which he was never to rise. He was haunted by terrible dreams. Now he was struggling again with the king, whom he—one of Exton's band—had helped to murder. Anon he felt the iron grasp of the blacksmith upon his throat, and in vain, in the horrible nightmare, tried to wrench himself free. Let us draw a curtain over such a death-bed scene. Peace may come to the sufferer, peace to the bereaved, peace to the martyr with the stake and faggots before him ; but to holy peace the bosom of guilt is a stranger : *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

## CHAPTER XIX.

### TRUE AND TRIED.

WITH slow and measured clang tolled the bell of Smithfield on the following morn. Almost before sunrise the wide area was filled by a dense crowd of spectators come to see the Lollard suffer. Some mocked, but more pitied. Every eye gazed on the thick stake with its heavy iron chain, and the huge bundles of faggots piled around it to consume a living human form. Men-at-arms with halberds kept a clear space around the stake, and staves were freely used when the swarming mass of people came too near. Monks and friars mixed with the crowd, making comments on the enormity of the crime for which Badby was to die. There was a platform on which one tonsured priest took his stand, to perform the mockery of preaching a sermon to the innocent man about to suffer.

Presently there was a murmured "Here they come!" and, surrounded by a strong body of men armed with bills and bows to prevent any chance of rescue, the

smith, with clanking fetters on his ankles, and manacles on his wrists, came slowly advancing to his death. John Badby towered in height above those around him, so that his pale but resolute face could be plainly seen even by those at some distance. Save in that paleness and the compression of his lips, he showed no sign of fear. The victim was fastened to the stake, and then the so-called sermon began. It was an exhortation to recant, to be reconciled to holy Church, before enduring pains which would otherwise be but a foretaste of pangs never-ending. Badby did not hear a word of the sermon; his eyes were raised to the sky, and his thought was, "Will it open before me, as it did before Stephen? If not, I shall see Him—within an hour!"

Before the tedious harangue was ended, there was a movement and stir amongst the crowd behind the stake. Badby could not turn his head to look, but he saw that the eyes of people in front were turned in one direction, and then he heard exclamations of "See her! she will come—she is forcing her way through!" Like a cold thrill came on Badby the fear that Marian was coming to make another attempt to shake his constancy even at the last. It would be horrible to have her there at such a moment, to utter her wild entreaties, and to witness that which might turn her brain! But it was not Marian who with desperate resolution was elbowing and pushing her way through the mass of spectators, and who, aided by some friendly hands, was



enabled, flushed and panting, at length to gain a place within the sight and hearing of John.

"I must see him—I must speak with him!" cried Dame Marjory's loud, strong voice; "I bear him a message from his mother!"

At that word the crowd gave way, even the preacher stopped to listen, and Badby, with some agitation, called out: "Speak, speak! how fares she? what does she say?"

"She says"—there was a lull of silence amongst the crowd as Marjory's voice rose loud and clear—" 'Tell my boy that he has his mother's blessing, and the blessing of Him whose cross he bears. Bid my son remember the promise of Christ: *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*' "

"Go back and tell her," cried Badby from the stake, "that her son, by God's grace, will show himself not unworthy of such a mother!"

The short colloquy, heard at a considerable distance, awakened such admiring sympathy in the crowd that some even clapped their hands.

"Set fire to the faggots at once!" cried the presiding sheriff, who feared that such sympathy might take a practical form, and a rush be made to release the Lollard.

But ere the command could be obeyed, another interruption occurred. Again it came from the direction behind the stake, so that it was only by the confused

cries from amongst the crowd that Badby knew what was passing.

“The royal livery—horsemen! the prince—the Prince of Wales! Make way, masters, make way! A pardon! he brings a pardon!”

Then indeed the flush of hope rose to Badby's pale cheek. Life was sweet. Like the three Jews of old, was he to be saved from the fiery trial, and come forth to praise his Deliverer?

It was far easier for Prince Harry, on his high-mettled steed, to make his way towards the stake than it had been for good Dame Marjory. The royal boy had horsemen and attendants on foot with him; the foremost of the latter was Dickon. The crowd fell back to the right and left before the heir to the throne. Prince Harry was soon so near to the fettered victim that there was no difficulty in conversation being held between them. The youth reined in his foaming steed, and with his right hand held out a parchment signed and sealed.

“It is not for a fine fellow like you, a bold Englishman, I trow, and more fitted to exchange blows with the French than to be burned alive like a wizard—it is not for you to feed the flames. What know you, son of the hammer, of doctrines or dogmas? leave them to the priests. You have but to say *I recant*, and your fetters shall fall, and you shall step forth free, with his grace the king's forgiveness, my favour, and a pension to boot!”

The flush had faded from Badby's cheek, and the short-lived hope from his heart. "Thanks, noble prince," he said firmly; "but I cannot recant. I would rather die than be false to the truth."

"What know you of truth or error—you, an unlettered man? This is sheer obstinacy or womanish superstition. Have you nothing to live for, that you are so eager to die?" The question was impatiently asked, for Harry cared not to have his will crossed, and he was provoked to find his determination to save the smith foiled by what he deemed reasonless, dogged resistance.

"I cannot recant," was Badby's reply.

"Then perish in your folly!" cried Harry, making his horse back a few steps as fire was applied to a faggot which kindled, crackled, and then, being damp, sent up a volume of smoke.

"O God, take care of my mother!" cried John, in a voice that at that moment of supreme trial sounded to the prince like a groan.

"He recants, he recants!" exclaimed Harry, and his cry was echoed by the crowd. "Pluck away the faggots!" shouted out the excited young prince; and the order was instantly obeyed. The wood which had ignited was thrust away from the stake, and the smouldering flame was extinguished by the eager hands of Dickon.

"Put it back!" said Badby firmly; "God will enable me to endure, and to be *faithful unto death!*"

These were the last words which the martyr was heard to utter. The faggot was replaced beside the rest, and again the torch was applied. Again rose a volume of smoke, thicker and denser than the last; it shrouded the Lollard's form, and it performed a work of mercy, for it also caused suffocation. When the flames at last sent up their tongues of fire, they but enwrapped a form from which the brave spirit had fled. John Badby's had been a short and comparatively painless path to glory.

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NOTE.

Three brief historical accounts of Badby's martyrdom shall be inserted here, that the reader may judge how closely fiction has followed fact.

"A layman, John Babbie, was committed to the flames in the presence of the Prince of Wales for a denial of transubstantiation. The groans of the sufferer were taken for a recantation, and the prince ordered the fire to be plucked away; but the offer of life and a pension failed to break the spirit of the Lollard, and he was again hurled back to his doom."—*Green's "History of the People of England."*

"Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, was a chief persecutor of the Lollards. One of them, of the name of Badby, was sentenced to be burned at Smithfield. He was tied to a stake, and faggots were piled around him, which were just going to be set on fire when the Prince of Wales rode up to him, and besought him to renounce his opinions and save his life, promising him to give him enough to live comfortably upon if he would do so. The poor man thanked the prince with many expressions of gratitude, but said that as he firmly believed his opinions to be true, he would not sacrifice his conscience to save his life. When the faggots were set on fire, the prince came

again and entreated him to recant, but he continued steadfast as before, and was accordingly burned."—*Markham's "History of England."*

"A poor smith, John Badby, was picked out for the second victim, and burned in the same place where Sawtre had perished before him. The Prince of Wales, who was present, vainly endeavoured to shake the Lollard's constancy by the offer of life and a yearly pension."

## CHAPTER XX.

### A CHAPTER SOON ENDED.

As soon as the crowd that wedged her in began to move and disperse so as to allow her a passage, Dame Marjory, pale and haggard, made her way out of the throng. Dickon, trembling and speechless with agitation, had come to the side of his aunt. The last terrible twenty-four hours had changed the gay, light-hearted youth into a thoughtful man. The twain hurried on side by side, but not a word was exchanged between them: the hearts of both were too full for speech.

“How shall I break this to my poor Marian?” was the thought of the brother.

“How will John’s mother endure this fearful trial?” reflected Marjory. “It will be some comfort to her to know that I carried her message, and to hear his brave reply. It was hard work to get near enough to the stake, but I would have pushed on had it cost me my life!”

After a long, rapid walk, Marjory and her nephew arrived at Boniface Lane; then turning down Bird’s

Alley, hurried up the stair up and down which John had so often carried his mother. At the sound of their steps, Lilian, who had been left with the widow, gently opened the door, and raised her finger to her lips to enjoin silence.

"We must not disturb her; she has fallen asleep," whispered the girl.

"Hers will be a woful awakening," said Dame Marjory, as, followed by Dickon, she entered Dame Alice's little sleeping apartment, and went straight up to the bed, on which lay a form—very still. Dame Marjory looked down on it for a moment, and then said, "She will never awake on earth. God has indeed heard John's prayer, and taken care of his mother. She and her son are already in glory together."

It was indeed so; neither had survived to endure the loss of the other. Lovely in life, in death they were not divided. The countenance of Alice expressed sweet peace, calmest repose.

"Death found her—utter not that word!

The sufferer prostrate lay;  
A gentle angel softly came  
And kissed her soul away.  
Then o'er the placid face remained  
A look of tranquil bliss,  
As if the lifeless clay retained  
The impress of that kiss."

## CHAPTER XXI.

### AFTER SEVEN YEARS.

WE will pass over seven years, and give the reader a glance at some of the characters which have been introduced into this tale.

We shall not find the Patons in Boniface Lane. Though the tasselled boot still hangs over the entrance to the shop, another name is above it. When Peterkin died, some two years after the time when my story commenced, Dickon, who was his heir, sold the business at once. He was weary of London life; he had renounced the hollow pleasures of the court on the day when Badby died. Dickon longed to be in the free country, drinking its pure air, pursuing its healthful occupations, and holding Lollard opinions in a place where envious tongues were not likely to denounce him for heresy. Dickon knew that his aunt's desire had long been to reside on her own little freehold at Greenwich. He enlarged her house, added to the acres around it, farmed them, and became a flourishing country squire. It was a curious transformation for the former jester. Few who saw



Dickon riding through his fields of corn, shearing his flocks, or selling his beeves at a fair, would have imagined the very handsome, intelligent farmer to be one who had ever worn the fool's cap and bells. But in his home, and amongst the friends whom his free hospitality draws around him, Dickon's wit and jests still make him the life of the circle. He is still overflowing with fun.

Dame Marjory, very little changed by time, still erect, still holding firmly to her own opinions, will pause in one of her oft-repeated stories of past times to listen to Dickon's playful account of yesterday's adventure at the fair—how he had outwitted the fox who was robbing his farm of the geese, or the thief who had broken into his larder at night.

Dickon is almost the only person who can succeed in bringing a smile to Marian's face. Though still young in years, the stooping form, drawn features, and languid, listless manner of the former Pink of Boniface Lane, make her appear a middle-aged woman, at least ten years older than her twin. Marian, weak in mind, and with spirits broken by the shock of her lover's death, has no resemblance now to any flower, unless it be a faded lily. On coming to her aunt's picturesque gabled farm, Marian brought her little treasures with her, and they adorn her chamber under the low-browed roof of thatch. There is a faded sampler, an old cushion, a manuscript, a bow and a quiver with arrows, and a chalk draw-

ing on the wall representing King Richard and his queen. The relic most prized of all is an iron frame delicately wrought, with a pattern of intertwined M's—an ornament meant to hold wood for the fire. But no faggot is ever placed in that frame, nor is one speck of dust or spot of rust ever suffered to rest upon it. Marian allows no one but herself even to touch it. A question as to what the frame was meant for, casually asked by a stranger, brought on a flood of tears. The poor maiden has been given charge of the flower-beds in the pretty garden, and she listlessly waters and tends the blossoms. To make posies for the sick is almost the sole amusement of Marian's joyless, colourless life. The betrothed of John Badby seldom speaks of her martyred lover, but she has been overheard murmuring to herself, "I was not worthy of him, and so God took him away."

But on the day on which we propose to visit Friern Hatch, even Marian's feet move more quickly, and her thin hands are fastening up garlands made of April's brightest flowers. Dame Marjory has been more than usually busy in the kitchen, from which comes a savoury, inviting scent. Dickon's wife is to introduce to a goodly company of neighbours and friends his little son and heir, and grand must be the feast to do honour to such an important event.

Dickon, in wild spirits, brings the babe into the sitting-room, thronged with smiling guests. The little one is covered with a beautiful veil: it was, seven years ago,

Dickon's own gift to his twin, to be worn on her bridal day.

The infant is first placed in the hands of his smiling, happy mother. In the pleasant, comely young dame, whose face beams with pure happiness, we can scarcely recognize the poor household drudge of former days. Lilian is almost as much changed as Marian, but in a different way. If the one is a faded flower, the other is the bud expanded into the goodly blossom under the genial rays of the sun. The lowly has been exalted. Lilian makes a capital housewife; for which she gives all the credit to Dame Marjory's teaching. In the home, in the farm, amongst her husband's tenants or other poorer neighbours, Lilian Paton is a general blessing. Marjory, no mean judge, is more than satisfied with her nephew's choice. Dickon not only loves but is very proud of his wife.

"You must not keep the child all to yourself, Lilian," says Dame Marjory, taking up the babe in her still strong and vigorous arms. She carries him about to be duly admired by the guests, as infants usually are on such happy occasions.

"What is to be his name?" asks one of his guests. "I suppose Richard, after his father."

"No; his name will be John," is Dame Marjory's reply.

"I suppose in honour of the saint?"

"In honour of a saint and a martyr too," says Marjory, bending to kiss the fair infant's brow, perhaps to

hide her own emotion. "Baby was born on the seventh anniversary of a day which was to us one of bitter grief, when Dame Alice died on her bed, and her son in the flames at Smithfield. But it was a grand birthday for *them*," continued the aged woman, raising her head almost proudly,—“a better birthday than that which brought this little cherub into a world of sin and woe. Our poor Marian loves the babe as her own; he will be something to brighten her life. She is so much gratified that the name of ‘John Badby’ should be given to her brother’s first-born son. It is a name which should never be forgotten—not by our family, no, nor by England neither. It is one which is written in heaven—it is one which the angels know; for amongst the glorious army of martyrs, those who were *faithful unto death*, is he who endured to the end—John Badby, brave and true-hearted,

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