# The House of Walderne eBook

## The House of Walderne

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# Page 1

## THE HOUSE OF WALDERNE

**A Tale of the Cloister and the Forest in the Days of the Barons' Wars**

by the Reverend A. D. Crake

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Epilogue.
Notes.

Preface.

It is not without pleasure that the author presents this, the twelfth of his series of historical novelettes, to his friends and readers; the characters, real and imaginary, are very dear to him; they have formed a part of his social circle for some two years past, and if no one else should believe in Sir Hubert of Walderne and Brother Martin, the

author assuredly does.  It was during a pleasant summer holiday that the plan of this little work was conceived:  the author was taking temporary duty at Waldron in Sussex, during the absence of its vicar—the Walderne of our story, formerly so called, a lovely village situated on the southern slope of that range of low hills which extends from Hastings to Uckfield, and which formed the backbone of the Andredsweald.  In the depths of a wood below the vicarage he found the almost forgotten site of the old Castle of Walderne, situate in a pathless thicket, and only approachable through the underwood.  The moat was still there, although at that time destitute of water, the space within completely occupied by trees and bushes, where once all the bustle and life of a medieval household was centred.

The author felt a strong interest in the spot; he searched in the Sussex Archaeological Collections for all the facts he could gather together about this forgotten family:  he found far more information than he had hoped to gain, especially in an article contributed by the Reverend John Ley, a former vicar of Waldron.  He also made himself familiar with the topography of the neighbourhood, and prepared to make the old castle the chief scene of his next story, and to revivify the dry dust so far as he was able.

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In a former story, the Andredsweald, a tale of the Norman Conquest, he wrote of “The House of Michelham,” in the same locality, and he has introduced one of the descendants of that earlier family, in the person of Friar Martin, thinking it might prove a link of interest to the readers of the earlier story.

He had intended to incorporate more of the general history of the time, but space forbade, so he can only recommend his readers who are curious to know more of the period to the Life of Simon de Montfort, by Canon Creighton {1}, which will serve well to accompany the novelette. And also those who wish to know more of the loving and saintly Francis of Assisi, will find a most excellent biography by Mrs. Oliphant, in Macmillan’s Sunday Library, to which the author also acknowledges great obligations.

If it be objected, as it probably may, that the author’s Franciscans are curiously like the early Wesleyans, or in some respects even like a less respectable body of modern religionists, he can only reply “so they were;” but there was this great difference, that they deeply realised the sacramental system of the Church, and led people to her, not from her; the preacher was never allowed to supersede the priest.

But, on the other hand, it may reasonably be objected that Brother Martin only exhibits one side of the religion of his period; that there is an unaccountable absence of the popular superstitions of the age in his teaching; and that, more especially, he does not invoke the saints as a friar would naturally have done again and again.

Now, the author does not for a moment deny that Martin must have shared in the common belief of his time; but such things were not of the essence of his teaching, only the accidental accompaniments thereof. The prominent feature of the preaching of the early Franciscans was, as was that of St. Paul, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And in a book intended primarily for young readers of the Church of England, it is perhaps allowable to suppress features which would perplex youthful minds before they have the power of discriminating between the chaff and the wheat; while it is not thereby intended to deny that they really existed. The objectionable side of the teaching of the medieval Church of England has been dwelt upon with such little charity, by certain Protestant writers, that their youthful readers might be led to think that the religion of their forefathers was but a mass of superstition, devoid of all spiritual life, and therefore the author feels that it is better to dwell upon the points of agreement between the fathers and the children, than to gloat over “corruptions.”

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In writing the chapters which describe medieval Oxford, the author had the advantage of an ancient map, and of certain interesting records of the thirteenth century, so that the picture of scholastic life and of the conflicts of “north and south,” *etc*. is not simply imaginary portraiture. The earliest houses of education in Oxford were doubtless the religious houses, beginning with the Priory of Saint Frideswide, but schools appear to have speedily followed, whose alumni lodged in such hostels as we have described in “Le Oriole.” The hall, so called (we are not answerable for the non-elision of the vowel) was subsequently granted by Queen Eleanor to one James de Hispania, from whom it was purchased for the new college founded by Adam de Brom, and took the name of Oriel College.

Two other points in this family history may invite remark. It may be objected that the Old Man of the Mountain is too atrocious for belief. The author can only reply that he is not original; he met the old man and all his doings long ago, in an almost forgotten chronicle of the crusades, especially he noted the perversion of boyish intellect to crime and cruelty.

Lastly, in these days of incredulity, the supernatural element in the story of Sir Roger of Walderne may appear forced or unreal. But the incident is one of a class which has been made common property by writers of fiction in all generations; it occurs at least thrice in the Ingoldsby Legends; Sir Walter Scott gives a terrible instance in his story of the Scotch judge haunted by the spectre of the bandit he had sentenced to death {2}, which appears to be founded on fact; and indeed the present narrative was suggested by one of Washington Irving’s short stories, read by the writer when a boy at school.

Whether such appearances, of which there are so many authentic instances, be objective or subjective—the creation of the sufferer’s remorse—they are equally real to the victim.

But the author will no longer detain the reader from the story itself, only dedicating it to the kind friends he met at Waldron during his summer holiday in eighteen hundred and eighty-three.

Prologue.

It was an ancient castle, all of the olden time; down in a deep dell, sheltered by uplands north, east, and west; looking south down the valley to the Sussex downs, which were seen in the hazy distance uplifting their graceful outlines to the blue sky, across a vast canopy of treetops; beneath whose shade the wolf and the wildcat, the badger and the fox, yet roamed at large, and preyed upon the wild deer and the lesser game. It bore the name of Walderne, which signifies a sylvan spot frequented by the wild beasts; the castle lay beneath; the parish church rose on the summit of the ridge above—a simple Norman structure, imposing in its very simplicity.

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Behind, the ground rose gradually to the summit of the ridge—which formed a sort of backbone to the Andredsweald. The ridge was then, as now, surmounted by a windmill, belonging then to the lords of the castle, where all his tenants and retainers were compelled to grind their corn. It commanded a beautiful view of sea and land; a hostelry stood near the summit, it was called the Cross in Hand, for it was once the rendezvous of the would-be crusaders, who, from various parts of the Weald, took the sacred badge, and started for the distant East via Winchelsea or Pevensey.

In the deep dark wood were many settlements and clearings; Walderne was perhaps the wildest, as its name implies; around lay Chiddinglye, once the abode of the Saxon offspring of Chad or Chid; Hellinglye (Ella-inga-leah), the home of the sons of Ella, of whom we have written before; Heathfield and Framfield on opposite sides, open heaths in the wood, covered with heather and sparsely peopled; Mayfield to the north, once the abode of the great Saint Dunstan, and the scene of his conflicts with Satan; Hothly to the south, where, at the date of our tale, lived the Hodleghs, an Anglo-Norman brood.

The Lord of Walderne was Ralph, son of Sybilla de Dene (West Dean) and Robert of Icklesham (near Winchelsea). He was blessed, or cursed, as the case might be, with three children; Roger, Sybil, and Mabel.

The old man came of a stern fighting stock: what wonder that his son inherited his character in this respect. He was a wilful yet affectionate lad of strong passions, one who might be led but never driven: unfortunately his father did not read his character aright, and at length a crisis arose.

Roger wooed the daughter of the neighbouring Lord of Hothly, but found a rival in a cousin, one Waleran de Dene, a favourite of his father, and a constant visitor at Walderne Castle. In those rude days the solution of the difficulty seemed simple—to fight the question out. The dead man would trouble neither lad nor lass any more, the living lead the fair bride to church; and, sooth to say, there were many misguided maidens who were proud to be fought for, and quite willing to give their hand to the victor.

So Roger challenged his cousin to fight when he met him returning from a visit to Edith de Hodlegh, and the challenge being readily accepted, the unhappy Waleran de Dene bit the dust. The old lord, grieving sore over the death of his sister's son, drove Roger from home and bade him never darken his doors again, till he had made reparation by a pilgrimage or a crusade; and Roger departed, mourned by his sisters and all the household, and was heard of no more during his father's lifetime.

But more grief was in store for the stern old lord of Walderne. The third child, Mabel, the youngest daughter, fell in love with a handsome young hunter, a Saxon outlaw of the type of Robin Hood, who delivered her from a wild boar which would have slain or cruelly mangled her. The old father had inspired no confidence in his children: she met

her outlaw again and again by stealth, and eventually became the bride of Wulfstan, last representative of the old English family who had possessed Michelham before the Conquest {3}.

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The remaining child, Sybil, alone gladdened her old father's heart and closed his eyes, weary of the world, in peace; after which she married Sir Nicholas de Harengod, and became Lady of Icklesham, by the sea, and Walderne up in the Weald.

The castle was originally one of those robber dens which were such a terror to their vicinities in the days of King Stephen; it escaped the general destruction of such holds under Henry Plantagenet, and became the abode of law-abiding folk.

It had long ceased to be a source of terror to the neighbourhood when it came into the possession of the Denes—to whom it was a convenient hunting seat; fortified, as a matter of course, by royal permission, which ran thus:

"Know that we have granted, on behalf of ourselves and our heirs, to our beloved Ralph de Dene that he may hold and keep his houses of Walderne fortified with moat and walls of stone and lime, and crenellated, without any let or hindrance from ourselves or our heirs."

This permission was made necessary in the time of the great Plantagenet, in order to prevent the multiplication of fortified places of offence as well as defence by tyrannical barons or other oppressors of the commonwealth; for in the days of Stephen, as we have remarked already, many, if not most, of such holds had been little better than dens of robbers, as the piteous lament which concludes the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle" too well testifies.

The space enclosed by the moat and outer walls of Walderne Castle was about 150 feet in diameter.

The old lord died in the arms of his remaining daughter Sybil, without seeking any reconciliation with his other children—in fact Roger was lost to sight—upon her head he concentrated the benediction which should have been divided amongst the three.

She married Sir Nicholas of Harengod, near the sea, and was happy in her choice. She built a chapel within the castle precincts, and her prayer for permission to do so yet remains recorded:

"That it may be allowed me to have a chapel in my castle of Walderne, at my own expense, to be served by the parish priest as chaplain; without either font or bell."

It was granted upon the condition that to avoid any appearance of schism, she should attend the parish church in state with her whole household thrice in the year.

Six Hundred Years Ago: they have all been dead and buried these six centuries; a dense wood, within which the moat can be traced, covers the site of Sybil's castle and chapel, yet in these old records they seem to live again. A sojourner for a brief summer holiday amidst their former haunts—the same yet so changed—the writer has striven to

revivify the dry bones, and to make the family live again in the story he now presents to his readers.

## Chapter 1:  The Knight And Squire.

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The opening scene of our tale is a wild tract of common land, interspersed with forest and heath, which lies northward at the foot of the eastern range of the Sussex downs. The time is the year of grace twelve hundred and fifty and three; the month a cold and seasonable January. The wild heath around is crisp with frost and white with snow, it appears a dense solitude; away to the east lies the town of Hamelsham, or Hailsham; to the west the downs about Lewes; to the south, at a short distance, one sees the lofty towers and monastic buildings of a new and thriving community, surrounded by a broad and deep moat; to the north copse wood, brake, heath, dell, and dense forest, in various combinations and endless variety, as far as the lodge of Cross in Hand, so called from the crusaders who took the sacred sign in their hands, and started for the earthly Jerusalem not so many years agone.

Across this waste, as the dark night was falling, rode a knight and his squire. The knight was a man of some fifty years of age, but still strong, tall, and muscular; his dark features indicated his southern blood, and an indescribable expression and manner told of one accustomed to command. His face bore the traces of scars, doubtless honourably gained; seen beneath a scarlet cap, lined with steel, but trimmed with fur. A flexible coat of mail, so cunningly wrought as to offer no more opposition to the movements of the wearer than a greatcoat might nowadays, was covered with a thick cloak or mantle, in deference to the severity of the weather; the thighs were similarly protected by linked mail, and the hose and boots defended by unworked plates of thin steel. In his girdle was a dagger, and from the saddle depended, on one side, a huge two-handed sword, on the other a gilded battle axe.

It was, in short, a knight of the olden time, who thus travelled through this dangerous country, alone with his squire, who bore his master’s lance and carried his small triangular shield, broad at the summit to protect the breast, but thence diminishing to a point.

“Dost thou know, my Stephen, thy way through this desolate country? for verily the traces of the road are but slight.”

“My lord, the night grows darker, and the air seems full of snow. Had we not better return and seek shelter within the walls of Hamelsham? I fear we have lost the way utterly, and shall never reach Michelham Priory tonight.”

“Nay, the motives that led me forth to face the storm still press upon me, I must reach Michelham tonight.”

An angry hollow gust of wind almost impeded his further progress as he spoke, and choked his utterance.

“An inhospitable reception England affords us, after an absence of so many years. Methinks I like Gascony the better in regard to climate.”

“For five happy years have I followed thy banner there, my lord.”

“Yet I love England better, foreign although my blood, or I had thought more of the French king’s offer.”

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“It was a noble offer, my lord.”

“To be regent of an unquiet realm while my revered suzerain and friend, Louis, went upon his crusade—mark me, Stephen, England has higher destinies than France; this land is fated to be the mother of a race of freemen such as once ruled the world from Rome of old. The union of the long hostile races, Norman and English, is producing a people which shall in time rule the world; and if I can do aught to help to lay the foundation of such a polity as befits the union, please God, I shall feel well repaid: in short, Leicester is a dearer name to me than Montfort; England than France.”

“Thy noble father, my lord, adorned the latter country.”

“God grant he has not left an inheritance of judgment to his children; the cries of the slaughtered Albigenses ever rang in my poor mother’s ears, and ring too often in mine.”

“I have never heard the story fairly told.”

“Thou shalt now. The land where they spoke the language of Oc, thence called Langue-d’oc, was hardly a part of France; it had its own government, its own usages, as well as its own sweet tongue. It was lovely as the garden of the Lord ere the serpent entered therein; the soil was fruitful, the corn and wine and oil abundant. The people were unlike other people; they cared little for war, they wrote books and made love on the banks of the Rhone and Garonne.

“Well had they stopped here, and not taken liberties” (here the knight crossed himself) “with the Church. Intercourse with Mussulmen and Greeks—who alike came to the marts—corrupted them, and they became unbelievers, so that even the children in their play mocked at the Church and Sacraments. In short, it was said they were Manicheans.”

“What is that?”

“People who believe that the powers of good and evil are co-equal and co-eternal, that both God and the devil are to be worshipped. At least this was laid to their charge; I know not if it be all true.

“Well, the Church appealed for help to the chivalry of France; she declared the goods and possessions of this unfortunate people confiscate to them who should seize them, and offered heaven to those who died in battle against them. Now these poor wretches could write love songs and were clever at all kinds of art, but they could not fight. My father was chosen to head the new crusade; and even he was shocked at the murderous scenes, the massacres, the burnings, which followed—God forbid I should ever witness the like—they were blotted out from the earth.”

The storm which had been gathering all this time now burst in its full violence upon our travellers.  Blinding flakes of snow, borne with all the force of the wind, seemed to overwhelm them; soon the tracks which alone marked the way became obliterated, and the riders wandered aimlessly for more than an hour.

“What shall we do, Stephen?  I have lost every trace of the way; my poor beast threatens to give up.”

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“I know not, my lord.”

“Ah, the Saints be praised, there is a light close at hand. It shines clear and distinct—-now it is shut out.”

“A door or window must have been opened and closed again.”

“So I deem, but this is the direction,” said the knight as he turned his horse’s head northwards.

Let us precede knight and squire and see what awaited them.

Upon a spot of firm ground, free from swamp, and clear for about the area of a couple of acres, stood a few primitive buildings: there was a barn, a cow shed, a few huts in which men slept but did not live, and a central building wherein the whole community, when at home, assembled to eat the king’s venison, and wash it down with ale, mead, and even wine—the latter probably the proceeds of a successful forage.

Darkness is falling without and the snowflakes fall thicker and thicker—it yet wants three hours to curfew—but the woods are quite buried in the sombre gloom of a starless night. The central building is evidently well lighted, for we see the firelight through many chinks in the ill-built walls ere we enter, although they have daubed the interstices of the logs whereof it is composed with clay and mud almost as adhesive as mortar. Let us go in—the door opens.

A huge fire burns in the centre of the building, and the smoke ascends in clouds through an opening in the roof, directly above, down which the snowflakes descend and hiss as they meet their death in the ruddy flames. Three poles are suspended over the fire, and from the point where they unite descends an iron chain, suspending a large caldron or pot.

Oh, what a savoury smell! the woods have been ransacked, that their tenants, who possess succulent and juicy flesh, may contribute to appease the hunger of the outlaws—bird and beast are there, and soon will be beautifully cooked. Nor are edible herbs wanting, such at least as can be gathered in the woods or grown in the small plot of cultivated ground around the buildings; which the men leave entirely, as do all semi-savage races, to the care of the women.

There is plenty of room to sit round this fire, and several men, besides women and boys, are basking in its warmth—some sit on three-legged stools, some cross-legged on the floor—and amidst them, with a charming absence of restraint, are many huge-jawed dogs, who slobber as they smell the fumes from the pot, or utter an impatient whine from time to time.

Their chieftain, a man of no small importance judging from his dress and manner, sits on the seat of honour, a species of chair, the only one in the building, and is perhaps the most notable man of the party. He is tall of stature, his limbs those of a giant, his fist ponderous as a sledge hammer; a tunic of skins confined around the waist by a belt of untanned leather, in which is stuck a hunting knife, adorns his upper story: short breeches of skin, and leggings, with the undressed fur of a fox outside, complete his bedecking.

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A loud barking of dogs was heard, then a trampling of horses; some looked astonished, others rose to their feet, and opening the door looked out into the storm.

“What folk hast thou got there, Kynewulf?”

“Some travellers I met outside as I was returning home from the chase, having got caught in the storm myself,” replied a gruff voice; “they had seen our light, but were trying in vain to get into our nest.”

“How many?”

“Two, a knight and a squire.”

“Bring them in, in God’s name; all are welcome tonight.

“But for all that,” said he, sotto voce, “it may be easier to get in than out.”

A brief pause, the horses were stabled, the guests entered.

“We have come to crave your hospitality,” said the knight.

“It is free to all—sit you down, and in a few minutes the women will serve the supper.”

They seated themselves—no names were asked, a few remarks were made upon that subject which interests all Englishmen so deeply even now—the weather.

“Hast travelled far?” asked the chieftain.

“Only from Pevensey; we sought Michelham, but in the storm we must have wandered miles from it.”

“Many miles,” said a low, sweet voice.

The knight then noticed the woman for the first time—he might have said lady—who sat on the right of this grim king.  Her features and bearing were so superior to her surroundings that he started, as men do when they spy a rich flower in a garden of herbs.  By her side was a boy, evidently her son, for he had her dark features, so unlike the general type around.

“How came such folk here?” thought De Montfort.

The meal was at length served, the stew poured into wooden bowls; no spoons or forks were provided.  The fingers and the lips had to do their work unaided, in that day, at least in the huts of the peasantry.  Bread, or rather baked corn cakes, were produced; herbs floated in the soup for flavouring; vegetables, properly so called, were there none.

Many a time had our travellers partaken of rougher fare in their campaigns, and they were well content with their food; so they ate contentedly with good appetite. The wind howled without, the snow found its way in through divers apertures, but the warmth of the central fire filled the hovel. Their hosts produced a decoction of honey, called mead, of which a little went a long way, and soon they were all quite convivial.

“Canst thou not sing a song, Stephen, like a gallant troubadour from the land of the sunny south, to reward our hosts for their entertainment?”

And Stephen sang one of the touching amatory ballads which had emanated so copiously from the unfortunate Albigenses of the land of Oc. The sweet soft sounds charmed, although the hosts understood not their meaning.

“And now, my lad, have not thy parents taught thee a song?” said the knight, addressing the boy.

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“Sing thy song of the Greenwood, Martin,” added the mother.

And the boy sang, with a sweet and child-like accent, a song of the exploits of the famous Robin Hood and Little John:

Come listen to me, ye gallants so free,
All you that love mirth for to hear;
And I will tell, of what befell,
To a bold outlaw, in Nottinghamshire.

As Robin Hood, in the forest stood,
Beneath the shade of the greenwood tree,
He the presence did scan, of a fine young man,
As fine as ever a jay might be.

Abroad he spread a cloak of red,
A cloak of scarlet fine and gay,
Again and again, he frisked over the plain,
And merrily chanted a roundelay.

The ballad went on to tell how next day Robin saw this fine bird, whose name was Allan-a-dale, with his feathers all moultered; because his bonnie love had been snatched from him and was about to be wed to a wizened old knight, at a neighbouring church, against her will. And then how Robin Hood and Little John, and twenty-four of their merrie men, stopped the ceremony, and Little John, assuming the Bishop’s robe, married the fair bride to Allan-a-dale, who thereupon became their man and took to an outlaw’s life with his bonny wife.

“Well sung, my lad, but when thou shalt marry, I wish thee a better priest than Little John; here is a guerdon for thee, a rose noble; some day thou wilt be a famous minstrel.

“And now, my Stephen, let us sleep, if our good hosts will permit.”

“There is a hut hard by, such as we all use, which I have devoted to your service; clean straw and thick coverlets of skins, warriors will hardly ask more.”

“It was but an hour since I thought the heath would have been our couch, and a snowball our pillow; we shall be well content.”

“It is wind proof, and thou mayst rest in safety till the horn summons all to break their fast at dawn: thou mayst sleep meanwhile as securely as in thine own castle.”

And the outlaws rose with a courtesy one would hardly have expected from these wild sons of the forest; while Kynewulf showed the guests to their sleeping quarters, through the still fast-falling snow.

The hut was snug as Grimbeard (for such was the chieftain's appropriate name) had boasted, and tolerably wind proof, although in such a storm snow will always force its way through the tiniest crevices.  It was built of wattle work, cunningly daubed with clay, even as the early Britons built their lodges.

And here slept the great earl, whose name was known through the civilised world, the brother-in-law of the king, the mightiest warrior of his time, and, amongst the laity, the most devout churchman known to fame.

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In the dead hour of the night, when the darkness is deepest and sleep the soundest, they were both awakened by the opening of the door, and the cold blast of wind it produced.  The earl and his squire started up and sat upright on their couches.

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A woman stood in the doorway, who held a boy by the hand; the eyes of both were red with weeping.

“Lady, thou lookest sad; hath aught grieved thee or any one injured thee? the vow of knighthood compels my aid to the distressed.”

It was the woman they had noted at the fireside.

“Thou art Simon de Montfort,” she said.

“I am; how dost thou know me?”

“I have met thee before, under other guise.  Is liberty dear to thee?”

“Without it life is worthless—but who or what threatens it?”

“The outlaws, amongst whom thou hast fallen.”

“They will not harm me.  I have eaten of their salt.”

“Nay, but they will hold thee to ransom, and detain thee till it is brought:  I heard them amerce thee at a thousand marks.”

“In that case, as I do not wish to winter here, I had better up and away; but who will be my guide?”

“My son; but thou must do me a service in return—thou must charge thyself with his welfare, for after guiding thee he can return here no more.”

“But canst thou part with thine own son?”

“I would save him from a life of penury and even crime, and I can trust him to thee.”

“Oh, mother!” said the boy, weeping silently.

“Nay, Martin, we have often talked of this and longed for such a chance, now it is come—for thine own sake, my darling, the apple of mine eye; this good earl can be trusted.”

“Earl Simon,” she said, ’I know thee both great and a man who fears God; yes, I know thee, I have long watched for such an opportunity; take this boy, and in saving him save yourself from captivity.”

“Tell me his name.”

“Martin will suffice.”

“But ere I undertake charge of him I would fain learn more, that I may bring him up according to his degree.”

“He is of noble birth, on both sides; how fallen from such high estate this packet—-entrusted in full confidence—will tell thee. Simon de Montfort, I give thee my life, nay, my all; let me hear from time to time how he fareth, through the good monks of Michelham—thou leavest a bleeding heart behind.”

“Poor woman! yet it is well for the boy; he shall be one of my pages, if he prove worthy.”

“It is all I ask: now depart ere they are stirring. It wants about three hours to dawn, the moon shines, the snow has ceased, so that thou wilt reach Michelham in time for early mass. I will take thee to thine horses.”

She led them forth; the horses were quietly saddled and bridled. No watch was kept; who could dread a foe at such a time and season? She opened the gateway in an outer defence of osier work and ditch which encompassed the little settlement.

One maternal kiss—it was the last.

And the three, earl, squire, and boy, went forth into the night, the boy riding behind the squire.

## Chapter 2: Michelham Priory.

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At the southern verge of the mighty forest called the Andredsweald, or Anderida Sylva, Gilbert d'Aquila, last of that name, founded the Priory of Michelham for the good of his soul.

The forest in question was of vast extent, and stretched across Sussex from Kent to Southampton Water; dense, impervious save where a few roads, following mainly the routes traced by the Romans, penetrated its recesses; the haunts of wild beasts and wilder men. It was not until many generations had passed away that this tract of land, whereon stand now so many pretty Sussex villages, was even inhabitable: like the modern forests of America, it was cleared by degrees as monasteries were built, each to become a centre of civilisation.

For, as it has been well remarked, without the influence of the Church there would have been in the land but two classes—beasts of burden and beasts of prey—an enslaved serfdom, a ferocious aristocracy.

And such an outpost of civilisation was the Priory of Michelham, on the verge of the debatable land where Saxon outlaws and Norman lords struggled for the mastery.

On the southern border of this sombre forest, close to his Park of Pevensey, Gilbert d'Aquila, as almost the last act of his race in England {4}, built this Priory of Michelham upon an island, which, as we have told in a previous tale, had been the scene of a most sanguinary contest, and sad domestic tragedy, during the troubled times of the Norman Conquest; the eastern embankment, which enclosed the Park of Pevensey and kept in the beasts of the chase for the use of Norman hunters, was close at hand.

The priory buildings occupied eight acres of land, surrounded by a wide and deep moat full forty yards across, fed by the river Cuckmere, and abounding in fish for fast-day fare. Although it had proved (as described in our earlier tale) incapable of a prolonged defence, yet its situation was quite such as to protect the priory from any sudden violence on the part of the "merrie men" or nightly marauders, and when the drawbridge was up, the gateway closed, the good brethren slept none the less soundly for feeling how they were protected.

Within this secure entrenchment stood their sacred and domestic buildings, their barns and stables; therein slept their thralls, and the teams of horses which cultivated their fields, and the cattle and sheep on which they fed on feast days. A fine square tower (still remaining) arose over the bridge, and alone gave access by its stately portals to the hallowed precincts; it was three stories high, the janitor lived and slept therein; a winding stair conducted to the turreted roof and the several chambers.

At the time of our story Prior Roger ruled the brotherhood; a man of varied parts and stainless life. He was not without monastic society: fifteen miles east was the Cluniac

priory of Lewes, fifteen miles west the Benedictine abbey of Battle, three miles south under the downs the “Alien” priory of Wilmington.

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But wherever a monastery was built roads were made, marshes drained, and the whole country rose in civilisation, while for the learning of the nineteenth century to revile monastic lore is for the oak to revile the acorn from which it sprang.

Here the wayfarer found a shelter; here the sick their needful medicine; here the children an instructor; here the poor relief; and here, above all, one weary of the incessant strife of an evil world might find *peace*.

On the morning succeeding the arrival of the great Earl of Leicester, that doughty guest was seated in the prior's chamber, in company with his host. The day was most uninviting without, but the fire blazed cheerfully within. The snow kept falling in thick flakes, which narrowed the vision so that our friends could hardly see across the moat, but the fire crackled on the great hearth where five or six logs fizzed and spluttered out their juices.

"My journey is indeed delayed," said the earl, "yet I am most anxious to reach London and present myself to the king."

"The weather is in God's hands; we may pray for a change, but meanwhile we must be patient and thankful that we have a roof over our heads, my lord."

"And it gives me full time to hear particulars about the boy whom I left in your care—a wilful, petted urchin, ten years of age he was then."

"The lad is docile; he has scant inclination towards the Church, but he shows the signs of his high lineage in a hundred different ways."

"High lineage?" said the earl, with a smile and a look of inquiry.

"We had supposed him of thy kindred; he bears every sign of noblesse and does not disgrace it," said the prior, himself of the kindred of the "lords of the eagle."

"He is the son of a brother crusader."

"The father is not living?"

"No, he fell in Palestine, within sight of the earthly Jerusalem, and I trust has found admittance into the Jerusalem which is above; he committed the boy to my care—

"But let them bring young Hubert hither."

The prior tinkled a silver bell, which lay upon the table, and a lay brother appeared, to whom he gave the necessary order. A knock at the door was soon heard, and a lad of some fourteen years entered in obedience to the prior's summons, and stood at first abashed before the great earl.

Yet he was not a lad wanting in self confidence; he was tall and slender, his features were regular, his hair and eyes light, his face a shapely oval; there was a winning expression on the features, and altogether it was a persuasive face.

“Dost thou remember me, my son?” asked the earl, as the boy knelt on one knee, and kissed his hand gracefully.

“It seems many years since thou didst leave me here, my lord.”

“Ah! thy memory is good—hast thou been happy here? hast thou done thy duty?”

“It is dull for an eaglet to be brought up in a cave.”

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“Art thou the eaglet then, and this the cave? fie!  Hubert.”

“My father was a soldier of the cross.”

“And wouldst thou be a soldier too, my boy? the paths of glory often lead to the grave; thou art safer far as an acolyte here; thou wilt perhaps be prior some day.”

“I covet not safety, my lord.  If my father loved thee, and thou didst love him, take me to thy castle and let me be thy page.  There are no chivalrous exercises here, no tilt yard, only the bell which booms all day long; matins and lauds; prime, terce and sext; vespers and compline; and masses between whiles.”

“My son, be not irreverent.”

The boy lowered his eyes at the reproof.

“Thou shalt go with me.  But, my boy, blame me not if some day thou grieve over the loss of this sweet peace.”

“I love not peace—it is dull.”

“How wonderful it is that the son should inherit the father’s tastes with his form,” said the earl to the prior.  “When this lad’s sire and I were young together he had just the same ideas, the same restless craving for excitement, and it led him at last to a soldier’s grave.  Well, what is bred in the bone will out in the flesh.

“Hubert, thou shalt go with me to Kenilworth, but it will be a hard and stern school for thee; there are no idlers there.”

“I am not an idler, my good lord.”

“Only over his books,” said the prior.

“That is because I prefer the lance and the bow to pot hooks and hangers on parchment.”

The boy spoke out fearlessly, almost pertly, like a spoiled child.  Yet he had a winning manner, which reconciled his elders to his freedom.

“Now, go back to thy pot hooks and hangers, my boy, for the present,” said the earl; “and tomorrow, perchance, I may take thee with me, if the storm abate.

“And now,” said the earl, when Hubert was gone, “send for the other lad; the waif and stray from the forest.”

So Hubert retired and Martin appeared.  It was by no means an uninteresting face, that which the earl now scanned, but quite unlike the features of Hubert—a round face, contrasting with the oval outlines of the other—with twinkling eyes and curling hair; a face which ought to be lit up with smiles, but which was sad for the moment.  Poor boy! he had just parted from his mother.

“Art thou willing to go away with me, my child?”

“Yes,” said he sadly, “since she told me to go; but I love her.”

“Thy name is Martin?”

“Yes; they call me so now.”

“What is thy other name?”

“I know not.  I have no other.”

“Wouldst thou fear to return to the green wood?”

“Yes, for they might call me a traitor, and serve me as they served Jack, the shoe smith, when he betrayed their plans.”

“And how was that?”

“Tied him to a tree and shot him to death with arrows.  How he did scream!”

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“What! didst thou see such a sight, a young boy like thee?”

“Yes,” said Martin innocently; “why shouldn’t I?”

There was a pause.

“Poor child,” said the prior.

“My boy, thou should say ‘my lord,’ when addressing a titled earl.”

“I did not know, my lord.  I beg pardon, my lord, if I have been rude, my lord.”

“Nay, thou hast already made up the tale of ‘my lords.’”

“You will not let them get me again, my lord?”

“They couldn’t get in here, and tomorrow, if the storm cease, I shall take thee away with me.  Fear not, my poor boy.  If thou hast for a while lost a mother, thou hast found a father.”

The boy sighed.  Affection is not so easily transferred; and the earl quite comprehended that sigh; as a strange interest, almost unaccountable, he thought, sprang up in his manly breast for the little nestling, thrown so strangely upon his protection and care.

Brave as a lion with the proud, gentle as a lamb with the weak and defenceless, such was Simon de Montfort, an embodiment of true greatness—the union of strength with love.  Both Martin and Hubert were fortunate in their new lord.

“There sounds the vesper bell.  Wilt thou with me to the chapel?” said the prior.

Thither both earl and prior proceeded.  It was Wednesday evening; the psalms were then apportioned to the days of the week, not of the month, and the first this night was the one hundred and twenty-seventh:

Except the Lord build the house,
their labour is but vain that build it.
Except the Lord keep the city,
the watchman watcheth but in vain.

And again:

Lo, children and the fruit of the womb
are an heritage and gift that cometh of the Lord.

The two boys whom he had so strangely adopted came to the mind of the earl; they were not of his blood, yet they might be “an heritage and gift of the Lord.” And as the psalms rose and fell to the rugged old Gregorian tones—old even then—their words seemed to Simon de Montfort as the voice of God.

Oh! how rough, yet how grand that old psalmody was! Modern ears call its intervals harsh, its melodies crude, but it spoke to the heart with a power which our sweet modern chants often fail to exercise over us, as we chant the same sacred lays.

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Nightfall—night hung like a pall over the island, over the moat, over the silent heath and woods; the snow kept falling, falling; the fires kept blazing in the huge hearths; and the bell kept tolling until curfew time, by the prior’s order, that if any were lost in the wild night they might be guided by its sound to shelter.

The earl slept soundly in his little monastic cell that night, and in the morning he perceived the light of a bright dawn through the narrow window; anon the winter’s sun rose, all glorious, and the frost and snow sparkled like the sheen of diamonds in its beams. The bell was just ringing for the Chapter Mass, the mass of obligation to all the brotherhood, and the only one sung—during the day—in contradistinction to the low, or silent, masses—which equalled the number of the brethren in full orders, of whom there were not more than five or six.

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The earl, his squire, and the two boys were there. The prior was celebrant. The manner of Hubert showed his distraction and indifference: it was like a daily lesson in school to him, and he gave it neither more nor less attention. But to Martin the mysterious soothing music of the mass, like strains from another world, so unlike earthly tunes, came like a new sense, an inspiration from an unknown realm, and brought the unbidden tears to his young eyes.

It must not be supposed that he was totally ignorant of the elements of religion; even the wild inhabitants of the forest crave some form of approach to God, and from time to time a wandering priest, an outlaw himself of English birth, ministered to the “merrie men” at a rustic altar, generally in the open air or in a well-known cavern. The mass in its simplest form, divested of its gorgeous ceremonial but preserving the general outline, was the service he rendered; and sometimes he added a little instruction in the vernacular.

What good could such a service be to men living in the constant breach of the eighth commandment? the Normans would ask. To which the outlaws replied, we are at open war with you, at least as honourable a war as you waged at Senlac.

And his mother saw that little Martin was taught the simple truths and precepts of Christianity; more she asked not; nor at his age did he need it.

But here was a soil ready for the good seed.

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The weather continued fine, so after mass the earl and his squire started for Lewes, taking the two boys with him, Hubert and Martin. That night they were the guests of John, Earl of Warrenne {5}, who, although he did not agree with the politics of Simon de Montfort, could not refuse the rites of hospitality.

On the morrow, resuming their route, they left the towers of Lewes behind them as they pursued the northern road. Once or twice the earl turned and looked behind him, at the castle and the downs which encircled the old town, with a puzzled and serious expression of face.

“Stephen,” he said to his squire; “I cannot tell what ails me, but there is an impression on my mind which I cannot shake off.”

“My lord?”

“That yon castle and those hills, which I seem to have seen in a dream, are associated with my future fate, for weal or woe.”

## Chapter 3:  Kenilworth.

The chief seat of the noble Earl of Leicester, as of a far less worthy earl of that name, three centuries later, was the Castle of Kenilworth.  It had been erected in the time of Henry the First by one Geoffrey de Clinton, but speedily forfeited to the Crown, by treason, real or supposed.  The present Henry, third of that name, once lived there with his fair queen, and beautified it in every way, specially adorning the chapel, but also strengthening the defences, until men thought the castle impregnable.

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Well they might, for our Martin and Hubert beheld on their arrival a double row of ramparts, looking over a moat half a mile round, and sometimes a quarter of that distance broad:  and the old servitors still told how the sad and feeble king had built a fragile bark, with silken hangings and painted sides, wherein he and his newly-married bride oft took the air on the moat.  The buildings of the castle were most extensive; the space within the moat contained seven acres; the great hall could seat two hundred guests.  The park extended without a break from the walls of Coventry on the northeast to the far borders of the park of the great Earl of Warwick on the southwest—a distance of several miles.

And here, in the society of a score of other boys of their own age, our Hubert and Martin were to receive their early education as pages.

Education—ah, how unlike that which falls to the lot of the schoolboy of the nineteenth century.  As a rule, the care of the mother was deemed too tender and the paternal roof too indulgent for a boy after his twelfth year, so he was sent, not exactly to a boarding school, but to the castle of some eminent noble, such as the one under our observation; and here, in the company of from ten to twenty companions of his own age, he began his studies.

We have previously described this course of education in a former tale, The Rival Heirs, but for the benefit of those who have not read the afore-said story we must be pardoned a little recapitulation.

He was daily exercised in the use of all manner of weapons, beginning with such as were of simple character; he was taught to ride, not only in the saddle, but to sit a horse bare-backed, or under any conceivable circumstances which might occur.  He had to bend the stout yew bow and to wield the sword, he had to couch the lance, which art he acquired with dexterity by the practice at the quintain.

He had also to do the work of a menial, but not in a menial spirit.  It was his to wait upon his lord at table, to be a graceful cup bearer, a clever carver, able to select the titbits for the ladies, and then to assign the other portions according to rank.

It was his to follow the hounds, to learn the blasts of the horn, which belonged to each detail of the field; to track the hunted animal, to rush in upon boar or stag at bay, to break up or disembowel the captured quarry.

It was his to learn how to thread the pathless forests, like that of Arden; by observing the prevalent direction of the wind, as indicated by the way in which the trees threw their thickest branches, or the side of the trunk on which the mosses grew most densely; to know the stars, and to thread the murky forest at midnight by an occasional glimpse of that bright polar star, around which Charley’s Wain revolved, as it does in these latter days.

It was his to learn that wondrous devotion to the ladies, which was at the foundation of chivalry, and found at last its reductio ad absurdum in the Dulcinea of Don Quixote; but it was not a bad thing in itself, and softened the manners, nor suffered them to become utterly ferocious.

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He was taught to abhor all the meaner vices, such as cowardice or lying—no gentleman could live under such an imputation and retain his claim to the name. But it must be admitted that there were higher duties practised wheresoever the obligations of chivalry were fully carried out: the duty of succouring the distressed or redressing wrong, of devotion to God and His Church, and hatred of the devil and his works.

Alas! how often one aspect of chivalry alone, and that the worst, was found to exist; the ideal was too high for fallen nature.

To Hubert the new life which opened before him was full of promise and delight; he seemed to have found a paradise far more after his own heart than Eden could ever have been: but it was otherwise with Martin.

They had not been unkindly received by their companions, although, as the other pages were nearly all the sons of nobles, there was a marked restraint in the way in which they condescended to boys who had only one name {6}. Still, the earl's will was law, and since he had willed that the newcomers should share the privileges of the others, no protest could be made.

And as for Hubert there was no difficulty; he was one of nature's own gentlemen, and there was something in his brave winning ways, in which there was neither shyness nor presumption, which at once found him friends; besides, his speech was Norman French, and he was au fait in his manners.

But poor little Martin—the lad from the greenwood—surely it was a great mistake to expose him to the jeers and sarcasms of the lads of his own age, but of another culture; every time he opened his mouth he betrayed the Englishman, and it was not until the following reign that Edward the First, by himself adopting that designation as the proudest he could claim, redeemed it from being, as it had been since the Conquest, a term of opprobrium and reproach.

The day always began at Kenilworth Castle with an early mass in the chapel at sunrise; then, unless it were a hunting morning, the whole bevy of pages was handed over to the chaplain for a few brief hours of study, for the earl was himself a literary man, and would fain have all under him instructed in the rudiments of learning {7}.

Hubert did not show to advantage, for he regarded all such studies as a degrading remnant of his life at Michelham, yet none could read and write so well as he amongst the pages, and he had his Latin declensions and conjugations well by heart, while he could read and interpret in good Norman French, or indifferent English, the Gospels in the large illuminated Missal; but the silly lad was actually ashamed of this, and would have bartered it all for the emptiest success in the tilt yard.

On the contrary, little Martin, who could not yet read a line, was throwing the whole deep earnestness of an active intellect into the work.

“Courage! little friend,” said the chaplain, “and thou wilt do as well as the wisest here, only be not impatient or discouraged.”

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And to Hubert he said one day:

“This hardly represents your best work, my son, you did better even yesterday.”

Hubert tossed his head.

“Martin cares only for books—I want to learn better things; he may be a monk, I will be a soldier.”

His literary acquirements, unusual in the time, increased his influence and reputation.

“And dost thou know,” said a deep voice, “what is the first duty of a soldier?”

It was the stern figure of the earl who stood unobserved in the doorway of the library.

Hubert hung his head.

“Obedience!”

“And know this,” added the speaker, “that learning distinguishes the man from the brute, as religion distinguishes him from the devil.”

The two medieval boys, with the story of whose lives this veracious chronicle concerns itself, were indeed singularly unlike in their tastes and dispositions.

Martin seemed destined by nature for the life of the cloister, the home of learning and contemplation in those days, wherein alone were libraries to be found, and peaceful hours to devote to their perusal. He learned his lessons with such avidity as to surprise and delight his teacher, his leisure hours were spent in the library of the castle—for Kenilworth had a library of manuscripts under Simon de Montfort—a long low room on an upper floor, one end of which was boarded off as a chamber for the chaplain, who was of course also librarian. And again, he evinced a joy in the services of the castle chapel which sufficiently marked his vocation. The earl was both devout and musical, and the solemn tones of the Gregorian Church Modes were rendered with peculiar force by the deep voices of the men, for which they seemed chiefly designed. As Martin listened, he became aware of sensations and ideas which he could not express—he wept for joy, or trembled with emotion like Saint Augustine of old {8}.

Then again, Sunday by Sunday, the chaplain was like a living oracle to him, as to many others. The ascetic face became beautiful with a beauty not of this earth—“his pallor,” said they, “became of a fair shining red” when he spoke of Christ or holy things, while anon his thunder tones awoke an echo in the heart of many as he testified against cruelty and wrong, of which there was no lack in those days.

Under his influence Martin was becoming moulded like pliant wax, the boy of the greenwood was losing all his rusticity, and yet, retaining his keen love of nature, was learning to look beyond nature to nature's God.  At times Martin was very weary of Kenilworth, and almost wished himself back in the greenwood again, so little was he in sympathy with the companions whom he had found.

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But one day the earl called him aside, and with a tenderness one could not have expected from that great statesman and mighty warrior, broke the sad tidings to the poor boy of the death of his ill-fated mother. It had arrived from Michelham; an outlaw had brought the news to the priory, with the request that the monks would send the tidings on to young Martin, wherever he might be. The death of his poor mother at last severed the ties which bound Martin to the greenwood; he longed after it no more; save that he often had daydreams wherein, as a brother of Saint Francis, he preached the glad tidings of the grace of God to his kindred after the flesh in the green glades of the Sussex woods.

One thing he had yet to subdue—his temper; like that of most people of excitable temperament it would some times flash forth like fire; his companions soon found this out, and the elder pages liked to amuse themselves in arousing it—a sport not quite so safe for those of his own age.

Altogether of a different mould was the bright joyous son of an ill-fated father; Hubert, son of Roger of Icklesham and Walderne. A boy, a typical boy, a brave free-hearted noble one:

With his unchecked, unbidden joy,
His dread of books, and love of fun.

He was rapidly acquiring ease and dexterity in all the sports of the tilt yard; the quintain had now no terrors for him, and he was quite at home on horseback already. Naturally he was rising fast in favour with his fellows, the only lad who seemed to stand aloof from him being Drogo de Harengod.

Drogo was about a year older than Hubert, tall and dark, of a haughty and intolerant disposition, and very “masterful,” but, as the old saw says:

Mores puerorum se detegunt inter ludendum.

So we will draw no more pen and ink sketches, but leave our characters to show themselves by their deeds.

It was a pleasant evening in early autumn, and the scene was the park of Kenilworth, some few months after the arrival of our two pages at the castle. Half a dozen of the youthful aspirants to chivalry, amongst whom were Drogo, Hubert, and Martin, gathered under an oak occupying an elevated site in the park: they had evidently just left the forest, for hares and rabbits were lying on the ground, the result of a little foray into the cover.

“What a view we have here; one can see the towers of Warwick, over the woods.”

“And there is the line of hills over Keinton and Radway {9}.”

“And there Black Down Hill.”

“And there the spires of Coventry.”

“Yes,” said Drogo, “but it is not like the view from my uncle’s castle in the Andredsweald, over a far wilder forest than this of Arden, with the great billowy downs for a southern bulwark.  There be wolves, yea, boars, and for lesser beasts of prey wildcats, badgers, and polecats; while the deer are as plentiful as sheep.”

“And where is that castle?” said Hubert.

# Page 21

“At Walderne; my uncle is Nicholas de Harengod, and some day the castle will be mine.”

Martin looked up with strange interest.

“What!  Walderne Castle yours!”

“Yes, have you heard of it?”

“And seen it.”

“Seen it?”

“Yes, afar off,” said the lad dreamily, for Hubert gave him a warning look.

“Even as a cat may look at a king’s palace.”

“But those woods are full of outlaws,” said another lad, Louis de Chalgrave.

“All the better; it will be rare sport to hunt them out.”

“Easier said than done,” muttered Martin, but not so low that his words were unheard.

“What is easier said than done?” cried Drogo.

“I mean the hunting out those outlaws.  Ever since you Normans came, in the days of the usurper you call the Conqueror, it has been talked about but never done.”

“Usurper we call the Conqueror, pretty words these for the park of Kenilworth,” said several voices.  “They suit the descendants of the men who let themselves be beaten at Hastings.”

“In any place but this Kenilworth they would cost a fellow his ears.”

“Yes, but Earl Simon loves the English.”

“Or he wouldn’t degrade us by bringing louts from the greenwood amongst us—boys whom our fathers would have disdained to set to mind their swine,” said Drogo.

“Probably your ancestor himself was a swineherd in Normandy, while mine were Thanes in England, and their courteous manners have descended to you,” retorted Martin; whereupon Drogo laid his bowstring about his daring junior.

Forgetting all disparity of age, the youngster flew at him, and struck him full between the eyes with his clenched fist; the other boys, instead of interfering, laughed heartily at the scene, and watched its development with interest, thinking Martin would get a good

switching.  But they forgot one thing, or rather did not know it.  Boxing was not a knightly exercise, not taught in the tilt yard, and Drogo could only use his natural weapons as a French boy uses his now.  But in the greenwood it was different, and young Martin had been left again and again, as a part of a sound education, to “hold his own” against his equals in age and size, by aid of the noble art of fisticuffs; what wonder then that Drogo’s eyes were speedily several shades darker than nature had designed them to be, of which there was no obvious need, and that victory would probably have decked the brows of the younger combatant had not the elders interfered.

“This is no work for a gentleman.”

“If fight you must, run a course against each other with blunted spears, since they won’t grant us sharp ones, more’s the pity.”

“The youngster should learn to govern his temper.”

“Nay, he did not begin it.”

The last speaker was Hubert.

Martin had walked away into the wood, as if he neither expected nor asked justice from his companions, and Hubert followed him.

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“There they go together.”

“Two boys, each without a second name.”

“But after all,” said Louis, ’I like Hubert better for standing up for his friend.”

“They are queer friends, as unlike as light and darkness,” said Drogo.

“Talking of darkness reminds one of your eyes, they are—”

“Hold your tongue.”

And a new quarrel commenced, which we will not stop to behold, but follow the two into the woods; “older, deeper, grayer,” with oaks that the Druids might have worshipped beneath.

## Chapter 4:  In the Greenwood.

While they were in sight of the other boys Martin’s pride kept him from displaying any emotion, but when they were alone in the recesses of the woods, and Hubert, putting his hand on the other’s shoulder bade him “not mind them,” his bosom commenced to heave, and he had great difficulty in repressing his tears.  It was not mere grief, it was the sense of desolation; he felt that he was not in his own sphere, and but for the thought of the chaplain would willingly have returned to the outlaws in the greenwood. No boy at a strange school feels as out of place as he, and the worst was, he did not get acclimatised in the least.

He had not found his vocation.  Then again, he had been sweetly lectured upon his temper by Father Edmund, and had promised to control it.  Still, was he to be switched by Drogo?  He knew he never could bear it, and didn’t quite feel that he ought to do so.

“Hubert,” he said at last, “I don’t think I can stay here.”

“Why, it is a very pleasant place.  I love it more every day, and they are not such bad fellows.”

“You are like them in your tastes, and I am not.”

“But tell me, Martin, how were you brought up; were you always with the outlaws?  You almost let out the secret today.”

“Yes, I was born in the woods.”

“Then you are not of gentle blood?”

“That depends upon what you mean by gentle blood.  I am not of Norman blood by my father’s side, although my mother may be, from whom I get my dark features:  my father was descended from the old English lords of Michelham, who lived on the island for ages before the Conquest; my mother’s family is unknown to me.”

“Indeed! what became of your English forbears?”

“Robert de Mortain contrived their ruin, but dearly did his race pay for it in the justice of God.  His ghost, or that of his son, still haunts Pevensey:  but all that is past and gone. Earl Simon sometimes says (you heard him perhaps the other day) that the English are of as good blood as the Normans, and that he should be proud to call himself an Englishman.

“He is worthy of the name,” said Martin, and Hubert smiled; ’but it is not that—I want to be a scholar, and by and by a priest.”

“The very thing they wanted to make me, and I wouldn’t for the world; what a pity we could not change places.  Ah! what is that?”

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A crushing of brambles and parting of bushes was heard, and lo! a deer, with a little fawn by its side, came across the glade, looking very frightened. The mother was restraining her own speed for the sake of the little one, but every moment got ahead, involuntarily, then stopped, and strove by piteous cries to urge the fawn to do its best.

What did it mean? The mystery was soon explained, the deep bay of a hound was heard close behind.

Martin's deep sympathies with the animal creation were aroused at once, and he stood in the opening the deer had made, his short hunting spear in hand.

"Take care—what are you about!" cried Hubert.

The next instant the deerhound came in sight, and in a few leaps would have attained his prey had not Martin been in the way; but the boy knelt on one knee, presenting his spear full at the dog, who, springing down a bank through the opening, literally impaled itself upon it.

"Good heavens!" said Hubert, "to kill a hound, a good hound like this."

"Didn't you see the poor fawn and its mother? I wasn't going to let the brute touch them. I would have died first."

Just then the voices of men came from the wood.

"See, they follow upon the track of the deer; let us run, we are in for it else."

"I am not ashamed of my deed," said Martin, and would sooner face it out; if they are good men they will not blame me."

"They will hang thee, that's all—fly."

"Too late; you go, leave me to pay the penalty of my own deed, if penalty there be."

"What, forsake a comrade in distress? Nay, I would die first, that is a thing I would die for, but for a brute—never."

A tall hunter, a man of most commanding appearance and stature, stood upon the scene. Two attendants followed behind.

"*The earl of Warwick*," whispered Hubert, awe struck.

The earl looked astonished as he saw the dog.

"Who has done this?" he said, in a voice of thunder.

But Martin did not tremble as he replied:

“I, my lord.”

“And why? did the hound attack thee?”

“It was to save the poor doe and her fawn; the mother would not leave her little one, and both would have been killed together.”

The indignation of the two woodsmen was almost indecorous, but they did not speak before their dread master.

“And didst thou have aught to do with it?” said the earl, addressing Hubert.

“Nay, my lord, I did it all with this spear; he tried to stop me,” said Martin.

“Then thou shalt hang for it.

“Here, Ralph, Gilbert, have you a rope between you?”

Ralph, the gamekeeper, unwound one from his waist.  It was too often needed, and had our Martin been a peasant lad, he would have speedily swung from a branch of the oak above, but—Hubert came bravely forward.

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“My Lord of Warwick, we knew not we were on your ground; we are pages from Kenilworth.”

The men who had seized Martin stood motionless at this, still, however, holding him, and awaiting further orders.

“Can this be true?” growled the Lord of the Bear and Ragged Staff.

“Yes, my lord, you see the crest of the Montforts on our caps.”

In his fury the earl had ignored the fact.

“Your names?”

“Martin.”

“Hubert.”

“‘Martin,’ ‘Hubert,’ of what? have you no ‘de,’ no second names?”

“We are not permitted to bear them.”

“Doubtless for good reason.  And now, what shall prevent me from hanging such nobodies, and burying you both beneath this oak, without anybody being the wiser?”

“The fact that you are a gentleman,” said Hubert boldly.

The earl seemed struck by the answer.

“Boy,” said he, “thou bast answered well, and second name or not, thou hast the right blood in thee; nor is the other lad wanting in courage.  But you must both answer for this.  Tomorrow I visit Kenilworth, and will see your lord.

“Release them, my men.

“Fare ye well till tomorrow.

“My poor Bruno!”

And the lads hastened home.

They told no one of their adventure, save Father Edmund, who not only did not chide them, but promised to plead for them if complaint were made to Earl Simon.

And very shortly, even the next day, the Earl of Warwick with an attendant squire rode up the approach to the barbican gate, and was admitted.  The boys had not long to wait

in suspense:  they were soon summoned from their tasks into the presence of their dread yet kind lord, and his visitor.

As they were ushered along the passage of that mighty castle, both felt a sinking of heart, Hubert more than Martin, for the latter had far more moral courage than his lithesome companion.

“Martin, we are in bad case.”

“I am not afraid.”

“Do own you were wrong.”

“I cannot, for I do not think I was.”

“Say so at all events.  What is the harm?”

“My tongue was given me to express my thoughts, not to conceal them.”

“Then you will be beaten.”

“And bear it; it was all my doing.”

At that moment the heavy doors swung open, and they stood in the presence of the two mightiest earls of the Midlands.  They stood as two culprits, Hubert very sheepish, with his head cast down, Martin with a comical mixture of resignation and apprehension.

“How is this?” said the Earl Simon.  “I hear that you two killed the good deerhound of my brother of Warwick.”

“It was I, my lord, not Hubert.”

“They were both together,” whispered the Earl of Warwick.  “I saw not who did the deed.”

“We may believe Martin.”

“So thou dost take all the blame upon thyself, Martin.”

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“All the blame, if blame there was, my lord.”

“If blame there was!  Surely thou art mad, boy! and thy back will verify the force of Solomon’s proverb, a rod for the fool’s back, unless thou change thy tone and ask pardon of my good brother.”

“My Lord of Warwick, I am very sorry that I was forced to kill your good hound, and hope you will forgive me.”

“Forced to kill!”

“If I had not, he would have killed the poor doe and her fawn together, and I could not have seen that, if I had to hang for it, as the noble earl threatened I should.”

“Tell me the whole story,” said the Earl of Leicester.

“Pardon me, my good brother, I want to hear how he defends himself.”

And Martin began:

“We were in the woods, when we heard a great rustling, and saw a doe crossing the path, very frightened, but for all that she kept stopping and looking back, and we saw a little fawn by her side, who couldn’t keep up; then we heard the hound baying behind, and the poor mother trembled and started, but wouldn’t leave her little one, but bleated piteously to the wee thing to make haste.  I never saw an animal in such distress before, and I could not bear it, so I stood in the track to stop the dog, and he rushed upon my spear.  I was very sorry for the good hound, but I was more sorry for the doe and her fawn.”

“And thou wouldst do the same thing again, I suppose?” said the Earl of Leicester.

“I couldn’t help it.”

“And what didst thou do, Hubert?”

“I tried to stop him, but I couldn’t.”

“Thou didst not feel the same pity, then, for the deer?”

“No, my lord, because I thought dogs were made to hunt deer, and deer to be hunted.”

“Thou art quite right, my lad,” said he of Warwick, “and the other lad is a simpleton—I was going to say a chicken-hearted simpleton, but he was brave enough when his own neck seemed in danger, nor does he fear much for his back now—

“What dost thou say, boy?”

“My lord, if I have offended you, I refuse not to pay with my back.”

“Get ready for the scourge, then,” said the earl his lord, half smiling, and evidently trying his courage, “unless thou wilt say thou art sorry for thy deed.”

“I am ready, my lord.  I would say anything I could say without lying, rather than offend thee, but what am I to do?  Let me bear what I have to bear.”

“Nay,” said the earl, “it may not be.  My brother of Warwick, canst thou not forgive him? I will send thee two good hounds in the place of poor Bruno.  Dost thou not see the lad has sat in the school of Saint Francis, who pitied and loved everything, great and small, as Adam de Maresco, my good friend at Oxford, tells me, and so all God’s creatures loved him, and came at his call—the birds, nay, the fishes?”

“Dost thou believe all this, my boy?” said he of Warwick.

“Yes, it is all true, is it not?  It is in the Flores Sancti Francisci.”

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The earl smiled.

“Come, my boy, I forgive thee.

“My good brother of Leicester, the lad is made for a Franciscan; don’t spoil a good friar by making him a warrior.”

“And Franciscan he shall be.

“Say, my boy, wouldst thou like to go to Oxford and study under my worthy friend, Adam de Maresco?”

Martin’s eyes sparkled with delight.

“Oh yes, my lord.

“Thank you, my Lord of Warwick.”

“Thy punishment shall then be exile from the castle; thou may’st cease from the sports of the tilt yard, which thou hast never loved, and Father Edmund shall take thee seriously in hand.”

“Oh, thanks, my lord, O felix dies.”

“See how he takes to Latin, like a duck to the water.

“Hubert, thou must go with him.”

Hubert’s countenance fell.

“Oh no, no, my lord, I want to be a soldier like my father; please don’t send me away.

“Oh, Martin, what a fool thou art!”

“Fool! fie! for shame! thou forgettest in whose company thou art.  Each to his own liking; thou to make food for the sword, Martin perhaps to suffer martyrdom on a gridiron, like Saint Lawrence, amongst the heathen.”

“He is the stuff they make martyrs from,” muttered he of Warwick.

“No, Hubert, you may stay and work out your own destiny, and Martin shall go to Oxford.”

“Oh, Martin, I am so sorry.”

But Martin was rapturous with joy.

And so, more soberly, was another person joyful—even the chaplain, for he saw the making of a valiant friar of Saint Francis in Martin. That wondrous saint, Francis of Assisi {10}, whose mission it was to restore to the depraved Christianity of the day an element it seemed losing altogether, that of brotherly love, was an embodiment of the sentiment of a later poet:

He prayeth best who loveth best,
All things both great and small,
For the dear God, who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

And wondrous was his power over the rudest men and the most savage animals in consequence. All things loved Francis—the most timid animals, the most shy birds, all alike flocked around him when he appeared.

The brotherhood he had founded was unlike the monastic orders; its members were not to retire from the world, but to live in it, and devote themselves entirely to the good of mankind; they were to renounce all worldly wealth, and embrace chastity, poverty, and obedience—theirs was not to be the joy of family life, theirs no settled abode. Wandering from place to place they were to live solely on the alms of those to whom they preached the gospel of peace.

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Established only at the beginning of the century of our tale, it had already extended its energies throughout Europe. They came to England in 1224, only four clergy and five laymen. Already they numbered more than twelve hundred brethren in England alone; and they were found where they were most needed, in the back slums of the undrained and crowded towns, amongst the hovels of the serfs where plague was raging, where leprosy lingered—there were the Franciscans in this the heroic age of their order, before they had fallen from their first love, and verified the proverb—Corruptio optimi est pessima. Under their teaching a new school of theology had arisen at Oxford; the great Bishop of Lincoln, Robert Grosseteste, was its first lecturer, the most enlightened prelate of the day; and now Adam de Maresco, a warm friend of Earl Simon, was at its head. To his care the earl determined to commend young Martin.

## Chapter 5: Martin Leaves Kenilworth.

Martin was henceforth relieved of his customary exercises in the tilt yard and elsewhere, which had become distasteful to him in proportion as the longing for a better life had grown upon his imagination. Of course the other boys treated him with huge contempt; and sent him metaphorically “to Coventry,” the actual spires of which august medieval city, far more beautiful then than now, rose beyond the trees in the park.

But the chaplain saw this, and with the earl’s permission lodged the neophyte in a chamber adjacent to his own “cell,” where he gave himself up to his beloved books, only varying the monotony by an occasional stroll with his friend Hubert, who never turned his back upon his former friend, and endured much chaffing and teasing in consequence.

Most rapidly Martin’s facile brain acquired the learning of the day—Latin became as his mother tongue, for it was then taught conversationally, and the chaplain seldom or never spoke to him in any other language.

And after a few months his zealous tutor thought him prepared for the important step in his life, and wrote to the great master of scholastic philosophy already mentioned, Adam de Maresco, to bespeak admission into one of the Franciscan schools or colleges then existing at Oxford. There was no penny or other post—a special messenger had to be sent.

The answer came in due course, and at the beginning of the Easter term Martin was told to prepare for his journey to the University. He was not then more than fifteen, but that was a common age for matriculation in those days.

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The morning came, so long looked for, and with a strange feeling Martin arose with daybreak from his couch, and looked from his casement upon the little world he was leaving. A busy hum already ascended from beneath as our Martin put his head out of the window; he heard the clank of the armourer's hammer on mail and weapon, he heard the clamorous noise of the hungry hounds who were being fed, he heard the scolding of the cooks and menials who were preparing the breakfast in the hall, he heard the merry laughter of the boys in the pages' chamber. But soon one sound dominated over all—boom! boom! boom! came the great bell of the chapel, filling hill and dale, park and field, with its echoes. Father Edmund was about to say the daily mass, and all must go to begin the day with prayer who were not reasonably hindered —such was the earl's command.

And soon the chaplain called, "Martin, Martin."

"I am ready, sire."

"Looking round on the home thou art leaving, thou wilt find Oxford much fairer."

"But thou wilt not be there."

"My good friend Adam will do more for thee than ever I could."

"Nay, but for thee, sire, I had fallen into utter recklessness; thou hast dragged me from the mire.

"Sit Deo gloria, then, not to a frail man like thyself; thou must learn to lean on the Creator, not the creature. Come, it is time to vest for mass. Thou shalt serve me as acolyte for the last time."

People sometimes talk of that olden rite, wherein our ancestors showed forth the death of Christ day by day, as if it had been a mere mechanical service. It was a dead form only to those who brought dead hearts to it. To our Martin it was instinct with life, and it satisfied the deep craving of his soul for communion with the most High, while he pleaded the One Oblation for all his present needs, just entering upon a new world.

The short service was over, and Martin was breakfasting in the chaplain's room with him and Hubert, who had been invited to share the meal. They were sitting after breakfast —the usual feeling of depression which precedes a departure from home was upon them—when a firm step was heard echoing along the corridor.

"It is the earl," said the chaplain, and they all rose as the great man entered.

"Pardon my intrusion, father. I am come to say farewell to this wilful boy."

They all rose, Martin overwhelmed by the honour.

“Nay, sit down.  I have not yet broken my own fast and will crack a crust with you.”

And the earl ate and drank that he might put them all at their ease.

“So the scholar’s gown and pen suit thee better than the coat of mail and the sword, master Martin!”

“Oh, my good lord!”

“Nay, my boy, thou wast exiled from home in my cause, and I may owe thee a life for all I can tell.”

“They would not have harmed thee, not even they, had they known.”

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“But you see they did not know, and all was fish that came to their nets.  Martin, don’t thou ever think of them.”

“Hubert, thou hadst better go, and come back presently,” whispered the chaplain, who felt that there were certain circumstances of which the boy might be better left ignorant, which nearly concerned his companion.

“Nay,” said Martin, ’there are no secrets between us.  He knows mine.  I know his.”

“But no one else, I trust,” said the earl, who remembered a certain prohibition.

“No, my lord, only Hubert.  He already knew so much, I was forced to tell him all.”

“Then thou hast not forgotten thy kindred in the greenwood?”

“I can never forget my poor mother.”

“Thou hast already told me all that thou dost know, and that thy fathers once owned Michelham.”

“So the outlaws said, the merrie men of the wood.  Oh if my father had but lived.”

“He would have made thee an outlaw, too.”

“It might well have been, but my poor mother would have been happy then.”

“But I think Martin has a scheme in his head,” said Hubert shyly.

“What is it, my son?” said the earl.

“The chaplain knows.”

“He thinks that when he has put on the cord of Saint Francis he will go and preach the Gospel to them that are afar off in the woods.”

“But they are Christians, I hope.”

“Nominally, but they know nought of the Gospel of love and peace.  Their religion is limited to a few outward observances,” said the chaplain, “which, separated from the living Spirit, only fulfil the words:  ‘The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.’”

“Ah, well, my boy, God speed thee on thy path, and preserve thee for that day when thou shalt come as a messenger of peace to them that sit in darkness,” said the earl.

“Thine,” he continued, ’is a far nobler ambition than that of the warrior, thine the task to save, his to destroy.

“What sayest thou, Hubert?”

“I would fain be a soldier of the Cross, like my father, and cut down the Paynim.”

“Like a godly knight I once knew, who, called upon to convert a Saracen, said the Creed and told him he was to believe it.  The Saracen, as one might have expected, uttered some words of scorn, and the good knight straight-way clove him to the chine.”

“It was short and simple, my lord; I should like to convert them that way best.”

The chaplain sighed.

“Oh, Hubert!” said Martin.

The earl listened and smiled a sad smile.

“Well, there is work for you both.  Mine is not yet done in the busy fighting world; rivers of blood have I seen shed, nay, helped to shed, and I must answer to God for the way in which I have played my part; yet I thank Him that He did not disdain to call one whose career lay in like bloody paths ‘the man after His own heart.’”

“It is lawful to draw sword in a good cause, my lord,” said the chaplain.

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“I never doubted it, but I say that Martin’s ambition is more Christ-like—is it not?”

“It is indeed.”

“Yet should I be called to lay down my life in some bloody field, if it be my duty, the path to heaven may not be more difficult than from the convent cell.”

These last words he said as if to himself, but years afterwards, on an occasion yet to be related, they came back to the mind of our Martin.

Upon a horse, which he had learned at length to manage well; with two attendants in the earl’s livery by his side, Martin set forth; his last farewells said. Yet he looked back with more or less sadness to the kind friends he was leaving, to tread all alone the paths of an unknown city, and associate with strangers.

As they passed through Warwick, the gates of the castle opened, and the earl of that town came forth with a gallant hunting suite; he recognised our young friend.

“Ah, Martin, Martin,” he said, ’whither goest thou so equipped and attended?”

“To Oxenford, to be a scholar, good my lord.”

“And after that?”

“To go forth with the cord of Saint Francis around me.”

“Ah, it was he who taught thee to kill my deerhound. Well, fare thee well, lad, and when thou art a priest say a mass for me, for I sorely need it.”

He waved his hand, and the cavalcade swept onward.

They rode through a wild tract of heath land. Cultivated fields there were few, tracts of furze—spinneys, as men then called small patches of wood—in plenty. The very road was a mere track over the grass, and it seemed like what we should now call riding across country.

At length they drew near the old town of Southam, where they made their noontide halt and refreshed themselves at the hostelry of the “Bear and Ragged Staff,” for the people were dependants of the mighty Lord of Warwick.

Then through a dreary country, almost uninhabited, save by the beasts of the chase, they rode for Banbury. Twice or thrice indeed they passed knots of wild uncouth men, in twos or threes, who might have been dangerous to the unattended traveller, but saw no prospect of aught but good sound blows should they attack these retainers of Leicester.

And now they reached the “town of cakes” (I know not whether they made the luscious compound we call Banbury cakes then), and passed the time at the chief hostelry of the town, sharing the supper with twenty or thirty other wayfarers, and sleeping with some of them in a great loft above the common room on trusses of hay and straw.

It was rough accommodation, but Martin’s early education had not rendered him squeamish, neither were his attendants.

The following day they rode through Adderbury, where not long before an unhappy miscreant, who counterfeited the Saviour and deluded a number of people, had been actually crucified by being nailed to a tree on the green.  Then, an hour later, they left Teddington Castle, another stronghold of the Earl of Warwick, on their right:  they were roughly accosted by the men-at-arms, but the livery of Leicester protected them.

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Soon after they approached the important town of Woodstock, with its ancient palace, where a century earlier Henry II had wiled away his time with Fair Rosamond. The park and chase were most extensive and deeply wooded; emerging from its umbrageous recesses, they saw a group of spires and towers.

“Behold the spires of Oxenford!” cried the men.

Martin’s heart beat with ill-suppressed emotion—here was the object of his long desire, the city which he had seen again and again in his dreams. Headington Hill arose on the left, and the heights about Cumnor on the right. Between them rose the great square tower of Oxford Castle, and the huge mound {11} thrown up by the royal daughter of Alfred hard by; while all around arose the towers and spires of the learned city, then second only in importance to London.

The first view of the Eternal City (Rome)—what volumes have been written upon the sensations which attend it. So was the first view of Oxford to our eager aspirant for monastic learning and ecclesiastical sanctity. Long he stood drinking in the sight, while his heart swelled within him and tears stood in his eyes; but the trance was roughly broken by his attendants.

“Come, young master. We must hurry on, or we may not get in before nightfall, and there may be highwaymen lurking about the suburbs.”

## Chapter 6: At Walderne Castle.

The watcher on the walls of Walderne Castle sees the sun sink beneath the distant downs, flooding Mount Caburn and his kindred giants with crimson light. In the great hall supper is preparing. See them all trooping in—retainers, fighting men, serving men, all taking their places at the boards placed at right angles to the high table, where the seats of Sir Nicholas de Harengod and his lady are to be seen.

He enters: a bluff stern warrior, in his undress, that is, without his panoply of armour and arms, in the long flowing robe affected by his Norman kindred at the festal board. She, with the comely robe which had superseded the gunna or gown, and the couvrechef (whence our word kerchief) on the head.

The chaplain, who served the little chapel within the castle, says grace, and the company fall upon the food with little ceremony. We have so often described their manners, or rather absence of manners, that we will not repeat how the joints were carved in the absence of forks, nor how necessary the finger glasses were after meals, although they only graced the higher board.

Wine, hippocras, mead, ale—there was plenty to eat and drink, and when the hunger was satisfied a palmer or pilgrim, who had but recently arrived from the Holy Land, sang a touching ballad about his adventures and sufferings in that Holy Land:

Trodden by those blessed feet
Which for our salvation were
Nailed unto the holy rood.

He sang of the captivity of Jerusalem under her Saracen rulers; of the Holy Places, nay, of the Sepulchre itself, in the hands of the heathen. That song, and kindred songs, had already caused rivers of blood to be shed; men were now getting hardened to the tale, albeit the Lady Sybil shed tears.

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For she thought of her brother Roger, who had taken the Cross at that gathering at Cross-in-Hand when labouring under his sire's dire displeasure, and who had fallen yet more deeply under the ban, owing to events with which our readers are but partially acquainted.

And now, where Roger sat, she saw her own husband—well beloved—yet had he not effaced the memory of her brother. And she longed to see that brother's son, of whom she had heard, recognised as the heir of Walderne.

The palmer sang, and his song told of one, a father stern, who bade his son wash off the guilt of some grievous sin in the blood of the unbeliever—how that son went forth, full of zeal—but went forth to find his efforts blasted by a haunting, malignant fiend he had himself armed with power to blast; how at length, conquering all opposition, he had reached the holy shore, and embarked on every desperate enterprise, until he was laid out for dead, when—

At this moment the chapel bell rang for the evening prayers, which were never later than curfew, for as men then rose with the sun it was well to go to bed with him, so they all flocked to the chapel. The office commonly called Compline was said, and the little sanctuary was left again vacant and dark save where the solitary lamp twinkled before the altar.

But the Lady Sybil did not seek her couch. She remained kneeling in devotion before the altar, which her wealth and piety had founded. Nor was she alone. The palmer yet knelt on the floor of the sanctuary.

When they had been left alone together for some minutes, and all was still save the wind which howled without she rose and said:

"Tell me who thou art, O mysterious man: thy voice reminds me of one long dead."

"Dead to the world, yet living in the flesh. Sybil, I am thy brother Roger, at least what remains of him; thou hast not forgotten me."

"But why hast thou been silent so long? Thy brother in arms, the great Earl of Leicester, himself said he saw thee fall fighting gloriously against the fell Paynim."

"And he spake sooth, but he did not see me rise again. I was carried off the field for interment by the good brethren of Saint John, when, just as they were about to lower me with the dead warriors into one common grave, they perceived that there was life in me. They raised me, and restored the spirit which had all but fled, and when at last it returned, reason did not return with it. For a full year I was bereft of my senses. They kept me in the hospital at Acre, but they knew nought, and could learn nought of my kindred, until at length I recovered my reason. Then I told them I was dead to the world,

and besought them to keep me, but they bade me wander, and stir up others to the rescue of the Holy Land ere I took my rest.  And then, too, there was my son—"

"Thy *son*?"

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“Yes.  I see I had better unfold all to thee in detail, from the beginning of my wanderings.  After I had fled from my father’s wrath, I first went to sunny Provence, where I found friends in the great family of the Montforts, and won the friendship of a man who has since become famous, the Earl of Leicester.  A distant kinswoman of theirs, a cousin many times removed, effaced from my heart the fickle damsel who had been the cause of my disgrace in England.  Poor Eveline!  Never was there sweeter face or sunnier disposition!  Had she lived all had been well.  I had not then gone forth, abandoned to my own sinful self.  But she died in giving birth to my Hubert.”

“Thy son, doth he yet live?”

“I left him in the care of Simon de Montfort, and went forward to the rendezvous of the crusaders, the Isle of Malta, where, being grievously insulted by a Frenchman—during a truce of God, which had been proclaimed to the whole army—forgot all but my hot blood, struck him, thereby provoked a combat, and slew him, for which I was expelled the host, and forbidden to share in the holy war.

“So I sailed thence to Sicily—in deep dejection, repenting, all too late, my ungovernable spirit.

“It was in the Isle of Sicily that an awful judgment befell me, which has pursued me ever since, until it has blanched my locks with gray, and hollowed out these wrinkles on my brow.

“I had taken up my quarters at an inn, and was striving in vain to drown my remorse in utter recklessness, in wine and mirth, when one night, as I lay half unconscious in bed, I heard the door open.  I started up and laid my hand on my sword, but melted into a sweat of fear as I saw the ghost of him I had slain, standing as if in life, his hand upon the wound my blade had made.

“‘Nay,’ said he, ’mortal weapons harm me not now, but see that thou fulfil for me the vow I have made.  Carry my sword in person or by proxy to Jerusalem, and lay it on the altar of the Holy Sepulchre.  Then I forgive thee my death.’

“The vision disappeared, but left me impressed with a sense that it was real and no dream.  Hence I dared to return to Malta, and telling my story begged, but begged in vain, to be allowed to carry the sword of the man I had slain through the campaign.

“I could not even obtain the sword.  It had been sent back to hang by the side of the rusty weapons his ancestors had once borne, in the hall of their distant Chateau de Fievrault.

“I returned to Provence, revisited the tomb of my Eveline, saw my boy, sought absolution, made many prayers, but could not shake off the phantom.  It was on a

Friday I slew my foe, and on each Friday night he appeared. The young Simon de Montfort was about to form another band of crusaders, and he allowed me to accompany him, with the result I have described. During my stay in the monastery at Acre the phantom troubled me not, and as I have already said, I would fain have remained there, but when they heard my tale they bade me return and fulfil my duties to my kindred, and stir up others to come to the aid of the Holy Land, since I was physically incapable of ever bearing arms again.

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“But I shall even yet fulfil my vow, and the vow of the man I slew, through my boy, when he has gained his spurs. My sinful steps are not permitted to press that soil, once trodden by those blessed feet, nailed for our salvation to the holy rood. Hubert will live and bear the sword of the slain Sieur de Fievrault, sans peur et sans reproche. Then I may lay me down in peace and take my rest.”

“Will thou not see my husband?”

“I cannot reveal myself here in this castle to any one but thee, and as my tormentor pays his visits again, I will betake me to the Priory of Lewes.”

“And must thou leave thy ancestral halls, and bury thyself again, my brother?”

“I must. My task is done. I came but to feast my eyes with the sight of thee, and to tell thee that thy nephew, the true heir of Walderne, lives, satisfied that thou wilt not now allow him to be defrauded of his rights.”

“Why not reveal thyself to my husband?”

“I cannot—at least not in this house; but in the morn, after I have parted for Lewes. tell him all.”

“And what proofs shall I give if he ask them?”

“Let him seek me at Lewes or, better still, refer to Simon de Montfort, who is the guardian of the boy, and has him in safe keeping at Kenilworth.”

“Sybil,” cried a voice.

“It is my husband. I must go. Farewell, dearly loved, unhappy brother.”

And she departed, leaving him alone in the chapel.

Hours had passed by, the inmates of the castle at Walderne all slept, still as the sleeping woods around, save only the watchman on the walls, for in those days of nightly rapine and daily violence no castle or house of any pretensions dispensed with such a guard.

Save only the watcher on the walls, and a lonelier watcher in the chapel. For there, in the sanctuary his sister had erected, knelt the returned prodigal, unknown to all save that sister. His heart was full of deep emotion, as well it might be. And thus he mused:

“This chapel was not here in my father’s time. There were few lessons to be learnt then, save those of strife and violence. What wonder that when he set me the example, my young blood ran too hotly in my veins, and that I finished my career of violence and

riot by slaying the rival who stood in my path? Yet was it done, not in cold blood but in fair fight. Still, he was my cousin, a favourite of my sire, who never forgave me, but drove me from home to make reparation in the holy wars. Then on the way to the land of expiation I must needs again stain my sword with Christian blood, and that on a day when it was sacrilege to draw sword.

“But I repent, I repent. O Lord, let the Blood which flowed on that very day down the Holy Rood blot out my sins, atone for my transgressions.

“Nay, he appears, as oft before, and stands before me as when I transfixed him on the quay at Malta.

“Avaunt, unquiet spirit. My feet have pressed the soil hallowed by the Sacred Blood. Avaunt, for I appeal from thy malice to God. Was it not thou who didst provoke, and wouldst fain have slain me? What was my act but one of self defence, defence first of honour, then of life?”

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Here he paused, as if listening.

“What dost thou say? I give thee rest. Let my son take the sword from thy ancestral hall, and wield it in the holy war in thy name. Then thy vow will be fulfilled, and thou wilt cumber earth no longer.

“Well, we shall see! But can I send him to that distant land? He may suffer as I.

“No! no! Son of my love! It may not be.

“Ah, thou departest. It is well. Avaunt thee, poor ghost! Avaunt thee.”

So the night sped away, and when the gates of the castle opened at sunrise, the palmer passed through them and took the road for Lewes.

We need hardly say that, in the course of the day after the ill-fated Roger had departed for Lewes, to bury his sorrows and his sins within the hallowed walls of the Priory of Saint Pancras, the Lady Sybil made a full revelation of all the circumstances of his visit to her husband, Sir Nicholas Harengod.

There was not a moment’s doubt in the mind of that worthy knight as to the proper course to be pursued. Roger must be left to carry out his own decision—as the most convenient to all parties concerned—and the son must at once be brought home and acknowledged as the true heir of Walderne, cum Icklesham, cum Dene, and I wot not what else. As for poor Drogo, he must be content with the patrimony of Sir Nicholas—-the manor of Harengod.

So Sir Nicholas first sought an interview with his brother-in-law, Roger, at the priory. He found him on the point of being admitted to the novitiate, and then started post haste across the country—northward for Kenilworth—where he arrived in due course, and was soon closeted with the mighty earl, to whom he revealed the whole story of the resurrection of Sir Roger of Walderne.

It was indeed a resurrection. At first the earl hardly credited its possibility; but anon with joy received it, and gave his full consent for Sir Nicholas to take Hubert away for a time, that he might make acquaintance with the home of his ancestors, and seek his father at Lewes.

Much more conversation passed between the knight and the earl, but we shall have occasion to develop its results as our narrative proceeds.

So we shall leave our readers to picture the delight and wonder of Hubert, the jealousy of Drogo, and much besides, while we go to Oxford to see Martin.

# Chapter 7:  Martin's First Day At Oxford.

It was a lovely morning in the Eastertide of 1256 when young Martin looked forth from the window of his hostel at Oxford on the quaint streets, the stately towers of the semi-monastic city.  He was bound, of course, as a dutiful son of Mother Church, to attend the early service at one of the thirteen churches, after which, still at a very early hour, he was invited to break his fast with the great Franciscan, Adam de Maresco, to whom his friend the chaplain had strongly commended him.  So he put on his scholar's gown, and went to the finest church then existing in Oxford, the Abbey Church of Oseney.

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This magnificent abbey had been endowed by Robert D'Oyley, nephew of the Norman Conqueror, mentioned in another of our Chronicles {12}. It was situated on an island, formed by various branches of the Isis, in the western suburbs of the city, and extended as far as from the present Oseney Mill to St. Thomas' Church. The abbey church, long since destroyed, was lofty and magnificent, containing twenty-four altars, a central tower of great height, and a western tower. Here King Henry III passed a Christmas with "reverent mirth."

There was a large gathering of monks, friars, and students; the quiet sober side of Oxford predominated in the early dawn, and Martin thought he had never seen so orderly a city. He was destined to change his ideas, or at least modify them, before he laid his head on his pillow that night.

Before leaving the church Martin ascended to the summit of the abbey tower, the wicket gate of which stood invitingly open, in order to survey the city and country, and gain a general idea of his future home. Below him, in the sweet freshness of the early morn, the branches of the Isis surrounded the abbey precincts, the river being well guarded by stone work and terraces, so that it could not at flood time encroach upon the abbey. Neither before the days of locks could or did such floods occur as we have now, the water got away more readily, and the students could not sail upon "Port Meadow" as upon a lake, in the winter and spring, as they do at the present day.

Beyond the abbey rose the church and college of "Saint George in the Castle," that is within the precincts of the fortress, and the great mound thrown up by Queen Ethelflaed, a sister of Alfred, now called the Jew's Mount {13}, and the two towers of the Norman Castle seemed to make one group with church and college. The town church of Saint Martin rose from a thickly-built group of houses, at a spot called Quatre Voies, where the principal streets crossed, which name we corrupt into Carfax. He counted the towers of thirteen churches, including the historic shrine of Saint Frideswide, which afterwards developed into the College of Christchurch, and later still furnished the Cathedral of the diocese.

Around lay a wild land of heath and forest, with cultivated fields very infrequently interspersed; the moors of Cowley, the woods of Shotover and Bagley; and farther still, the forests of Nuneham, inhabited even then by the Harcourts, who still hold the ancestral demesne. Descending, he made his way to Greyfriars, as the Franciscan house was called, encountering many groups who were already wending their way to lecture room, or, like Martin, returning to break their fast after morning chapel, which then meant early mass at one of the many churches, for only in three or four instances had corporate bodies chapels of their own.

These groups were very unlike modern undergraduates; as a rule they were much younger people, of the same ages as the upper forms in our public schools, from fourteen or fifteen years upwards; mere boys, living in crowded hostels, fighting and

quarrelling with all the sweet “abandon” of early youth, sometimes begging masterfully, for licenses to beg were granted to poor students, living, it might be, in the greatest poverty, but still devoted to learning.

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At length Martin arrived at the house of the Franciscans, where he was eventually to lodge, but they had no room for him at this moment, hence he had been sent to a hostelry, licensed to take lodgers; much to the regret of Adam de Maresco. But he could not show partiality. Each newcomer must take his turn, according to the date of the entry of his name. The friary was on the marshy ground between the walls and the Isis, on land bestowed upon them in charity, amongst the huts of the poor whom they loved. At first huts of mud and timber, as rough and rude as those around, arose within the fence and ditch which they drew and dug around their habitations, but the necessities of the climate had driven them to build in stone, for the damp climate, the mists and fogs from the Isis, soon rotted away their woodwork. And so Martin found a very simple, but very substantial building in the Norman architecture of the period. The first “Provincial” of the Greyfriars had persuaded Robert Grosseteste, afterwards the great Bishop of Lincoln, to lecture at the school they founded in their Oxford house, and all his powerful influence was exercised to gain them a sound footing in the University. They deserved it, for their schools attained a reputation throughout Christendom, so nobly was the work, which Grosseteste began, carried on by his scholar and successor, Adam de Maresco.

And they had helped to make Oxford, as it was then, the second city of importance in England, and only second to Paris amongst the learned cities of the world.

Martin was shown along a cloister looking through the most sombre of Norman arches, upon a greensward. The doors of many cells opened upon it. He was told to knock at one of them, and a deep voice replied, “Enter in the name of the Lord.”

It was a large, plain room, with a vaulted ceiling lighted by lancet windows and scantily furnished; rough oaken benches, a plain heavy table, covered with parchments and manuscripts: in one recess a Prie-Dieu beneath a crucifix, and under the fald stool a skull, with the words “memento mori,” three or four chairs with painfully straight backs, a cupboard for books (manuscripts) and parchments, another for vestments ecclesiastical or collegiate. This was all which cumbered the bare floor. At the corner of the room a spiral stone staircase led to the bed chamber.

Before the table stood an aged and venerable man, in the gray clothing of the Franciscans, sweet in face, pleasant in manner, dignified in hearing, in reputation without a stain, in learning unsurpassed.

Martin bowed reverently before him, and gave him the chaplain’s letter.

“I had heard of thy arrival, my son. I trust thou hast found comfortable lodgings at the hostel I recommended?”

“I have slept well, my father.”

“And hast not forgotten thy duty to God?”

“I should do discredit to my teacher at Kenilworth if I did.  I have been to the abbey church.”

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“He is a man of God, and I doubt not thou art worthy of his love, for he writes of thee as a father might of a much-loved son. But now, my son, we must break our fast. Come to the refectorium with me.”

Passing into the cloister they came to the dining hall or “refectorium.” Three long tables, a fourth where the elders and professors sat, on a raised platform at right angles to the others. A hundred men and boys had already assembled, and after a Latin grace, breakfast began. It was not a fast day, so the fare was substantial, although quite plain—porridge, pease soup, bread, meat, cheese, and ale. The most sober youth of the university were there, men who meant eventually to assume the gray habit, and carry the Gospel over wilderness and forest, in the slums of towns, or amongst the heathen, counting peril as nought. There was no buzz of conversation, only from a stone pulpit the reader read a chapter from the Gospels.

After this was done, grace after meat was said, and the elders first departed, the great master taking Martin back with him into his cell.

“And now, my son, what dost thou come to Oxford for?”

“To learn that I may afterwards teach.”

“And what dost thou desire to become?”

“One of your holy brotherhood, a brother of Saint Francis.”

“Dost thou know what that means, my son? Scanty clothing, hard fare, the absence of all that men most value, the welcoming of perils and hardships as thy daily companions, that thou mayst take thy life in thy hand, and find the sheep of Christ amongst the wolves.”

“All this I have been told.”

“Well, my son, thou art yet new to the world. At Oxford thou will see it, and will make thy choice better when thou knowest both what thou rejectest and what thou seekest. Meanwhile, guard thy youthful steps; avoid quarrelling, fighting, drinking, dicing; mortify thine own flesh—”

“Do these temptations await me in Oxford?”

“The air has been full of them, since Henry brought the thousand students from the gay university of Paris hither. Thou wilt soon see, and gauge thy power of resisting temptation. I would not say, stay indoors. The virtue which has never been tested is nought.”

“Where do the brethren chiefly work for God?”

“In the noisome lazar houses, amongst the lepers, in the shambles of Newgate, here on the swamps between the walls and the Thames, where men live and suffer.  We do not enter the brotherhood to build grand buildings.  We sleep on bare pallets without pillows.”

“Why without pillows?” asked Martin, wondering.

“We need no little mountains to lift our heads to heaven.  None but the sick go shod.”

“Is it not dangerous to health to go without shoes in the winter?”

“God protects us,” said the master, smiling sweetly.  “One of our friars found a pair of shoes last winter on a frosty morning, and wore them to matins.  At night he had a dream.  He dreamt that he was travelling on the work of God, and that at a dangerous pass in the forest of the Cotswolds, robbers leapt out upon him, crying, ’Kill, kill.’

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“‘I am a friar,’ he shrieked.

“‘You lie,’ they replied, ‘for you go shod.’

“He awoke and threw the shoes out of the window.”

“And did he catch cold afterwards?”

Another smile.

“No, my son, all these things go by habit.”

“Shall I begin to leave off my shoes?”

“Not yet, your vocation is not settled.  You may yet choose the world.”

“I never shall.”

“Poor boy, you are young and cannot tell.  Perhaps before nightfall a different light may be thrown upon your good resolutions.”

A pause ensued.  At length Martin went on, “At least you have books.  I love books.”

“At first we had not even them, but later on the Holy Father thought that those who contend with the unbelieving learned should be learned themselves.  They who pour forth must suck in.”

“When did the Order come to Oxford?”

“Thirty years agone.  When we first landed at Dover we made our way to London, the home of commerce, and Oxford, the home of learning.  The two first gray brethren lost their way in the woods of Nuneham, on their road to the city, and afraid of the floods, which were out, and of the dark night, which made it difficult to avoid the water, took refuge in a grange, which belonged to the Abbey of Abingdon, where dwelt a small branch of the great Benedictine Brotherhood.  Their clothes were ragged and torn with thorns, and they only spoke broken English, so the monks took them for the travelling jugglers of the day, and welcomed them with great hospitality.  But after supper they all assembled in the common room, and bade the supposed jugglers show their craft.

“’We be not jugglers, we be poor brethren of our Lord and Saint Francis.’

“Now the monks were very jealous of the new Order, so unlike themselves, in its renunciation of ease and luxury, and in very spite they called them knaves and impostors, and kicked them out of doors.”

“What did they do?”

“They slept under a tree, and the angels comforted them. The next day they got to Oxford and began their work. The plague had been raging in the poorer quarters of the city, and they brought the joy of the Gospel to those miserable people. At length their numbers increased, and they built this house wherein we dwell.”

In such conversation as this Martin passed a happy hour, then went to the first lecture he attended, in the schools attached to the friary, where the great works of Augustine and Aquinas formed the text books; no Creek as yet. He passed from Latin to Logic, as the handmaid of theology. The great thinker Aristotle supplied the method, not the language or matter, and became the ally of Christianity, under the rendering of a learned brother.

Then followed the noontide meal, a stroll with some younger companions of his own age, to whom he had been specially introduced, which led them so far afield that they only returned in time for the vesper service, at the friary.

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After the service Martin should have returned to his lodgings at once, but, tempted by the novelty of all he saw about him, he lingered in the streets, and saw cause to alter his opinion of the extreme propriety of the students. Some of them were playing at pitch and toss in the thievish corners. At least half a dozen pairs of antagonists were settling their quarrels with their fists or with quarterstaves, in various secluded nooks. Songs, gay rather than grave, not to say a trifle licentious, resounded; while once or twice he was asked: "Are you North or South?"—a query to which he hardly knew how to reply, Kenilworth being north and Sussex south of Oxford.

But the penalty of not answering was a rude jostling, which tried his temper sadly, and awoke the old Adam within him, which our readers remember only slumbered. He looked through the open door of a tavern. It was full of the young reprobates, and the noise and turmoil was deafening.

As he stood by the door, three or four grave-looking men came along.

"We must get them all home, or there will be bloodshed tonight," Martin heard one say.

"It will be difficult," replied the other.

Into the tavern they turned, and the noise suddenly subsided.

"What do ye here, ye reprobates, that ye stand drinking, dicing, quarrelling? To your hostels, every one of you," said the first.

Martin expected scornful resistance, and was surprised to see that instead, all the rapscallions evacuated the place, and the "proctors," as we should now call them, remained to remonstrate with the host, whose license they threatened to withdraw.

"How can I help it?" he said. "They be too many for me."

"If you cannot keep order, seek another trade," was the stern response. "We cannot have the morals of our scholars corrupted."

"Bless you, sirs, it is they who corrupt me. I don't know half the wickedness they do."

Our readers need not believe him, the proctors did not.

But Martin took the warning, and was bent on getting home, only he lost his way, and could not find it again. It was not for want of asking; but the young scholars he met preferred lies to truth, in the mere frolic of puzzling a newcomer, and sent him first to Frideswide's, thence to the East Gate, near Saint Clement's Chapel, and he was making his way back with difficulty along the High Street when he heard an awful confusion and uproar about the "Quatre Voies" (Carfax) Conduit.

“Down with the lubberly North men!”

“Split their skulls, though they be like those of the bullocks their sires drive!”

“Down with the moss troopers!”

“Boves boreales!”

And answering cries:

“Down with the lisping, smooth-tongued Southerners!”

“Australes asini!”

“Eheu!”

“Slay me every one with a burr in his mouth.” (An allusion to the Northumbrian accent.)

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“Down with the mincing fools who have got no r.r.r’s”

“Burrrrn them, you should say.”

“Frangite capita.”

“Percutite porcos boreales.”

“Vim inferre australibus asinis.”

“Sternite omnes Gallos.”

So they shouted imprecations in Latin and English, and eke in French, for there were many Gauls about.

What chance of getting through the fighting, drunken, riotous mobs? Quarterstaves were rising and falling upon heads and shoulders. No deadlier weapons were used, but showers of missiles from time to time descended, unsavoury or otherwise.

At length the superior force of the Northern men prevailed, and Martin, whose blood was strangely stirred, saw a slim and delicate youth fighting so bravely with a huge Northern ox ("bos borealis,” he called him) that for a time he stayed the rush, until the whole Southern line gave way and Martin, entangled with the rout, got driven down Saint Mary’s Lane, opposite the church of that name, an earlier building on the site of the present University church.

At an angle of the street, where another lane entered in, the young Southerner before mentioned turned to bay, and with three or four more of his countryfolk kept the narrow way against scores of pursuers.

Martin could not restrain himself any longer. He saw three or four men pressed by dozens, and rushed with all the fire of his generous and impetuous nature to their aid, in time to intercept a blow aimed at the young leader:

Well could he brandish such weapons, and he stood side by side and settled many a “bos borealis,” or northern bullock, with as much zest as ever a southern butcher. But at length his leader fell, and Martin stood diverting the strokes aimed at his fallen companion, who was stunned for the moment, until a rough hearty voice cried out:

“Let them alone, they have had enough. ’Tis cowardly to fight a dozen to one. Listen, the row is on in the Quatre Voies again. We shall find more there.”

The two were left alone.

Martin raised his wounded companion, whose head was bleeding profusely.

“Art thou hurt much?”

“Not so very much, only dazed.  I shall soon be better.  I am close home.”

“Let me support you.  Lean on me, I will see you safe.”

“You came just in time.  Where did you come from?  I never saw you before—and where did you learn to handle the cudgel so well?”

“From the woods of merry Sussex, and later on, the tilt yard of Kenilworth.”

“Oh, you are a true Southerner, then.  So am I, the second son of Waleran de Monceux of Herst, in the Andredsweald.

“Here we are at home—come in to Saint Dymas’ Hall.”

## Chapter 8:  Hubert At Lewes Priory.

William de Warrenne and Gundrada his wife, the daughter of the mighty Conqueror, were travelling on the Continent and made a pilgrimage to the famous Abbey of Clairvaux, presided over by the great abbot, poet, and preacher of the age, Saint Bernard.  So much did they admire all they saw and heard, so sweet was the contrast of monastic peace to their life of ceaseless turmoil, that they determined to found such a house of God on their newly-acquired domains in Sussex, after the fashion of Clairvaux.

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Already they had superseded the wooden Saxon church of Saint Pancras, the boy martyr of ancient Rome, which they found at Lewes, by a stone building, and now upon its site they began to erect a mightier edifice by far, upon proportions which would entail the labour of generations.

A wondrous and beautiful priory arose; it covered forty acres, its church was as big as a cathedral, a magnificent cruciform pile—one hundred and fifty feet long, sixty-five feet in height from pavement to roof; there were twenty-four massive pillars in the nave {14}, each thirty feet in circumference; but it was not until the time of their grandson, the third earl, that it was dedicated. Nor indeed were its comely proportions enhanced by the two western towers until the very date of our tale, nearly two centuries later. Then it lived on in its beauty, a joy to successive generations, until the vandals of Thomas Cromwell, trained to devastation, so completely destroyed it in a few brief weeks that the next generation had almost forgotten its site {15}.

The first monks were foreigners, by the advice of Lanfranc, and, as a great favour, Saint Bernard sent three of his own brethren from Clairvaux, who taught the good people of Lewes to sing “Jesu dulcis memoria.” Loth though we are to confess it, there can be little doubt that the foreigners were a great advance in learning and piety upon the monks before the Conquest; the first prior, Lanzo, was conspicuous for his many virtues and sweet ascetic disposition.

There the bones of the founders were laid to rest beneath the gorgeous fabric they had founded, and there they had hoped to await the day of doom and righteous retribution. But alas! poor Normans! in the sixteenth century old Harry pulled the grand church down above their heads; in the nineteenth the navvies, making the railroad, disinterred their bones. But they respected the dead, the names William and Gundrada were upon the coffins which their profane mattocks unearthed, and the reader may see them at Southover Church.

In the freshness of a May morning Hubert and his new uncle, Sir Nicholas Harengod, dismounted at the gate of the priory, having left their train at the hostelry up in the town.

“Canst thou tell us whether the brother of Saint John, Roger erst of Walderne, is tarrying within?”

“Certes he is, but just now he heareth the Chapter Mass—few services or offices doth he miss, and like Saint James of old, his knees are worn as hard as the knees of camels.”

“We would fain see him—here is his son.”

“By our lady, not to mention Saint Pancras, a well-favoured stripling. And thou?”

“I am Sir Nicholas of Walderne,” said he of that query, with some importance, which was quite lost upon the janitor.

“Walderne!  Some place in the woods may be.  Well, get you, worshipful sirs, to the hospitium, where we feed all hungry folk at the hour of noon, and I will strive to find the good brother.”

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The splendid group of buildings, of which only a few half-demolished walls remain, rose before them, on each side of the great quadrangle which they now entered; the chapter house, where the brethren met for counsel; the refectory, where they fed; the dormitory, where they slept; the scriptory, where they copied those beautiful manuscripts which antiquarians love to obtain; the infirmary, where the sick were tended; and lastly, the hospitium or guest house, where all travellers and pilgrims were welcome.

They entered the hospitium, where the noontide meal was about to be served. It was plain but ample; solid joints, huge loaves, ale, and even wine in moderation. Some twenty sat down to the hospitable board.

During the “noon meat” a homily was read. When the meal was over a lay brother came and beckoned Sir Nicholas and Hubert to follow him. He led them to the cloisters and knocked at the door of a cell.

“Come in,” said a deep voice.

Could this be the father Hubert had so longed to know, clad in a long dark dress, with haggard and worn features, which, however, still preserved their native nobility?

At the sight of his visitors he showed an emotion he vainly endeavoured to repress, under an affectation of self control. He greeted Sir Nicholas kindly, but embraced his fair son, while tears he could not repress streamed down his worn cheeks.

“This is then my Hubert. Ah, how like thy short-lived mother! She lives again in thee, my boy.”

“But, my father, I trust thy courage and valour have descended to me also. They do not call me girlish at Kenilworth.”

“Such as I have to bequeath is, I trust, thine. Thy mother came of a race more addicted to lute and harp than sword or spear. It was the worse for them in their dire need, when the stern father of him who shelters thee harried their land with fire and sword.

“But we waste time. Sit down and let the eyes of the father, weary of the world, gaze upon the boy in whom he lives again.”

For a few moments there was silence, during which Roger seemed struggling to overcome an emotion which overpowered him.

“I was thinking of the sunny land of Provence, and was there again with one dearly loved, who was only spared to me a few short months. She died in giving thee birth, my Hubert; had she lived, I had not become the wreck I am.

“So thou desirest to go forth into the world, my son?”

“As thou didst also, my father.”

“But I trust under other auspices.  Tell me not of my giddy youth.
Dearly did I pay the price of youthful folly and unseemly strife.
Thou, too, my boy, must buy experience; God grant more cheaply than
I bought mine.”

There he shuddered.

“My boy, hast thou ever wished to be a warrior of the Cross—a crusader?”

“Often, oh how often.  In that way I would fain serve God.”

# Page 44

The monk soldier smiled.

“And how wouldst thou attempt to convert the infidel?”

“At the first blasphemy he uttered I would cut him down, cleave him to the chine.”

“Such our knights generally hold to be the better way, for their arms were readier than their tongues, but I never heard that they saved the souls of the heathen thereby.”

“No one wants to see them in heaven, I should think.  Let them go to their own place.”

“It is wrong, I know it is.  It must be.  There is a better way—come with me, boy, I would fain show thee something.”

He led the wondering boy into the garden of the monastery.  There in the centre arose an artificial mount, and upon it stood a cross—the figure of the Redeemer, bending, as in death, from the rood.  It was called “The Calvary,” and men came there to pray.

The father bent his knee—the son did the same.

“Now, my boy, whom did He die for but His enemies?  Even for His murderers He cried, ‘Father, forgive them!’ And you would fain slay them.”

Hubert was silent.

“When thou art struck—”

“No one ever struck me without getting it back, at least no boy of my own age,” interrupted Hubert.

“And He said, ’When thou art smitten on one cheek, turn the other to the smiter.’”

“But, my father, must we all be like that?  I am sure I couldn’t be that sort of Christian; even the good earl Simon is not, nor Martin either.  Perhaps the chaplain is—do you think so?”

“Who is Martin?”

“The best boy I know, but I have seen him fight.”

“Well, and thou may’st fight nay, must, as the world goes, in a good cause, and there is a sword which thou must bear unsullied through the conflict.  But if thou avengest thine own private wrongs, as I did, or bearest rancour against thy personal foes, never wilt thou deliver me.”

“Deliver thee?”

“Yes, my child.  I am under a curse, because on the very day of the great sacrifice on the Cross, on a Friday, I slew a man who had insulted me.  He died unhouselled, unanointed, unannealed, and his ghost ever haunts my midnight hour.”

“Even here, in this holy, consecrated place?”

“Even in the very church itself.”

“Can any one else see it?”

“They have never done so.  Perhaps as thou art of my blood, it might be permitted thee.”

“I will try.  Let me stay this night with thee, and watch by thy side in the church.”

“Thou shalt be blessed in the deed.  I will ask Sir Nicholas to tarry the night if he can do so.”

“Or I might ride back alone tomorrow.”

“The forest is dangerous; the outlaws abound.”

“That for the outlaws, hujus facio;” and Hubert snapped his fingers.  It was about the only scrap of Latin he cared for.

The father smiled sadly.

“Come, we are keeping Sir Nicholas waiting;” and they returned to the great quadrangle, where they found that worthy striding up and down with some impatience.

# Page 45

“We must be off at once, brother, Hubert and I. The woods are not over safe after nightfall.”

“I must ask thee to spare me my son a while. I would fain make his further acquaintance.”

“Come back with us to Walderne, then. The lad would soon die of the gloom of a monastery.”

“I spent four years in one, and the earl found me alive at the end,” said Hubert.

“Nay, my brother, I may not leave the priory now.”

“But how long wilt thou keep the boy?”

“Only till tomorrow.”

“Well, I may tarry till tomorrow, but not at the monastery. My old crony, the De Warrenne up at the castle, will lodge me, and I will return for the lad after the Chapter Mass, at nine.”

Of all forms of architecture the Norman appears to the writer the most awe inspiring. Its massive round pillars, its bold, but simple arch, have an effect upon the mind more imposing and solemnising, if we may coin the word, than the more florid architecture of the decorated period, which may aptly be described as “Gothic run to seed.” Such a stern and simple structure was the earlier priory church of Lewes, in the days of which we write.

A little before midnight two forms entered the south transept by a little wicket door. There was a black darkness over the heavens that night, and a high wind moaned and shrieked about the upper turrets of the stately fane. Oh, how solemn was the inner aspect at that dread hour, lighted only by the seven lamps, which, typical of the Seven Spirits of God, burned in the choir, pendent from the roof.

One timorous glance Hubert gave into the dark recesses of the aisles and transept, into the dim space overhead, as if he almost expected to hear the flapping of ghostly pinions in the portentous gloom. A sense of mystery daunted his spirit as he followed his sire by the light of a feeble lamp, carried in the hand, amidst the tall columns which rose like tree trunks around, each shaft appearing to rise farther than the sight could penetrate, ere it gave birth to the arch from its summit. Dead crusaders lay around in stone, and strove with grim visage to draw the sword and smite the worshippers of Mohammed, as if in the very act they had been petrified by a new Gorgon’s head. The steps of the intruders seemed sacrilegious, breaking the solemn stillness of the night as the father led the son into the chapel of the patron saint of his order:

Who propped the Virgin in her faint,
The loved Apostle John.

There the horror-stricken Hubert heard the dismal tale which we have already related, and that his unhappy father believed himself yet visited each night by the ghost of the man he had slain. And also that it was fixed in his poor diseased brain that the apparition would not rest until the crusade, vowed by the Sieur de Fievrault, but cut short by his fall, should be made by proxy, and that the proxy must be one sans peur et sans reproche. And that this reparation made, the poor spirit, according to the belief of the age, released from purgatorial fires, might enter Paradise and reappear no more between the hours of midnight and cock crowing to trouble the living.

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“What an absurd story,” the sceptic may say.  No doubt it is to us, but a man must live in his own age, and there was nought absurd or improbable to young Hubert in it all.

And when the weird tale was finished, and the hour of midnight tolled boom! boom! boom! from the tower above, every stroke sent a thrill through the heart of the youth. That dread hour, when, as men thought, the powers of darkness had the world to themselves, when a thousand ghosts shrieked on the hollow wind, when midnight hags swept through the tainted air, and goblins gibbered in sepulchres.

Just then Hubert caught his father’s glance, and it made each separate hair erect itself:

Like quills upon the fretful porcupine.

“Father,” cried the boy, “what art thou gazing at? what aileth thee?  I see nought amiss.”

Words came from the father’s lips, not in reply to his son, but as if to some object unseen by all besides.

“Yes, unhappy ghost, I may dare thy livid terrors now.  My son, thy proxy, is by my side, pure and shameless, brave and trustworthy.  He shall carry thy sword to the holy soil and dye it ’deep in Paynim blood.’  Then thou and I may rest in peace.”

“Father, I see nought.”

“Not there, between those pillars?”

“What is it?”

“A dead man, with a sword wound in his open breast, which he displays.  His eyes live, yea, and the wound lives.”

“No, father, there is nothing.”

“Then go and stand between those pillars, and prove it to me to be void.”

Hubert hesitated.  He would sooner have fought a hundred boyish battles with fist, quarterstaff, or even deadly weapons—but this—

“Ah, thou darest not.  Nay, I blame thee not, yet thou didst say there was nothing.”

Hubert could not resist that pleading tone in which the sire seemed to ask release from his own delusion.  He went with determined step, and stood on the indicated spot.

“He is gone.  He fled before thee.  The omen is good.  Thou shalt deliver thy sire—let us pray together.”

Sire and son knelt until the first note of the matin song just before daybreak (it was the month of May) broke the utterance of the father and, we fear we must own it, the sleep of the son.

Domine labia mea aperies
Et os meum annuntiabit laudem Tuam.

The sombre-robed monks were in the choir, the organ rolling out its deep notes in accompaniment to the plain song of the Venite exultemus, which then, as now, preceded the psalms for the day.  Then came the hymn:

Lo night and clouds and darkness wrap
The world in dark array;
The morning dawns, the sun breaks in,
Hence, hence, ye shades—away {16}!

“Come, Hubert, dear son, worthy of thy sainted mother.  We will praise Him, too, for He has lifted the darkness from my heart.”

## Chapter 9:  The Other Side Of The Picture.

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The young scion of the house of Herstmonceux led Martin a few steps down the lane opposite Saint Mary's Church, until they came to the vaulted doorway of a house of some pretensions. Its walls were thick, its windows deep set and narrow. Dull in external appearance, it did not seem to be so within, for sounds of riotous mirth proceeded from many a window left open for admittance of air. The great door was shut, but a little wicket was on the latch, and Ralph de Monceux opened it, saying:

"Come and do me the honour of a short visit, and give me the latest news from dear old Sussex."

"What place is this?" replied Martin.

"Beef Halt, so called because of the hecatombs of oxen we consume."

Martin smiled.

"What is the real name?"

"It should be 'Ape Hall,' for here we ape men of learning, whereas little is done but drinking, dicing, and fighting. But you will find our neighbours in the next street have monopolised that title, with yet stronger claims."

"But what do the outsiders call you?"

"Saint Dymas' Halt, since we never pay our debts. But the world calls it Le Oriole {17} Hostel. A better name just now is 'Liberty Hall,' for we all do just as we like. There is no king in Israel."

So speaking, he lifted the latch, and saluted a gigantic porter:

"Holloa, Magog! hast thou digested the Woodstock deer yet?"

"Not so loud, my young sir. We may be heard." He paused, but put his hand knowingly to the neck just under the left ear.

"Pshaw, he that is born to die in his bed can never be hanged. Where is Spitfire?"

"Here," said a sharp-speaking voice, coming from a precocious young monkey in a servitor's dress.

"Get me a flagon of canary, and we will wash down the remains of the pasty."

"But strangers are not admitted after curfew," said the porter.

"And I must be getting to my lodgings," said Martin.

“Tush, tush, didn’t you hear that this is Liberty Hall?

“Shut your mouth, Magog—here is something to stop it.  This young warrior just knocked down a bos borealis, who strove to break my head.  Shall I not offer him bread and salt in return?”

The porter offered no further opposition, for the speaker slipped a coin into his palm as he continued:

“Come this way, this is my den.  Not that way, that is spelunca latronum, a den of robbers.”

“Holloa! here is Ralph de Monceux, and with a broken head, as usual.

“Where didst thou get that, Master Ralph, roaring Ralph?”

Such sounds came from the spelunca latronum.”

“At the Quatre Voies, fighting for your honour against a drove of northern oxen.”

“And whom hast thou brought with thee to help thee mend it?”

“The fellow who knocked down the bos who gave it me, as deftly as any butcher.”

“Let us see him.”

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“What name shall I give thee?” whispered Ralph.

“Martin.”

“Martin of—?”

“Martin from Kenilworth,” said our bashful hero, blushing.

“Thou didst say thou wert of Sussex?”

“So I am, but I was adopted into the earl’s household three years agone.”

“Then he is Northern,” said a listener.

“No, he came from Sussex.”

“Say where? no tricks upon gentlemen.”

“Michelham Priory.”

“Michelham Priory.  Ah! an acolyte!  Tapers, incense, and albs.”

“Acolyte be hanged.  He does not fight like one at all events.”

“Come up into my den.

“Come, Hugh, Percy, Aylmer, Richard, Roger, and we will discuss the matter deftly over a flagon of canary with eke a flask or two of sack, in honour of our new acquaintance.”

“Nay,” said Martin, “now I have seen you safe home, I must go.  It is past curfew.  I am a stranger, and should be at my lodgings.”

“We will see thee safely home, and improve the occasion by cracking a few more bovine skulls if we meet them, the northern burring brutes.  Their lingo sickens me, but here we are.”

So speaking, he opened the door of the vaulted chamber he called his “den.”  It was sparingly furnished, and bore no likeness to the sort of smoking divan an undergrad of the tone of Ralph would affect now in Oxford.  Plain stove, floor strewn with rushes, rude tapestry around the walls, with those uncouth faces and figures worked thereon which give antiquarians a low idea of the personal appearance of the people of the day, a solid table, upon which a bear might dance without breaking it, two or three stools, a carved cabinet, a rude hearth and chimney piece, a rough basin and ewer of red ware in deal setting, a pallet bed in a recess.

And the students, the undergraduates of the period, were worth studying. One had a black eye, another a plastered head, a third an arm in a sling, a fourth a broken nose. Martin stared at them in amazement.

“We had a tremendous fight here last night. The Northerners besieged us in our hostel. We made a sally and levelled a few of the burring brutes before the town guard came up and spoiled the fun. What a pity we can’t fight like gentlemen with swords and battle axes!”

“Why not, if you must fight at all?” said Martin, who had been taught at Kenilworth to regard fists and cudgels as the weapons of clowns.

“Because, young greenhorn,” said Hugh, “he who should bring a sword or other lethal weapon into the University would shortly be expelled by alma mater from her nursery, according to the statutes for that case made and provided.”

“But why do you come here, if you love fighting better than learning? There is plenty of fighting in the world.”

“Some come because they are made to come, others from a vocation for the church, like thyself perhaps, others from an inexplicable love of books; you should hear us when our professor Asinus Asinorum takes us in class.

# Page 49

“Amo, amas, amat, see me catch a rat.  Rego, regis, regit, let me sweat a bit.”

“Tace, no more Latin till tomorrow.  Here is a venison pasty from a Woodstock deer, smuggled into the town beneath a load of hay, under the very noses of the watch.”

“Who shot it?”

“Mad Hugh and I.”

“Where did you get the load of hay from?”

“Oh, a farmer’s boy was driving it into town.  We knocked him down, then tied him to a tree.  It didn’t hurt him much, and we left him a walnut for his supper.  Then Hugh put on his smock and other ragtags, and hiding the deer under the hay, drove it straight to the door, and Magog, who loves the smell of venison, took it in, but we made him buy the bulk of the carcase.”

“How much did he give?”

“A rose noble, and a good pie out of the animal into the bargain.”

“And what did you do with the cart?”

“Hugh put on the smock again, and drove it outside the northern gate, past ‘Perilous Hall,’ then gave the horse a cut or two of the whip, and left it to find its way home to Woodstock if it could.”

“A good thing you are here with your necks only their natural length.  The king’s forester would have hung you all three.”

“Only he couldn’t catch us.  We have led him many a dance before now.”

When the reader considers that killing the king’s deer was a hanging matter in those days, he will not think these young Oxonians behind their modern successors in daring, or, as he may call it, foolhardiness.

Martin was hungry, the smell of the pasty was very appetising, and neither he nor any one else said any more until the pie had been divided upon six wooden platters, and all had eaten heartily, washing it down with repeated draughts from a huge silver flagon of canary, one of the heirlooms of Herstmonceux; and afterwards they cleansed their fingers, which they had used instead of forks, in a large central finger glass—nay, bowl of earthenware.

“More drink, I have a jorum of splendid sack in you cupboard,” cried their host when the flagon was empty.

“Now a song, every one must give a song.

“Hugh, you begin.”
I love to lurk in the gloom of the wood
Where the lithesome stags are roaming,
And to send a sly shaft just to tickle their ribs
Ere I smuggle them home in the gloaming.

“Just the case with this one we have been eating.  But that measure is slow, let me give you one,” said Ralph.

Come, drink until you drop, my boys,
And if a headache follow,
Why, go to bed and sleep it off,
And drink again tomorrow.

Martin began to fear that the wine was suffocating his conscience in its fumes—and said:

“I must go now.”

“We will all go with you.”

“Magog won’t let us out.”

“Yes he will, we will say we are all going to Saint Frideswide’s shrine to say our prayers.”

# Page 50

“The dice before we go.”

“Throw against me,” said Hugh to our Martin.

“I cannot, I never played in my life.”

“Then the sooner you begin the better.

“Here, roaring Ralph, this innocent young acolyte says he has never touched the dice.”

“Then the sooner he begins the better.

“Come, stake a mark against me.”

“He hasn’t got one.”

Shame, false shame, conquered Martin’s repugnance.  He threw one of his few coins down, and Ralph did the same.

“You throw first—six and four—ten.  Here goes—I have only two threes, the marks are yours.”

“Nay, I don’t want them.”

“Take them and be hanged.  D’ye think I can’t spare a mark?”

“Fighting, dicing, drinking,” and then came to Martin’s mind the words of Adam de Maresco, uttered that very morning, and now he determined to go at once at any cost, and turned to the door.

“Nay, we are all going to see thee safe home.  The boves boreales may be grazing in the streets.”

“I hear them!  Burr! burr! burr!”

Down the stairs they all staggered.  Martin felt so overcome as he emerged into the air that he did not know at first how to walk straight, yet he had not drunk half so much as the rest.

“Ce n’est que le premier pas qui coute.”

But happily (to ease the mind of our readers we will say at once) he was not to take many steps on this road.

“Magog!  Magog! open! open!”

“Not such a noise, you’ll wake the old governor above,”—alluding to the master of the hostel.

“He won’t wake, not he.  It does not pay to see too much.  He knows his own interests.”

“Past curfew,” growled Magog.  “Can’t let any one out.”

“That only means he wants another coin.”

“Open, Magog, we are going to pray at Saint Frideswide’s shrine for thee.”

“We are going to get another deer for thee at Woodstock.”

“We are going by the king’s invitation to visit the palace, and see the ghost of fair Rosamond.”

“We are going to sup with the Franciscans—six split peas and a thimbleful of water to each man.”

Even the venal porter hesitated to let such a crew into the streets, but he gave way under the pressure of another coin.  Cudgel in hand they went forth, and as they passed the hostel they called “Ape Hall” they sang aloud:

Come forth, ye apes, and scratch your polls,
Your learning is in question,
And while ye scratch, eat what ye catch,
To quicken your digestion.

Two or three “apes” looked out of the window much disgusted, as well they might be, and were driven back by a shower of stones.  Onward—shouting, roaring, singing, but they met no one.  All the world was in bed.  The moon alone looked down upon them as she waded through the clouds, casting brilliant light here, leaving black shadows there.

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All at once a light, the light of a torch, turned the corner. The tinkling of a small bell was heard. It was close upon them. A priest bore the last Sacrament to the dying—the Viaticum, or Holy Communion, so called when given in the hour of death.

“Down,” cried Ralph, and they all knelt as it passed, for such was the universal habit. Even vicious sinners thought they atoned for their vice by their ready compliance with the forms of the Church. Many a man in that day would have thought it a less sin to cut a throat than to omit such an act of devotion.

But Martin recognised the priest. It was Adam de Maresco in his gray Franciscan robes, and he thought the father recognised him. He turned crimson with shame at being found in such company.

At last they reached home, and sick at heart he knocked at the door. It was long before he was admitted, and then not without sharp words of reproof, at which his companions laughed, as they turned and went back to Le Oriole.

Martin bathed his head in water to drive away the racking headache. Fire seemed coursing through his veins as he lay down on the hard pallet of straw in his little cell.

He was awoke by a hideous purring; there, as he thought, upon his cast-off garments, sat the enemy of mankind: he had drawn the mark gained at the dice out of the gypsire, and was feasting on it with his eyes, ever and anon licking it with great gusto, and meanwhile purr, purr, purring like a huge cat.

Martin, now awake, dashed from his couch—no fiend was there—he tore his gypsire open, took out the coin, opened his casement, and threw it like an accursed thing into the street. Then he got in bed again and sobbed like a child.

## Chapter 10: Foul And Fair.

The rivalry between Drogo and Hubert became the more intense that both lads were bound to suppress it; and after the return of the latter from Sussex, it found vent in many acts of hostility and spite on the part of the former, who was the older and bigger boy. Yet he could not bully Hubert to any extent. The indomitable pluck and courage of the youngster prevented it. He would not take a blow or an insult without the most desperate resistance in the former case, and the most sarcastic retorts in the latter, and he had both a prompt hand and a cutting tongue. So Drogo had to swallow his hatred as best he could, but it led to many black dark thoughts, and to a determination to rid himself of his rival should the opportunity ever be afforded, by fair means or foul.

“I mean yet to be Lord of Walderne,” he said to himself again and again.

And first of all he longed to get Hubert expelled from Kenilworth, and to deprive him of the favour and protection of the earl; and one day the devil, who often aids and abets those who seek his help, threw a chance in his way.

# Page 52

The earl had found it necessary to put a check upon the constant slaughter of the deer in his large domains, which bade fair to depopulate the forests. Therefore he had especially forbidden the pages to shoot a stag or fawn, under any pretext, and as his orders had been once or twice transgressed, he had caused it to be intimated that the next offence, on the part of a page, would be punished by expulsion: a very light penalty, when on many domains, notably in the royal parks, it was death to a peasant or any common person to kill the red deer.

All the young candidates for knighthood at Kenilworth had their arrows marked, for an arrow was too expensive a thing to be wasted, and therefore the young archers regained their shafts when they had done their work at the target. Such marks were useful also in preventing disputes.

One day, out in the woods, letting fly these shafts at lesser game, such as they were permitted to kill, Hubert lost one of his arrows. A few days afterwards the chief forester came up to the castle to see the earl, who had just returned after a prolonged absence, and his communication caused no little stir.

The next day, after chapel, the earl ordered all the pages, some twenty-five in number, to assemble in their common room, where they received such lessons in the "humanities" from the chaplain as their lord compelled them to accept, often against their taste and inclination, for they thought nothing worth learning save fighting and hunting.

When they had assembled, the earl, attended by the chaplain, appeared. They all stood in humble respect, and he looked with a keen eye down their ranks, as they were ranged about twelve on each side of the hall. A handsome, athletic set they were, dressed in what we should call the Montfort livery—a garb which set off their natural good looks abundantly—the dark features of Drogo; the light eyes and flaxen hair of the son of a Provencal maiden, our Hubert; were fair types of the varieties of appearance to be met amongst the groups.

The earl's features were clouded.

"You are all aware, my boys, of the order that no one below knightly rank should shoot deer in my forests?"

"We are," said one and all.

"Does any page profess ignorance of the rule?"

No reply.

"Then I have another question to put, and first of all, let me beg most earnestly to press upon the guilty one the necessity of truth and honour, which, although it may not justify

me in remitting the penalty, may yet retain him my friendship.  A deer has been slain in the woods, and by one of you.  Let the guilty boy avow his fault."

No one stirred.

The earl looked troubled.

"This grieves me deeply," he said, "far more than the mere offence.  It becomes a matter of honour—he who stirs not, declares himself innocent, called by lawful authority to avow the truth as he now is."

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Once or twice the earl looked sadly at Hubert, but the face of the fair boy was unclouded. If he had looked on the other side, he might have seen anxiety, if not apprehension, on one face.

“Enter then, sir forester.”

The forester entered.

“You found a deer shot by an arrow in the West Woods?”

“I did.”

“And you found the arrow?”

“Yes.”

“Was it marked?”

“It was.”

The earl held an arrow up.

“Who owns the crest of a boar’s head?”

Hubert started.

“I do, my lord—but—but,” and he changed colour.

Do not let the reader wonder at this. Innocence suddenly arraigned is oft as confused as guilt.

“But, my lord, I never shot the deer.”

“Thine arrow is a strong presumptive proof against thee.”

“I cannot tell, my lord, who can have used one of my arrows for such a purpose—I did not.”

Here spoke up another page, a Percy of the Northumbrian breed of warriors.

“My lord, I was out the other day with Hubert in the woods, and he lost an arrow which he shot at a hare. We often lose our arrows in the woods.”

“Does any other page know aught of the matter? Speak to clear the innocent or convict the guilty. As you look forward to knighthood, I adjure you all on your honour.”

Then Drogo, who thought that things were going too well for Hubert, spoke.

“My lord, is it a duty to tell all we know, even if it is against a companion?”

“It is under such circumstances, when the innocent may be suspected.”

“Then, my lord, I saw Hubert shoot that deer, as I was in the West Woods.”

“Saw him!  Did he see you?”

“It is a lie, my lord,” cried Hubert indignantly.  “I cast the lie in his teeth, and challenge him to prove his words by combat in the lists, when I will thrust the slander down his perjured throat.”

The earl had his own doubts as to this new piece of evidence, for he was aware of Drogo’s feelings towards Hubert, and therefore he welcomed the indignant denial of the younger boy.  Still, he could not permit mortal combat at their age.  They were not entitled to claim it while below the rank of knighthood.

“You are too young for the appeal to battle.”

“My lord,” whispered one of his knights, “a similar case occurred at Warkworth Castle when I was there:  a page gave another the direct lie as this one has done, and the earl permitted them to run a course with blunted lances and fight it out; adjudging the dismounted page to be in the wrong, as indeed he afterwards proved to be.”

“Let it be so,” said Earl Simon, who had a devout belief in the ordeal, as manifesting the judgment of the Unerring One.  “We allow the appeal, and it shall be decided this afternoon in the tilt yard.”

Blunted lances!  Not very dangerous, our readers may think at first thought.  But the shock and the violent fall from the horse was really the more dangerous part of the tournament.  The point of the lance seldom penetrated the armour of proof in which combatants were encased.

# Page 54

The pages separated in great excitement. Most of them held with Hubert—for Drogo's arrogant manners had not gained him many friends. Much advice was given to the younger boy how to "go in and win," and the poor lad was eager for the fight whereby his honour was to be vindicated, as though victory and reputation were quite secured, as indeed in his belief they were.

The ordeal! it seems full of superstition to us, unaccustomed to believe in, or to realise, God's direct dealing with the world. But men then thought that God must show the innocence of the accused who thus appealed to Him, whether by battle or by the earlier forms of ordeal {18}.

But was not the casting of lots in the Old Testament akin to the idea, and are there not passages in the Levitical books prescribing similar usages with the object of detecting innocence or guilt?

At all events, the ordeal was allowed to be decisive, and if it were a capital charge, the headsman was at hand to behead the convicted offender—convicted by the test to which he had appealed.

A peculiarly solemn order and ritual was observed in such appeals, when the fight was to the death. The combatants confessed, and received, what to one was probably his last Communion; and thus avowing in the most solemn way their innocence before God and man, they came to the lists. In cases where one of the party must of necessity be perjured, the sin of thus profaning the Sacraments of the Church was supposed to ensure his downfall the more certainly, for would not God the rather be moved to avenge Himself?

But in the case of these pages, both under the degree of knighthood, such solemn sanction was not invoked, yet the affair was sufficiently impressive. The tilt yard was a wide and level sward, bordered on one side by the moat, surrounded by a low hedge, within which was erected a covered pavilion, not much unlike the stands on race courses in general design, only glittering with cloth of gold or silver, with flags and pennons fair.

In the foremost rank of seats sat the earl and his countess, with other guests of rank then residing in the castle, behind were other privileged members of the household, and around the course were grouped such of the retainers and garrison of the castle as the piquant passage of arms between two boys had enticed from their ordinary posts or duties. But perhaps it was only the same general appetite for excitement which gathers the whole mass of boys in our public schools (or did gather in rougher days), to witness a "mill."

But one essential ceremonial was not omitted. The two combatants being admitted to the lists, each stood in turn before the earl, seated in the pavilion, and thus cried:

“Here stands Drogo of Harengod, who maintains that he saw Hubert (of Nowhere) shoot the earl’s deer, and will maintain the same on the body of the said Hubert, soi-disant of Walderne.”

These additions to Hubert’s name were insults, and made the earl frown, while it spoke volumes as to the true cause of the animosity.  Then Hubert stood up and spoke.

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“Here stands Hubert of Walderne, who avows that Drogo of Harengod lies, and will maintain his own innocence on the body of the said Drogo, so help him God.”

Then both knelt, and the chaplain prayed that God, who alone knew the hearts and the hidden actions of men, would reveal the truth, by the events of the struggle.

Then each of the combatants went to his own end of the lists, where a horse and headless lance were awaiting him, under the care of two friends—fratres consociati. Percy, and Alois from Blois, were the friends of Hubert. The chronicler has forgotten who befriended or seconded Drogo, and hopes he found it hard to find any one to do so.

The earl rose up in the pavilion, and bade the herald sound the charge. The two combatants galloped against each other at full speed, and met with a dull heavy shock. Drogo’s lance had, whether providentially or otherwise, just grazed the helmet of his opponent and glanced off. Hubert’s came so full on the crest of his enemy that he went down, horse and all.

Had this been a mortal combat, Hubert would at once have been expected to dismount, and with his sword to compel a confession from his fallen foe, on the pain of instant death in the case of refusal. But this combat was limited to the tourney—and a loud acclaim hailed Hubert as Victor.

Drogo was stunned by his fall, and borne by the earl’s command to his chamber.

“God hath spoken, and vindicated the innocent,” said the earl.

“Rise, my son,” he added to Hubert, who knelt before him. “We believe in thy truth, and will abide by the event of the ordeal; but as thou art saved from expulsion, it is fitting that Drogo should pay the penalty he strove to inflict upon another.”

Hubert was not generous enough to pray for the pardon of his foe (as in any book about good boys he would have done). He felt too deeply injured by the lie.

But his innocence was not left to the simple test of the trial by combat, in which case many modern unbelievers might feel inward doubts. That night the forester sought the earl again, and brought with him a verdurer or under keeper. This man had seen the whole affair, had seen Drogo pick up Hubert’s arrow after the latter was gone, and stand as if musing over it, when a deer came that way, and Drogo let fly the shaft at once. Then he discovered the spectator, and bribed him with all the money he had about him to keep silence, which the fellow did, until he heard of the trial by combat and the accusation of the innocent, whereupon his conscience gave him no rest until he had owned his fault, and bringing the bribe to his chief, the forester, had made full reparation.

There was another gathering of the pages in the great hall on the following day. The earl and chaplain were there, the chief forester and his subordinate. Drogo, still suffering from his fall, and by no means improved in appearance, was brought before them.

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“Drogo de Harengod,” said the earl, “I should have doubted of God’s justice, had the ordeal to which thou didst appeal gone otherwise. But since yesterday the right has been made yet more clear. Dost thou know yon verdurer?”

Drogo looked at the man.

“My lord,” he said. “I accept the decision of the combat. Let me go from Kenilworth.”

“What, without reparation?”

“I have my punishment to bear in expulsion from this place”—("if punishment it be,” he muttered)—“as for my soi-disant cousin, it will be an evil day for him when he crosses my path elsewhere.”

The earl stood astonished at his audacity.

“Thou perjured wretch!” he said. “Thou perverter by bribes! thou liar and false accuser! *Go*, amidst the contempt and scorn of all who know thee.”

And, amidst the hisses of his late companions, Drogo left Kenilworth for ever—expelled.

## Chapter 11: The Early Franciscans.

We are afraid that some of our youthful readers will wonder what cause Martin had for such extreme self reproach, and why he should make such a serious matter of a little dissipation—such as we described in our former chapter.

But Martin had received a higher call, and although the old Adam within him would have its way, at times, yet his whole heart was set on serving God. To Hubert this dissipation would have seemed a small thing; to Martin such drinking, dicing, and brawling was simply selling his birthright for a mess of pottage.

So, with the early dawn, he went to mass at the Franciscan house, and wept all through the service, devoutly offering at the same time the renewed oblation of his heart to God, and praying that through the great sacrifice there commemorated and mystically renewed, the oblation of self might be sanctified.

Then he sought the good prior, Adam de Maresco, and obtaining an audience after the dejeuner or breakfast, poured out all his sorrows and sin.

The good prior almost smiled at the earnestness of the self rebuke. He was not at all shocked. It was just what he had expected; he was only too delighted to find that the young prodigal loathed so speedily the husks which the swine do eat.

“Ah, my son, did I not bid thee not to trust too much to thyself? and now my words have been verified by thy own experience, as it was perhaps well they should be.”

“Well! that I should become a drunkard, dicer, and brawler.”

“Well that thou shouldst so early hate drinking, dicing, and brawling. To many such hatred only comes after years have brought satiety; to thee, my dear child, one night seems to have brought it.”

“Yes, now I am clothed, and in my right mind, like the lunatic who had been cutting himself with stones. But, my father, take me in, I cannot trust myself out of the shelter of the priory.”

“Then thou art not fit to enter it, for we want men whom we may send out into the world without fear. No! the first vacant cell shall be thine, but I will not hasten the time by a day. Thou must prove thy vocation, and then thou mayst join the brotherhood of sweet Saint Francis.”

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“Tell me, my father, how old was the saint when he renounced the world?  Did Francis ever love it?”

“He did, indeed.  He was called ‘Le debonair Francois.’  He loved the Provencal songs, and indeed learned to sing his sweet melodies to Christ after the mode of those songs of earthly love.  His eyes danced with life, he went singing about all day long, and through the glorious Italian night.  But even then he loved his neighbour.  No beggar asked of him in vain.  Liberalis et hilaris was Francis.”

“And did he ever fight?”

“Yes.  When a mere lad, he lay a year in prison at Perugia, having been taken captive in fighting for his own city Assisi.  But even then he was the joy of his fellow captives, from his bright disposition.”

“When did he give up all this?”

“Not till he was ten years older than thou art.  One night he was made king of the feast, at a drinking bout, and went forth, at the head of his companions, to pour forth their songs into the sweet Italian moonlight.  A sudden hush fell upon him.

“‘What ails thee, Francis?’ cried the rest.  ’Art thinking of a wife?’

“‘Yes,’ he said.  ’Of one more noble, more pure, than you can conceive, any of you.’”

“What did he mean?”

“The yearning for the life which is hid with Christ in God had seized him.  It was the last of his revels.

“‘Love set my heart on fire,’

“He used afterwards to sing.  It was at that moment the fire kindled.”

“I wish it would set mine on fire.”

“Perhaps the fire is already kindled.”

“Nay, think of last night.”

“And what makes thee loathe last night?  Other young men do not loathe such follies.”

“Shame, I suppose.”

“And what gives thee that divine shame?  It is not thine own sinful nature.  There is something in thee which is not of self.”

“You think so?  Oh, you think so?”

“Indeed I do.”

“Then you give me fresh hope.”

“Since you ask it of a fellow worm.”

“But what can I do?  I want to be up and doing.”

“Keep out of temptation.  Avoid the causeway after vespers.  Meanwhile I will enrol thy name as an associate of the Order, and thou shalt go forth as Francis did, while not yet quite separated from the world.  Do you know the story of the leper?”

“Tell it me.”

“One day the saint, not yet a saint, only trying to be one, met one of these wretched beings.  At first he shuddered.  Then, remembering that he who would serve Christ must conquer self, he dismounted from his horse, kissed the leper’s hand, and filled it with money.  Then he went on his road, but looked back to see what had become of the leper, and lo! he had disappeared, although the country was quite plain, without any means of concealment.”

“What had become of him?”

“That I cannot tell thee.  Francis thought afterwards it was an angel, if not the Blessed Lord Himself.”

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“May I visit the lepers tomorrow?”

“The disease is infectious.”

“What of that?” said Martin, unconsciously imitating his friend Hubert.

“Well, we will see.  Again Francis once gave way to pride.  How do you think he conquered it?”

“Tell me, for that is my great sin.”

“He exchanged his gay clothes with a wretched beggar, and begged all day on the steps of Saint Peter’s at Rome.”

“May I do that on the steps of Oseney?”

“It would not be a bad way to subdue the pride of the flesh!  But then there are other things to subdue.  Dost thou love to eat the fat and drink the sweet?”

“All too well!”

“So did Francis.  He had a very sweet tooth, so he lived for a week on such scraps as he could beg in beggar’s plight from door to door; all this in the first flush of his devotion.”

“And what else?”

“Ah! that without which all else is nought, the root from which it all sprang:  he lived as one who felt the words, ’I live, yet not I, but Christ which liveth in me.’  He would spend hours in rapt devotion before the crucifix, with no mortal near, until his very face was transformed, and the love of the Crucified set his heart on fire.”

“And when did he go forth to found his mighty Order?”

“Not until the eighth year of this century, and the twenty-sixth of his age.  One feast of bright Saint Barnaby, he was at mass, and heard the words of the Gospel wherein is described how our Lord sent forth His apostles to preach two by two; without purse, without change of raiment, without staff or shoes {19}.  Out he went, threw off his ordinary clothing, donned a gray robe, like this we wear, tied a rope round for a girdle, and went forth crying:

“‘Repent of your sins, and believe the Gospel!’

“I was travelling in Italy then, and once met him on his road. Methinks I see him now—-his oval face, his full forehead, his clear, bright, limpid eyes, his flowing hair, his long hands and thin delicate fingers, and his commanding presence.

“‘Brother!’ he said. ’Hast thou met with Him of Nazareth? He is seeking for thee.’

“You will hardly believe that I did not understand him at first, so unfamiliar in my giddy youth were the simplest facts of the Gospel. But the words sank as if by miraculous force into my heart, and from that hour I knew no rest till I found Him, or He found me.”

“Was Francis long alone?”

“No. Brother after brother joined him. First Bernard, then Peter, then Giles; they went singing sweet carols along the road, which Francis had composed out of his ready mind. They were the first hymns in the vernacular, and the people stopped to hear about God’s dear Son. Then, collecting a crowd, they preached in the marketplace. Such preaching! Francis’ first sermon in his native town set every one crying. They said the Passion of Jesus had never been so wept over in the memory of man.

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“The brotherhood increased rapidly, and they went on pilgrimage to Rome, to gain the approbation of the Pope. They went on foot, carrying neither purses nor food, but He who careth for the ravens cared for them, and soon they reached the Holy City. The Pope, Innocent the Third, was walking in the Lateran, when up came a poor man in a gray shepherd’s smock, and addressed him. The Pope, indignant at being disturbed in his meditations by this intrusion, bade the intruder leave the palace, and turned away. But the same night he had two dreams: he thought a palm tree grew out of the ground by his side, and rose till it filled the sky.

“‘Lo,’ said a voice, ‘the poor man whom thou hast driven away.’

“Then he thought he saw the church falling, and a figure in a gray robe rushed forth and propped it up—

“‘Lo, the poor man whom thou hast driven away.’

“He sent for the stranger, and Francis opened his heart to the mighty Pontiff.

“‘Go,’ said the Pope, ’in the name of the Lord, and preach repentance to all; and when God has multiplied you in numbers and grace, I will give you yet greater privileges.’

“Then he commanded that they should receive the tonsure, and, although not ordained, be considered clerks.

“Imagine their joy! They visited the tombs of the Holy Apostles; and, bare footed, penniless as they came, went home, singing and preaching all the way. And thus they sang:”

Love sets my heart on fire,
Love of my Bridegroom new,
The Slain: the Crucified!
To Him my heart He drew
When hanging on the Tree,
From whence He said to me
I am the Shepherd true;
Love sets my heart on fire.

I die of sweetest love,
Nor wonder at my fate,
The sword which deals the blow
Is love immaculate.
Love sets my heart on fire (etc).

“So singing, and now and then discoursing on heavenly joys, the little band reached home. And from thence it has grown, until it has attained vast numbers. We are all

over Europe.  The sweet songs of Francis have set Italy on fire.  And now wherever there are sinners to be saved, or sick in body or soul to be tended, you find the Franciscan.

“Now I hear the bell for terce—go forth, my son, and prove your vocation.”

## Chapter 12:  How Hubert Gained His Spurs.

Two years had elapsed since the events related in our last two chapters; and they had passed uneventfully, so far as the lives of the page and the scholar are concerned.

Hubert had attained to the close of his pagedom, and the assumption of the second degree in chivalry, that of squire.  He ever longed for the day when he should be able to fulfil his promise to his poor stricken father, who, albeit somewhat relieved of his incubus, since the night when father and son watched together, was not yet quite free from his ghostly visitant; moderns would say “from his mania.”

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And Martin was still fulfilling his vocation as a novice of the Order of Saint Francis, and was close upon the attainment of the dignity of a scholastic degree—preparatory (for so his late lamented friend had advised) to a closer association with the brotherhood, who no longer despised, as their father Francis did, the learning of the schools.

We say late lamented friend, for Adam de Maresco had passed away, full of certain hope and full assurance of “the rest which remaineth for the people of God.” He died during Martin’s second year at Oxford.

Meanwhile the political strife between the king and the barons had reached its height. The latter felt themselves quite superseded by the new nobility, introduced from Southern France. The English clergy groaned beneath foreign prelates introduced, not to feed, but to shear the flocks. The common people were ruined by excessive and arbitrary taxation.

At last the barons determined upon constitutional resistance, and Earl Simon, following the dictates of his conscience, felt it his duty to cast in his lot with them, although he was the king’s brother-in-law. Still, his wife had suffered deeply at her brother’s hands, and was no “dove bearing an olive branch.”

It was in Easter, 1258, and the parliament, consisting of all the tenants in capiti, who hold lands directly from the crown, were present at Westminster. The king opened his griefs to them—griefs which only money could assuage. But he was sternly informed that money would only be granted when pledges (and they more binding than his oft-broken word) were given for better government, and the redress of specified abuses; and finally, after violent recriminations between the two parties, as we should now say the ministry and the opposition, headed by Earl Simon, parliament was adjourned till the 11th of June, and it was decided that it should meet again at Oxford, where that assembly met which gained the name of the “Mad Parliament.”

On the 22nd of June this parliament decreed that all the king’s castles which were held by foreigners should be rendered back to the Crown, and to set the example, Earl Simon, although he had well earned the name “Englishman,” delivered the title deeds of his castles of Kenilworth and Odiham into the hands of the king.

But the king’s relations by marriage refused to follow this self-denying ordinance, and they well knew that neither the old king nor his young heir, Prince Edward, wished them to follow Earl Simon’s example. A great storm of words followed.

“I will never give up my castles, which my brother the king, out of his great love, has given me,” said William de Valence.

“Know this then for certain, that thou shalt either give up thy castles or thy head,” replied Earl Simon.

The Poitevins saw they were in evil case, and that they were outnumbered at Oxford. So they left the court, and fled all to the Castle of Wolvesham, near Winchester, where their brother, the Bishop Aymer, made common cause with them.

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The barons acted promptly.  They broke up the parliament and pursued.

Hubert was at Oxford throughout the session of the Mad Parliament, in attendance on his lord, as “esquire of the body,” to which rank he, as we have said, had now attained; and at Oxford he met his beloved Martin again.  Yes, Hubert was now an esquire; now he had a right to carry a shield and emblazon it with the arms of Walderne.  He was also withdrawn from that compulsory attendance on the ladies at the castle which he had shared with the other pages.  He had no longer to wait at table during meals.  But fresh duties, much more arduous, devolved upon him.  He had to be both valet and groom to the earl, to scour his arms, to groom his horse, to attend his bed chamber, and to sleep outside the door in an anteroom, to do the honours of the household in his lord’s absence, gracefully, like a true gentleman; to play with his lord, the ladies, or the visitors at chess or draughts in the long winter evenings; to sing, to tell romaunts or stories, to play the lute or harp; in short, to be all things to all people in peace; and in war to fight like a Paladin.

Now he had to learn to wear heavy armour, and thus accoutred, to spring upon a horse, without putting foot to stirrup; to run long distances without pause; to wield the heavy mace, axe, or sword for hours together without tiring; to raise himself between two walls by simply setting his back against one, his feet against the other; in short, to practise all gymnastics which could avail in actual battles or sieges.

In warfare it became his duty to bear the helmet or shield of his lord, to lead his war horse, to lace his helmet, to belt and buckle his cuirass, to help him to vest in his iron panoply, with pincers and hammer; to keep close to his side in battle, to succour him fallen, to avenge him dead, or die with him.

Such being a squire’s duties, what a blessing to Hubert to be a squire to such a Christian warrior as the earl, a privilege he shared with some half dozen of his former fellow pages—turn and turn about.

In this capacity he attended his lord during the pursuit of the foreign favourites to Wolvesham Castle, where they had taken refuge with Aymer de Valence, whom the king, by the Pope’s grace, had made titular bishop of that place.  We say titular, for Englishmen would not permit him to enjoy his see; he spoke no word of English.

At Wolvesham the foreign lords were forced to surrender, and accepted or appeared to accept their sentence of exile.  But ere starting they invited the confederate barons to a supper, wherein they mingled poison with the food.

This nefarious plot Hubert discovered, happening to overhear a brief conversation on the subject between the bishop’s chamberlain and the Jew who supplied the poison, and whom Hubert secured, forcing him to supply the antidote which in all probability saved the lives of the four Earls of Leicester, Gloucester, Hereford, and Norfolk.  The

brother of the Earl of Gloucester did die—the Abbot of Westminster—the others with difficulty recovered.

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Hubert had now a great claim not only on the friendship of his lord, which he had earned before, but on that of these other mighty earls, and they held a consultation together, to decide how they could best reward him for the essential service he had rendered. The earl told the whole story of his birth and education, as our readers know it.

“He has, it is true, rendered us a great service, but that does not justify us in advancing him in chivalry. He must earn that by some deed of valour, or knighthood would be a mere farce.”

“Exactly so,” said he of Hereford. “Now I have a proposition: not a week passes but my retainers are in skirmish with those wildcats, the Welsh. Let the boy go and serve under my son, Lord Walter. He will put him in the way of earning his spurs.”

“The very thing,” said Earl Simon. “Only I trust he will not get killed, which is very likely under the circumstances, in which case I really fear the poor old father would go down with sorrow to the grave. Still, what is glory without risk? Were he my own son, I should say, ‘let him go.’ Only, brother earl, caution thy noble son and heir, that the youngster is very much more likely to fail in discretion than in valour. He is one of those excitable, impulsive creatures who will, as I expect, fight like a wildcat, and show as little wisdom.”

Hubert was sent for.

“Art thou willing to leave my service?” said the earl.

“My lord,” said poor Hubert, all in a tremble, “leave thee?”

“Yes; dost thou not wish to go to the Holy Land?”

“Oh, if it is to go there. But must I not wait for knighthood?”

The reader must remember that knighthood alone would give Hubert a claim upon the assistance and hospitality of other knights and nobles, and that once a knight, he was the equal in social station of kings and princes, and could find admittance into all society. As a squire, he could only go to the Holy Land in attendance upon some one else, nor could he carry the sword and belt of the dead man whom he was to represent. A knight must personate a knight.

Hence Hubert’s words.

“It is for that purpose we have sent for thee,” replied the earl. “Thou must win thy spurs, and there is no likelihood of opportunity arising in this peaceful land (how little the earl thought what was in the near future), so thou must even go where blows are going.”

“I am ready, my lord, and willing.”

“The Earl of Hereford is about to return home, and will take thee with him to fight against the Welsh under his banner.  Now what dost thou say to that?”

Hubert bent the knee to the new lord, with all that grace which he inherited from his Provencal blood.  And sooth, my young readers, if you could have seen that eager face with that winning smile, and those brave bright eyes, you would have loved him, too, as the earl did; but for all that I do not think he had the sterling qualities of his friend Martin, who is rather my hero:  but then I am not young now, or I might think differently.

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We have not space again to describe this portion of Hubert's life, upon which we now enter, in any detail. Suffice it to say he went to Hereford Castle with the earl, and was soon transferred to an outpost on the upper Wye, where he was at once engaged in deadly warfare with the fiercest of savages. For the Welsh, once the cultivated Britons, had degenerated into savagery. Bloodshed and fire raising amongst the hated "Saxons" (as they called all the English alike) were the amusement and the business of their lives, until Edward the First, of dire necessity, conquered and tamed them in the very next generation. Until then, the Welsh borders were a hundred times more insecure than the Cheviots. No treaties could bind the mountaineers. They took oaths of allegiance, and cheerfully broke them. "No faith with Saxons" was their motto.

These fields, these meadows once were ours,
And sooth by heaven and all its powers,
Think you we will not issue forth,
To spoil the spoiler as we may,
And from the robber rend the prey.

Even the payment of blackmail, so effectual with the Highlanders, did not secure the border counties from these flippant fighters, and in sooth Normans were much too proud for any such evasion of a warrior's duty.

There, then, our Hubert fleshed his maiden sword, within a week after his arrival at Llanystred Castle; and that in a fierce skirmish, wherein the fighting was all hand to hand, he slew his man.

But in these fights, where every one was brave, there was small opportunity for Hubert to gain personal distinction. A coward was very rare; as well expect a deer to be born amongst a race of tigers. There were, it is true, degrees of self devotion, and for a chance of distinguishing himself by self sacrifice Hubert longed.

And thus it came.

He had been sent from the castle on the Wye, which might well be called, like one in Sir Walter's tales, "Castle Dangerous," upon an errand to an outpost, and was returning by moonlight along the banks of the stream, there a rushing mountain torrent. It was a weird scene, the peaks of the Black Mountains rose up into the calm pellucid air of night, the solemn woods lined the further bank of the river, and extended to the bases of the hills. It was just the time and the hour when the wild, unconquered Celts were likely to make their foray upon the dwellers on the English side of the stream, if they could find a spot where they could cross.

About half a mile from Llanystred Castle, amidst the splash and dash of the water, Hubert distinguished some peculiar and unaccustomed sounds, like the murmur of many voices, in some barbarous tongue, all ll's and consonants.

He waited and listened.

Just below him roared and foamed the stream, and it so happened that a series of black rocks raised their heads above the swollen waters like still porpoises, at such distances as to afford lithesome people the chance of crossing, dry shod, when the water was low.

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But it was a risk, for the river had all the strength of a cataract, and he who slipped would infallibly be carried down by the strong current and dashed against the rocks and drowned.

Here Hubert watched, clad in light mail was he, and he cunningly kept in the shadow.

Soon he saw a black moving mass opposite, and then the moonlight gleam upon a hundred spear tops. Did his heart fail him? No; the chance he had pined for was come. It was quite possible for one daring man to bid defiance to the hundred here, and prevent their crossing.

See, they come, and Hubert's heart beats loudly—the first is on the first stone, the others press behind. He, the primus, leaps on to the second rock, and so to the third, and still his place is taken, at every resting place he leaves, by his successor. Yes, they mean to get over, and to have a little blood letting and fire raising tonight, just for amusement.

And only one stout heart to prevent them. They do not see him until the last stepping stone is attained by the first man, and but one more leap needed to the shore, when a stern, if youthful, voice cries:

"Back, ye dogs of Welshmen!" and the first Celt falls into the stream, transfixed by Hubert's spear, transfixed as he made the final leap.

A sudden pause: the second man tries to leap so as to avoid the spear, his own similar weapon presented before him, but position gives Hubert advantage, and the second foe goes down the waves, dyeing them with his blood, raising his despairing hand, as he dies, out of the foaming torrent.

The third hesitates.

And now comes the real danger for Hubert: a flight of arrows across the stream—they rattle on his chain mail, and generally glance harmlessly off, but one or two find weak places, and although his vizor is down, Hubert knows that one unlucky, or, as the foe would say "lucky," shot penetrating the eyelet might end sight and life together. So he blows his horn, which he had scorned to do before.

He was but imperfectly clad in armour, and was soon bleeding in divers unprotected places; but there he stood, spear in hand, and no third person had dared to cross.

But when they heard the horn, feeling that the chance of a raid was going, the third sprang. With one foot he attained the bank, and as Hubert was rather dizzy from loss of blood, avoided the spear thrust. But the young Englishman drove the dagger, which he carried in the left hand, into his throat as he rose from the stream. The fourth leapt.

Hubert was just in time with the spear.  The fifth hesitated—the flight of arrows, intermitted for the moment, was renewed.

Just then up came Lord Walter, the eldest son of the earl, with a troop of lancers, and Hubert reeled to the ground from loss of blood, while the Welsh sullenly retreated.

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They bore him to the castle.  A few light wounds, which had bled profusely from the leg and arm, were all that was amiss.  Hubert's ambition was attained, for he had slain four Welshmen with his own young hand.  And those to whom "such things were a care" saw four lifeless, ghastly corpses circling for days round and round an eddy in the current below the castle, round and round till one got giddy and sick in watching them, but still they gyrated, and no one troubled to fish them out.  They were a sign to friend and foe, a monument of our Hubert's skill in slaying "wildcats."

A few days later the Lord of Hereford arrived at the castle, and visited Hubert's sick chamber, where he brought much comfort and joy.  A fine physician was that earl; Hubert was up next day.

And what was the tonic which had given such a fillip to his system, and hurried on his recovery?  The earl purposed to confer upon him the degree he pined for, as soon as he could bear his armour.

At first any knight could make a knight.  Now, to check the too great profusion of such flowers of chivalry, the power to confer the accolade was commonly restricted to the greater nobles, and later still, as now, to royalty alone.

It was the eve of Saint Michael's Day, "the prince of celestial chivalry," as these fighting ancestors of ours used to say.  It was wild and stormy, for the summer and autumn had been so wet that the crops were still uncarried through the country.  The river below was rushing onward in high flood; here it came tumbling, there it rolled rumbling; here it leapt splashing, there it rushed dashing; like the water at Lodore; and seemed to shake the rocks on which Castle Llanystred was built.

And above, the clouds in emulous sport hurried over the skies, as if a foe were chasing them, in the shape of a southwestern blast.  So the nightfall came on, and Hubert went with the decaying light into the castle chapel, where he had to watch his arms all night, with fasting and prayer, spear in hand.

What a night of storm and wind it was on which our Hubert, ere he received knighthood, watched and kept vigil in the chapel.  It reminded him of that night in the priory at Lewes, and from time to time weird sounds seemed to reach him in the pauses of the blast.  All but he were asleep, save the sentinels on the ramparts.

He thought of his father, and of the Frenchman, the Sieur de Fievrault, whose place and even name he was to assume.  Once he thought he saw the figure of the slain Gaul before him, but he breathed a prayer and it disappeared.

How he welcomed the morning light.
The sun breaks forth, the light streams in,
Hence, hence, ye shades, away!

Imagine our Hubert’s joy, when, the following morning, Earl Simon quite unexpectedly arrived at the castle, and with him the Bishop of Hereford; come together to confer on important business of state with the Earl of Hereford, whom they had first sought at his own city, then followed to this outpost, where they learned from his people he had come to confer knighthood on some valiant squire.

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The reader may also imagine how Earl Simon hoped that that valiant squire might prove to be Hubert. And lo! so it turned out.

Early in the morning our young friend was led to the bath, where he put off forever the garb of a squire, then laved himself in token of purification, after which he was vested in the garb and arms of knighthood. The under dress given to him was a close jacket of chamois leather, over which he put a mail shirt, composed of rings deftly fitted into each other, and very flexible. A breastplate had to be put on over this. And as each weapon or piece of armour was given, strange parallels were found between the temporal and spiritual warfare, which, save when knighthood was assumed with a distinctly religious purpose, would seem almost profane.

Thus with the breastplate: "Stand—having on the breastplate of righteousness."

And with the shield: "Take the shield of faith, wherewith thou shalt be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

We will not follow the parallel farther: had all the customs of chivalry been indeed performed in accordance with this high ideal, how different the medieval world would have been.

Thus accoutred, but as yet without helmet, sword, or spurs, our young friend was led to the castle chapel, between two (so-called) godfathers—two sons of the Earl of Hereford—in solemn procession, amidst the plaudits of the crowd. There the Earl of Leicester awaited him, and Hubert's heart beat wildly with joy and excitement, as he saw him in all his panoply, awaiting the ward whom he had received ten years earlier as a little boy from the hands of his father, then setting out for his eventful crusade.

The bishop was at the altar. The High Mass was then said; and after the service the young knight, advancing to the sanctuary, received from the good earl, whom he loved so dearly, as the flower of English chivalry, the accolade or knightly embrace.

The Bishop of Hereford belted on the young knight's own sword, which he took from the altar, and the spurs were fastened on by the Lady Alicia, wife of Lord Walter of Hereford, and dame of the castle.

Hubert then took the oath to be faithful to God, to the king, and to the ladies, after which he was enjoined to war down the proud and all who did wickedly, to spare the humble, to redress all wrongs within his power, to succour the miserable, to avenge the oppressed, to help the poor and fatherless unto their right, to do this and that; in short, to do all that a good Christian warrior ought to do.

Then he was led forth from the church, amidst the cheers and acclamations of all the population of the district, with whom the action which hastened his knighthood had won

him popularity.  Alms to the poor, largesse to the harpers and minstrels:  all had to be given; and the reader may guess whose liberality supplied the gifts.

Then—the banquet was spread in the castle hall.

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## Chapter 13:  How Martin Gained His Desire.

While one of the two friends was thus hewing his way to knighthood by deeds of “dering do,” the other was no less steadily persevering in the path which led to the object of his desire.  The less ambitious object, as the world would say.

He was ever indefatigable in his work of love amidst the poor and sick, and gained the approbation of his superiors most thoroughly, although in the stern coldness which they thought an essential part of true discipline, they were scant of their encomiums.  Men ought to work, they said, simply from a sense of duty to God, and earthly praise was the “dead fly which makes the apothecary’s ointment to stink.”  So they allowed their younger brethren to toil on without any such mundane reward, only they cheered them by their brotherly love, shown in a hundred different ways.

One long-remembered day in the summer of the year 1259, Martin strolled down the river’s banks, to indulge in meditation and prayer.  But the banks were too crowded for him that day.  He marked the boats as they came up from Abingdon, drawn by horses, laden with commodities; or shot down the swift stream without such adventitious aid.  Pleasure wherries darted about impelled by the young scholars of Oxford, as in these modern days.  Fishermen plied their trade or sport.  The river was the great highway; no, there was no solitude there.

So into the forest which lay between Oxford and Abingdon, now only surviving in Bagley Wood, plunged our novice.  As the poet says:

Into the forest, darker, deeper, grayer,
His lips moving as if in prayer,
Walked the monk Martin, all alone:
Around him the tops of the forest trees
Waving, made the sign of the Cross
And muttered their benedicites.

The woods were God’s first temples; and even now where does one feel so alone with one’s Maker?  How sweet the solemn silence! where the freed spirit, freed from external influences, can hold communion with its heavenly Father.  So felt Martin.  The very birds seemed to him to be singing carols; and the insects to join, with their hum, the universal hymn of praise.

Oh how the serpent lurks in Eden—beneath earthly beauty lies the mystery of pain and suffering.

A wail struck on Martin’s ears—the voice of a little child, and soon he brushed aside the branches in the direction of the cry, until he struck upon a faintly trodden path, which led to the cottage of one of the foresters, or as we should say “keepers.”

At the gate of the little enclosure, which surrounded the patch of cultivated ground attached to the house, a young child stood weeping.  When she saw Martin her eyes lighted up with joy.

“Oh, God has sent thee, good brother.  Come and help my poor mother.  She is so ill,” and she tripped back towards the house; “and father can’t help her, nor brother either. Father lies cold and still, and brother frightens me.”

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What did it mean?

Martin saw it at once—the plague! That terrible oriental disease, probably a malignant form of typhus, bred of foul drainage, and cultivated as if in some satanic hot bed, until it had reached the perfection of its deadly growth, by its transmission from bodily frame to frame. It was terribly infectious, but what then? It had to be faced, and if one died of it, one died doing God's work—thought Martin.

So as Hubert faced his Welshmen, did Martin face his foe—"typhus" or plague, call it which we please.

Which required the greater courage, my younger readers? But there was no more faltering in Martin's step than in Hubert's, as he went to that pallet in an inner room, where a human being tossed in all the heat of fever, and the incessant cry, "I thirst," pierced the heart.

"So did *he* thirst on the Cross," thought Martin, "and He thirsts again in the suffering members of His mystical body—for in all their affliction He is afflicted."

There was no water close by in the chamber, but Martin had noticed a clear spring outside, and taking a cup he went to the fount and filled it. He administered it sparingly to the parched lips, fearing its effect in larger quantities, but oh! the eagerness with which the sufferer received it—those blanched lips, that dry parched palate.

"Canst thou hear me, art thou conscious?"

"An angel of God?"

"No, a sinner like thyself."

"Go, thou wilt catch the plague."

"I am in God's hands. *He* has sent me to thee. Tell me sister—hast thou thrown thyself upon His mercy, and united thy sufferings with those of the Slain, the Crucified, who thirsted for thee?"

And Martin spoke of the life of love, and the death of shame, as an angel might have done, his features lighted up with love and faith. And the living word was blessed by the Giver of Life.

Then he felt the poor child pulling him gently to another room, whence faint moans were now heard. There lay the brother, a fine lad of some fourteen summers, in the death agony, the face black already; and on another pallet the dead body of the forester, the father of the family.

Martin could not leave them. The night came on. He kindled a fire, both for warmth and to purify the air. He found some cakes and very soon roasted a morsel for the poor girl, the only one yet untouched, partaking of it sparingly himself. He went from sufferer to sufferer; moistening the lips, assuaging the agony of the body, and striving to save the soul.

The poor boy passed into unconsciousness and died while Martin prayed by his side. The widow lingered till the morning light, when she, too, passed away into peace, her last hours soothed by the message of the Gospel.

Then Martin took the child and led her towards the city, meditating sadly on the strange mystery of death and pain. The woods were as beautiful as before, but not in the eyes of one whose mind was full of the remembrance of the ravages of the fell destroyer.

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“Where are you taking me?”

“To the good sisters of Saint Clare, who will take care of thee for Christ’s sake.”

So he strove to wipe away the tears from the orphan’s eyes.

He reached Oxford, gave up his charge to the charitable sisterhood, then reported himself to his academical and ecclesiastical superiors, who were pleased to express their approval of all that he had done. But as a measure of precaution they bade him change and destroy his infected raiment, to take a certain electuary supposed to render a person less disposed to infection, and to retire early to his couch.

All this he did; but after his first sleep he woke up with an aching head and intolerable sense of heat—feverish heat. He understood it all too well, and lost no time in commending himself to his heavenly Father, for he felt that he might soon lose consciousness and be unable to do so.

A purer spirit never commended itself to its Maker and Redeemer. But it was not in this he put his trust. It was in Him of whom Saint Francis sang so sweetly:

To Him my heart He drew
While hanging on the tree,
From whence He said to me
I am the Shepherd true;
Love sets my heart on fire—
Love of the Crucified.

And ere his delirium set in, Martin made a full resignation of his will to God. He had hoped to do much for love of his Lord, to carry the message of the Gospel into the Andredsweald, where the kindred of his mother yet lived, and the thought that he should never see their forest glades again was painful. And the blankness of unconsciousness, the fearful nature of the black death, was in itself repulsive; but it had all been ordered and settled by Infinite Love before ever he was born, probably before the worlds were framed, and Martin said with all his heart the words breathed by the Incarnate God, when groaning beneath the olive tree in mysterious agony:

“Not my will, but thine, be done.”

And then he lapsed into delirium.

The next sensation of which he was conscious, and which he afterwards remembered, for we have not done with our Martin yet, was one of a singular character. A glorious light, but intensely painful, seemed before his eyes. It burnt, it dazzled, it confounded him; yet he admired and adored it, for it seemed to him the glory of God thus fashioning itself before him. And on that brilliant orb, glowing like a sun, was a black spot which

seemed to Martin to be himself, a blot on God's glory, and he cried, "Oh, let me perish, if but Thy glory be unstained," when a voice seemed to reply, "My glory shall be shown in thy redemption, not in thy destruction."

Probably this took place at the crisis of the disease, and the physical and spiritual sensations were in union throughout the illness. For now Martin was delirious with joy —sweet strains of music were ever about him. The angels gathered in his cell and sang carols, songs of love to the Crucified. One stormy night, when gentle but heavy rain descended, patter, patter, on the roof above his head, he thought Gabriel and all the angelic choir were there, singing the Gloria in Excelsis, poising themselves on wings without the window, and the strain:

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Pax in terra hominibus bonoe voluntatis,

Was so ineffably sweet that the tears rolled down his cheeks in streams.

This was the end of the imaginary music.  The next morning he woke up conscious—-himself again.  His first return to consciousness was an impression of a voice:

“Dearest brother, thou art better, art thou not?”

“I am quite free from pain, only a hungered.”

“What food dost thou desire to enter thy lips first?”

“The Bread of Life.”

“But not as the Viaticum {20}, thank God.  Wait awhile, I go to fetch it from the altar.”

And the successor of Adam de Maresco, the new head of the Oxford House, left the youth and went into their plainly-furnished chapel, where, in a silver dove, the only silver about the church, the reserved sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ was always kept for the sick in case of need.  It hung from the beams of the chancel, before the high altar.

First the prior knelt and thanked God for having preserved the life of the youth they all loved.

“Thou hast yet great things for him to do on earth ere it come to his turn to rest,” he murmured.  “To Thee be all the glory.”

Then he returned and gave the young novice his communion.  Martin received it, and said, “I have found Him whom my soul loveth.  I will hold Him and will not let Him go.”

From that time the patient was able to take solid nourishment, and grew rapidly better, until at last he could leave his room and sit in the sunny cloisters:

Restored to life, and power, and thought.

And one day he sat there, dreamily watching old Father Thames, as he murmured and bubbled along, outside the stone boundary.

“Onward till he lose himself in the ocean, so do flow our lives till they merge into eternity,” said the prior.  “Now with impetuous flow, now in gentler ripple, but ever onward as God hath ordained; so may our souls, when the work of life is accomplished, lose themselves in God.”

Martin moved his lips in silent acquiescence.

It was intense, the enjoyment of that sweet spring day, a day when all the birds seemed singing songs of gladness, and the air was balmy beyond description. Life seemed worth living.

“My son, when thou art better thou must travel for change of air.”

“Whither?” said Martin.

“Where wouldst thou like to go?”

“Oh, may I go to my kindred and teach them the holy truths of the Gospel?”

“Thou shalt. Brother Ginepro shall go with thee, and ere thou startest thou shalt be admitted to the privileges and duties of the second order, and be Brother Martin.”

“And when shall I be ordained?”

“That may not be, yet. Thou art not twenty years of age. Thou mayst win many souls to Christ while a lay brother, as did Francis himself, our great master. He did not seek the priesthood also, too great a burden for a humble soul like his, and certes, if men understood what a priest is and what he should be, there would be fewer but perchance holier priests than there are now.”

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The reader must remember that nearly all the friars were laymen; lay preachers, as we would say; preaching was not then considered a special clerical function.

Martin could not speak for joy, but soon tears were seen to start down his cheeks.

“I was thinking of my poor mother.  Oh, that she had lived to see this day,” he exclaimed, as he saw the prior observe his emotion.

The reader will remember that news of her death had reached Martin soon after his arrival at Kenilworth, without which he could not have remained all these years away from the Andredsweald.  Her death had partially (only partially) snapped the link which bound him to his kindred, the love of whom now began to revive in the breast of the convalescent.

## Chapter 14:  May Day In Lewes.

It was the May Day of 1259, one of the brightest days of the calendar.  The season was well forward, the elms and bushes had arrayed themselves in their brightest robe of green; the hedges were white and fragrant with may; the anemone, the primrose, the cowslip, and blue bell carpeted the sward of the Andredsweald; the oaks and poplars were already putting on their summer garb.  The butterflies settled upon flower after flower; the bees were rejoicing in their labour; their work glowed, and the sweet honey was fragrant with thyme.

Oh how lovely were the works of God upon that bright May Day, as from village church and forest sanctuary the population of Sussex poured out from the portals, after the mass of Saints Philip and James; the children bearing garlands and dressed in a hundred fantastic hues, the May-poles set up on every green, the Queen of May chosen by lot from amongst the village maidens.

Never were sweeter nooks, wherein to spend Maytide, than around the villages and hamlets of the Andredsweald, whither the action of our tale betakes itself again—around Chiddinglye, Hellinglye, Alfristun, Selmestun, Heathfeld, Mayfeld, and the like—not, as now, accessible by rail and surrounded by arable lands; but settlements in the forest, with the mighty oaks and beeches which had perchance seen the coming of Ella and Cissa, long ere the Norman set foot in Angleland; and with solemn glades where the wind made music in the tree tops, and the graceful deer bounded athwart the avenue, to seek refuge in tangled brake and inaccessible morass.

Chief amongst these Sussex towns and villages was the old borough of Lewes, distinguished alike by castle and priory.  The modern visitor may still ascend to the summit of the highest tower of that castle, but how different (yet how much the same) was the scene which a young knight viewed thence on this May Day of 1259.  He had

come up there to take his last look at the fair land of England ere he left it for years, it might be never to return.

“It is a fair land; God keep it till I return.”

The great lines of Downs stretched away—northwest to Ditchling Beacon; southwest to Brighthelmston, a hamlet then little known; on the east rose Mount Caburn, graceful in outline (recalling Mount Tabor to the fond remembrance of the crusaders); southeast the long line stretched away by Firle Beacon to Beachy Head.

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“Ah, there is Walderne, away far off, just to the left of the eastern range of Downs—I see it across the plain twelve miles away. I see the windmills on the hill, and below the church towers, and the tops of the castle towers in the vale beneath. I shall soon bid them all farewell.”

Then the young knight turned and looked on the fertile valley wherein meandered the Ouse. The grand priory lay below: its magnificent church, well known to our readers; its towers and pinnacles.

“And there my poor father wears out his days, now a brother professed. And he, for whom Europe was not large enough in his youth, now never leaves the convent’s boundaries. But he is about to travel to Jerusalem by proxy.

“If only I could see Martin again. I cannot think why Martin and I should be like Damon and Pythias, to whom the chaplain once compared us. But we are, although one will fain be a friar and the other a warrior.”

He descended the tower after one more lingering glance at the view, but his light nature soon threw off the impression, and none was gayer guest at the noontide meal, the “nuncheon” of Earl Warrenne of Lewes, the lord of the castle.

It was eventide, and the marketplace was filled with an excited population. There were ruffling men-at-arms, stolid rustics, frightened women and children, overturned stalls, shouts and screams; unsavoury missiles, such as rotten eggs and stale vegetables, were flying about; and in the midst of the open space the figure of a Jew, who had excited the indignation of the multitude, was the object of violent aggression which seemed likely to endanger his life.

A miracle had occurred. The crucifix over the rood at Saint Michael’s Church had suddenly blazed out with a supernatural light, which had endured for many minutes: the multitude flocked in to see and adore, and much was the reputation of Saint Michael’s shrine enhanced, when this unbelieving Jew actually had the temerity to assert that the light was only caused by the rays of the sun falling directly upon the figure through a window in the western wall, narrow as the slits we see in the old castle towers, so arranged as on this particular day to bring the rays of the setting sun full upon the gilding of the cross {21}.

But the explanation, probably true, was the signal for frantic cries:

“Out on the blasphemer! The accursed Jew! Let him die the death!”

And it is very probable that he would have been “done to death” had not an interruption, characteristic of the age, occurred.

Two friars, clad in the garb of Saint Francis, just then entered the square and learned the cause of the tumult. Their action was immediate. The brethren stalked into the midst of the crowd, which made way for them as if a superior being had commanded their reverence, and one of the two mounted on a cart, and took for his text, in a clear piercing voice which was heard everywhere, “Christ, and Him crucified.”

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The swords were hastily thrust into their scabbards, the missiles ceased. The other brother had reached the Jew.

“Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” said he. “He is the prisoner of the Lord; accursed be he who touches him; may his hand rot off, and his light be extinguished in darkness.”

All was now silence as the first brother, pale with recent illness, but radiant with emotion, began to speak.

And Martin preached, taking his illustrations from the circumstances of the day.

“The object of the Crucifixion,” he said, “had yet to be attained amongst them.”

A crucifix had, as he heard, shone with a mysterious light, and one had desecrated it with his tongue. But, worse than that, he saw a thousand desecrated forms before him who ought to be living crucifixes, for were they not told to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, to remain upon their voluntary crosses till Christ said, “Come down. Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of the Lord”? And were they doing this? Were they repaying the love of Calvary, as for instance the saints of that day, Saints Philip and James, had done; giving heart for heart, love for love; or were they worshipping dread and ghastly idols, their own lusts and passions? In short, were they to be companions of the angels—God’s holy ones? Or the slaves and sport of the cruel and fiery fiends for evermore?

The power of an orator, and Martin was a born orator, over the men of the middle ages was marvellous. Few could read, and books were scarce as jewels. The tongue, the living voice, had to do the work which the public press does now, as well as its own, and the preacher was a power. But those medieval sermons were full of quaint illustrations.

Martin described the angels as weeping because men would not turn and love the Lord who had died for them. He described the joy over one repentant sinner, the horror over the sins which crucified the Lord afresh. They were waiting now to set the bells of heaven a ringing, when the news came of one soul converted and turned to the Lord—-one repentant sinner.

“They are waiting now,” he said. “Will you keep them waiting up there with their hands on the ropes?”

Cries of “No! no!” broke from several.

“And there be the cruel, rampant, remorseless devils with their claws, hoofs, and horns. They be terrible, but their hearts of fire are the worst, those evil hearts burning with hatred to the sons of men. Now, on my way I saw a vision: we rested at a holy house of God, where be many brethren who strive to glorify Him, according to the rule of Saint Benedict. And as we were all at prayers in the chapel, methought it was full of devils

whispering all sorts of temptations, as they did to Saint Antony, trying to keep the monks from their prayers and meditations.  And lo, I came to Lewes, and methought one devil only sat on the gate, and swayed the hearts of all the men in the town.  He had little to do.  The world and the flesh were helping him, and just now it was the devil of cruelty."

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The men looked down.

"'A Jew! only a Jew!' you say; 'the wicked Jews crucified our Lord.'

"And ye, what do ye do? Why, ye crucify Him daily. Nay, look not so amazed. Saint Paul says it, not I. He says the sins of Christians crucify our Lord afresh."

And here he spoke so piteously of the Passion of the Lord and His thirst for the souls of men, that women, yea and many men, wept aloud. In short, when the sermon was over, the crowd escorted Martin to the priory, where he was to lodge, with tears and cries of joy.

"Thou hast begun well, brother Martin," said Ginepro, when they could first speak to each other in the hospitium.

"I! No, not I. God gave me strength," and he sank on the bench exhausted and pale.

"It is too much for thee."

"No, not too much. I love the good work. God give the increase."

"What Martin, my Martin, thou here? I have followed thee. I heard thee, but couldn't get near thee for the press," cried an exultant voice.

"My Hubert, so thou art a knight at last?"

"Yes, and tomorrow I go to Walderne to say goodbye to the people there, and the next day take ship from Pevensey for Harfleur, on my road to the Holy Land.

"But how pale thou art! Come, tell me all. Art thou a brother yet? Hast thou earned it by some pious deed, as I earned my knighthood by a warlike one? Come, tell me all, dear Martin."

"You tell your story first. I have only heard that you have won your spurs."

Hubert, nothing loth, told the story with which our readers are acquainted.

Then Martin told his story very simply and modestly, but Hubert could not help feeling that he would sooner have defended a ford twenty times over, than have spent one hour in that plague-infected house.

They were very happy in their mutual love, and this last meeting was made the most of. Old remembrances were recalled, scenes of the past brought to recollection; until the compline hour, after which all, monks and guests alike, retired to rest, and silence reigned through the vast pile.

Save in one narrow cell, where the sire and son were dispensed from the rule—where the old father rejoiced in his boy, devouring him with those aged eyes.

“God will preserve thee, Hubert.  I know He will, but there will be trials and difficulties.”

“I am prepared for them.”

“But God will bring thee back to thy old father, the vow fulfilled; and my freed spirit shall rejoice in thee again.  Thou knowest thy duty.  Thou must first visit the Castle of Fievrault, and there seek of the old seneschal the sword of the man I slew.  He will give it thee freely when thou tellest thy story and disclosest thy name.  But be sure thou dost not tarry there, no, not one night, for the place is haunted.  Then thou must take the nearest route to Jerusalem.”

“But it is now in the hands of the Mussulmen.”

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“Upon certain conditions, and the payment of a heavy fine, they allow pilgrims to approach. Would that thou couldst enter it amidst a victorious host, but that day, in penalty for our sins, is not allowed as yet to dawn. Thou hast but to pray before the Holy Sepulchre, to deposit the sword to be blessed thereon, and thou mayst return.”

“But will there be no fighting?”

“This I cannot tell at present; a temporary truce exists. It may be broken at any moment, and if it be, thou mayst tarry for one campaign, not longer. My eyes will ache to see thee again, and remember that but to have visited the Holy Places will entitle thee to all the indulgences and privileges of a crusader—Bethlehem, Nazareth, Calvary, Gethsemane, Olivet. The task is easier now, by reason of the truce, although the infidels be very treacherous, and thou wilt need constant vigilance.”

So they talked until the midnight hour.

No ghostly visitant appeared to mar its joy, and the sire and son slept. The old man made the youth lie on his couch, while he lay on the floor. Hubert resisted the arrangement in vain; the father was absolute, and so they slept.

On the morrow the travellers (of both parties) left the priory together, after the chapter mass at nine. Hubert had bidden the last farewell to his old father, who with difficulty relinquished his grasp of his adored boy, now that the hour for fulfilling the purpose of many years had come at last. Martin and his brother and companion Ginepro were there, and the six men-at-arms who were to act as a guard of honour to the young knight in his passage through the forest to the castle of his ancestors. They purposed to travel together as long as their different objects permitted.

“My men will be a protection,” said Hubert.

The young friars laughed.

“We need no protection,” said Ginepro. “If we want arms, these bulrushes will serve for spears.”

“Nay, do not jest,” said Martin.

“We have other arms, my Hubert.”

“What are they?”

“Only faith and prayer, but they never fail.”

Then they talked of the future. Hubert disclosed all his plans to Martin; how he must visit the castle at Fievrault; how he must seek and carry the sword of the knight whom

his father had slain and lay it on the Holy Sepulchre; how then he hoped to return, but not till he had dyed the sword in the blood of the Paynim, *etc*. And Martin told his plans for a mission in the Andredsweald; of his hope to reclaim the outlaws to Christianity, and to pacify the forests; to reunite the lords of Norman descent and the Saxon peasants together in one common love.

“Shall you visit Walderne Castle?” inquired Hubert.

“It may fall to my lot to do so.”

“Avoid Drogo; at least do not trust him. He hates us both.”

“He may have mended.”

Hubert shook his head.

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A few warm, affectionate words, and they came to the spot where their road divided—-the one to the northeast, the other to the southeast. They tried to preserve the proper self control, but it failed them, and their eyes were very limpid. So they parted.

At midday the two friars rested in a sweet glade, and slept after a frugal meal, till the birds awoke them with their songs.

“They remind me of an incident in the life of our dear father Francis,” said Ginepro, “which my father witnessed.”

“Tell it as we go. Sweet converse shortens the toil of the way.”

“Once, when he was preaching, the birds drowned his voice with their songs of gladness, whereupon he said:

“’My sisters, the birds, it is now my turn to speak. You have sung your sweet songs to God. Now let me tell men how good He is.’

“And the birds were silent.”

“I can quite believe it.”

“His power over animals was wonderful. Once a little hare was brought in, all alive, for the food of the brotherhood, and they were just going to kill the wee thing, when Francis came in and pitied it.

“‘Little brother leveret,’ he said. ’How didst thou let thyself be taken?’

“The poor hare rushed from the hands of him who held it, and took refuge in the robe of the father.

“’Nay, go back to thy home, and do not let thyself be caught again,’ he said, and they took it back to the woods and let it go.”

Just at this point they reached Chiddinglye, and as they emerged from the forest on the green, Ginepro spied a number of children playing at seesaw in a timber yard, laughing and shouting merrily.

Instantly he cried, “Oh, there they are; I love seesaw; I must go and have a turn.”

“Are we not too old for such sport?” said Martin.

“Not a bit. I feel quite like a child,” and off he ran to join the children amidst the laughter of a few older people.

But the young brother did not simply play at seesaw.  He got the children around him, after a while, and soon held them breathless as he related the story of the Child of Bethlehem and the Holy Innocents, stories which came quite fresh to them in those days, when there were few books, and fewer readers.  And these little Sussex children drank in the touching story with all their little ears and hearts.  In all Ginepro did there was a wondrous freshness.  And that same evening, when the woodmen came home from work, Martin preached to the whole village from the steps of the churchyard cross.

It was a strangely impressive scene.  The mighty background of the forest; the friar in his gray dress, his features all animation and life; the multitude listening as if they were carried away by the eloquence of one whose like they had never seen before; the tears running down furrows on their grimy cheeks, specially visible on those of the iron smelters, of whom there were many in old Sussex.

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Close by stood the parish priest, listening with delight and without that jealousy which too often moved the shepherds of the parochial flocks to resent the advent of the friar. And when Martin at last stopped, exhausted:

“Ye will both come with me, you and your brother, who has been preaching to my little ones, and be my guests this night.”

And they willingly consented.

But we must return to our crusader and his fortunes.

## Chapter 15:  The Crusader Sets Forth.

The hall of Walderne Castle was brilliantly illuminated by torches stuck in iron cressets all round, and eke by waxen tapers in sconces on the tables.  All the retainers of the house were present, whether inmates of the castle or tenants of the soil.  There were men-at-arms of Norman or Poitevin blood, franklins and ceorls (churls) of Saxon lineage; all to gaze upon the face of their young lord, and acknowledge him as their liege, ere he left them for the treacherous and burning East to accomplish his father’s vow.

The Holy Land!  That grave of warriors!  How far away it seemed in those days of slow locomotion.

A rude oak table of enormous strength extended two-thirds of the length of the hall.  At the end another “board,” raised a foot higher, formed the letter T with the lower one; and in its centre, just opposite the junction, sat Sir Nicholas in a chair of state, surmounted by a canopy; on his right hand the Lady Sybil, on his left the hero of the night, our Hubert.

The walls of the hall were wainscoted with dark oak, richly carved; and hung round with suits of antique and modern armour, rudely dinted; with tattered banners, stained with the life blood of those who had borne them in many a bloody field at home and abroad. There were the horns of enormous deer, the tusks of patriarchal boars; war against man and beast was ever the burden of the chorus of life then.

And the supper—shall I give the bill of fare?

First, the fish.  Everything that swam in the rivers of the Weald (they be coarse and small) was there; perch, roach, carp, tench (pike not come into England yet).  And of sea fish—herrings, mackerel, soles, salmon, porpoises—a goodly number.

Secondly, the birds.  A peacock at the high board, goodly to look upon, bitter to eat; two swans (oh, how tough); vultures, puffins, herons, cranes, curlews, pheasants, partridges

(out of season or in season didn't matter); and scores of domestic fowls—hens, geese, pigeons, ducks, et id genus omne.

Thirdly, the beasts. Two deer, five boars from the forest, come to pay their last respects to the young crusader; and to leave indigestion, perhaps, as a reminder of their fealty. From the barnyard, ten little porkers, roasted whole; one ox, four sheep—only the best joints of these, the rest given away; and two succulent calves.

Of the pastry—twelve gallons cream, twenty gallons curds, three bushels of last autumn's apples were the foundation; two bushels of flour; almonds and raisins. Yes, they had already got them in England.

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In point of variety, they a little overdid it; sometimes mingling wine, cheese, honey, raisins, olives, eggs, yea, and vinegar, all in one grand dish.  It sets the teeth on edge to think of it.

As for the wines, there were Bordeaux (Gascon), and Malmsey (Rhenish), and Romeneye, Bastard and Osey (very sweet the last two); and for liquors hippocras and clary (not claret).

All was profusion, not to say waste, but the poor had a good time afterwards.  And when the desire of eating and drinking was satisfied, the harpers and gleemen began; and first the chief harper, with hoary beard, sang his solo:

Sometimes in the night watch,
Half seen in the gloaming,
Come visions advancing, advancing, retreating
All into the darkness.

And the harps responded in deep minor chords:
All into the darkness.

We dream that we clasp them,
The forms of our dear ones.
When, lo, as we touch them,
They leave us and vanish
On wings that beat lightly
The still paths of slumber.

Very softly the harps:
The still paths of slumber.

They left in high valour
The land of their boyhood,
And sorrowful patience
Awaits their returning
While love holds expectant
Their homes in our bosoms.

Sweetly the harps:
Their homes in our bosoms.

In high hope they left us
In sorrow with weeping
Their loved ones await them.
For lo, to their greeting

Instead of our heroes
Come only their phantoms.

The harps deep and low:
Come only their phantoms.

We weep as we reckon
The deeds of their glory—
Of this one the wisdom,
Of that one the valour:
And they in their beauty
Sleep sound in their death shrouds.

The harps dismally:
Sleep sound in their death shrouds {22}.

“Stop! stop!” said Sir Nicholas, for tears rose to his lady’s eyes. “No more of this. Strike up some more hopeful lay. What mean you by such boding?”

“Let the heir stay with us,” cried the guests.

“Nay; I have striven in vain that so it might be, but his father, Sir Roger, wills otherwise, and the son can but obey. I see you love him for his own fair face;” (Hubert blushed), “for the deed of valour by which he won his spurs; and for his blood and kindred. But go he will and must, and there is an end of it.

“One more announcement I have to make. The father of our Hubert, mindful of the past, wishes to make what reparation is in his power. He bids me announce that he intends to take the life vows in the Priory of Saint Pancras, and to be known from henceforth as Brother Roger; and that his son should be formally adopted by us. He is so in our hearts already, and should bear from henceforth the name of ‘Radulphus,’ or ‘Ralph,’ in memory of his grandfather.

“Now I have said all. Render him your homage, swear to be faithful, and acknowledge no other lord when I am gone and while he lives.”

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They all rose to their feet, and with the greatest enthusiasm swore to acknowledge none but Hubert as Lord of Walderne while he lived.

And he thanked them in a “maiden” speech, so gracefully—just as you would expect of our Hubert.

“The Holy Land,” said Sir Nicholas, “is a long way off, and many, as the gleemen (not without justice) have told us, leave their bones there. But we hope better things, and I trust the Lady Sybil and I may live to see his return. But should it be otherwise, acknowledge no other heir. Be true to Hubert, while he lives.”

“We will, God being our helper.”

“And now fill your cups, and drink to his safe journey and happy return.”

It was done lustily: if mere drinking could do it, there was no fear that Hubert would not return safely.

Then the gleemen struck up a merrier song, a sweet and tender lay of a Christian knight who fell into the power of “a Paynim sultan,” and whom the sultan’s daughter delivered at the risk of her life—all for love. How she followed him from clime to clime, only remembering the Christian name. How she found him at last in his English home, and was united to him, after being baptized, in holy wedlock. How the issue of this marriage was no other than the sainted Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas a Becket {23}.

And Hubert cast his eyes on Alicia de Grey, the orphan ward of his aunt, and she blushed as she met his gaze. Shall we tell his secret? He loved her, and had already plighted his troth.

“No pagan beauty,” he seemed to whisper, “shall ever rob me of my heart. I leave it behind in England.”

And even here he had a rival.

It was Drogo. The reader may ask, where was Drogo that night? At Harengod, his mother’s demesne, where he was to remain until Hubert had set sail, after which he might from time to time visit Sir Nicholas, his father’s brother, a relationship which that good knight could never forget, unworthy though Drogo was of his love. But the uncle was really afraid to let the youths come together, lest there should be a quarrel, perhaps not confined to words.

He had spoken his mind decidedly to Drogo about the question of inheritance. Hubert should, if he survived the pilgrimage, be Lord of Walderne, as was just, Drogo of Harengod: if either died without issue, the other should have both domains.

Of course Sir Nicholas was quite unaware that the third child of the old lord, Mabel, had left issue.  Do our readers remember it?  Drogo had no real claim on Walderne, and could only succeed by disposition of Sir Nicholas, in the absence of natural heirs.

When the party in the hall broke up about midnight, one parting interview took place between the lovers in Lady Sybil's bower, while the kind lady got as far as her notions of propriety (which were very strict) permitted, out of earshot.

Oh, those poor young lovers!  She cried, and although Hubert tried hard to restrain it, it was infectious, and he couldn't help a tear.  But he must go!

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“Wilt thou be true to me till death?”
the anxious lover cried.
“Ay, while this mortal form hath breath,”
Alicia replied.

“Come, go to bed,” said Sir Nicholas, entering, and they went:  To bed, but not to sleep.

On the morrow the sun shone brightly on the castle, on the church, on the hilltop, and on the wooded valley of Walderne.  The household assembled first for a brief parting service in the castle chapel, for it was an old proverb with them, “mass and meat hinder no man,” and then the breakfast table was duly honoured.

And then—the last parting.  Oh how hard to speak the final words; how many longing, lingering looks behind; how many words, which should have been said, came to the mind of our hero as he rode through the woods, with his squire and six men-at-arms, who were to share his perils and his glory.

Sir Nicholas was by his side, for he had determined to see the last of Hubert, who had wound himself very closely round the old knight’s heart; and together they rode through Hailsham to Pevensey.

The first part of their journey was through a dense and tangled forest, which extended nearly to Hailsham.  It passed through the district infested by the outlaws, and, although they had never molested Sir Nicholas, nor he them, they were dangerous to travellers of rank in general, and few dared traverse the forest roads unattended by an escort.  In the depths of these hoary woods were iron works, which had existed since the days of the early Britons, but had of late years been completely neglected, for all the thoughts of the Norman gentlemen or the Saxon outlaws were concentrated on war or the chase.

Hailsham (or, as it was then called, Hamelsham) was the first resting place, after a ride of nearly nine miles.  It was an old English settlement in the woods, which had now become the abode of a lord of Norman descent, who had built a castle, and held the town as his dependency.  However, the races were no longer in deadly hostility—the knights had their liberties and rights, and so long as they paid their tribute duly, all went as well as in the olden time, before the Conquest; albeit the curfew from the old church tower each night told its solemn tale of subjection and restraint, as it does even now, when the old ideas have quite departed, and few realise what it once meant.

Over the flat marshes to Pevensey, marshes then covered at high tide—leaving on the left the high lands of Herstmonceux, where the father of “Roaring Ralph” of that ilk still resided, lord paramount.  The castle was hidden in the trees.  The church stood bravely out, and its bells were ringing a wedding peal in the ears of the parting knight.  How tantalising!

Pevensey now reared its giant towers in front.  There reigned the Queen's uncle, Peter of Savoy, specially exempted from the sentence of exile which had fallen upon the rest of the king's foreign kindred.

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There was scant time for hospitality. The vessel lay in the dock which was to bear the crusader away; there was to be a full moon that night; wind and tide were favourable. Everything promised a quick passage, and, after a brief refection, Hubert bade his kinsman and friends farewell, and embarked in the Rose of Pevensey.

England sank behind him. The last glimpse he had of his native land was the gleam of the sunset on Beachy Head.

My native land—Good night.

## Chapter 16: Michelham Once More.

It was a summer evening, and the sun was sinking behind the hills which encompass Lewes. His declining beams gilded the towers of Michelham Priory.

Several of the brethren were walking on the terrace, which overlooked the broad moat, on the western side of the priory; for it was the recreation hour, between vespers and compline.

Across the woods came the knell of parting day, the curfew from the tower of Hamelsham: the “lowing herd wound slowly o’er the lea” from the Dicker, when two friars came in sight, who wore the robe of Saint Francis, and approached the gateway.

“There be some of those ‘kittle cattle,’ the new brethren,” said the old porter from his grated window in the gateway tower over the bridge. “If I had my will, they should spend the night on the heath.”

The friars rang the bell. The porter reluctantly opened.

“Who are ye?”

“Two poor brethren of Saint Francis.”

“What do you want?”

“The wayfarer’s welcome. Bed and board according to the rule of your hospitable house.”

“We like not you grey friars—for we are told you are setters forth of strange doctrines, and disturb steady old church folk. But natheless the hospitium is open to you as to all, whether gentle or simple, lay folk or clerks. So enter, only if you threw those gray cloaks into the moat, you would be more welcome.”

They knew that, but they were not ashamed of their colours.

“Look,” said one of the monks to his fellow; “they that have turned the world upside down have come hither also.”

“Whom the warder hath received.”

“They will find scant welcome.”

Meanwhile Martin was looking with curious eyes on the buildings which had first received him when he escaped from the outlaw life of old.  But the evening meal was already prepared, and the bell rang for supper.

Many guests were there—lay folk on pilgrimage, palmers and pilgrims with their stories, pedlars with their wares, clerics on their road to the Continent from the central parts of the island, men-at-arms, Englishmen, Normans, Gascons, Provencals.  And all had good fare, while a monk in nasal voice read:

A good old homily of Saint Guthlac of Croyland,

Above the clatter of knives and dishes.

Now this Saint Guthlac was an abbot of Croyland, and many conflicts did he have with the devils of the fen country, whose presence could generally be ascertained by the hissing which took place when they settled with their fiery hoofs and claws on the wet swamps and moist sedges.

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“And my brethren, certes we poor monks of Saint Benedict may learn much from these fiends; and first, from their hot and fiery tempers and bodies, we may be taught to say with Saint Ambrose:”

Quench thou the fires of hate and strife
The wasting fevers of the heart.

At this moment a calf’s head was brought in, very tender and succulent, and the rest of the quotation was drowned in the clatter of plates and dishes. At last the voice emerged from the tumult:

“Which I have seen in these fens, whither Satan and his imps do often resort to cool themselves in these stagnant waters. And first there be the misshapen, goggle-eyed goblins, with faces like the full moon, only never saw I the moon so hideous; these be the demons of sensuality, gluttony and sloth—libera nos Domine, and then there be . . .”

The wine was handed round, wine of Gascony, where the friars of Michelham had vineyards; full drinking, rich-bodied red wine, brought in huge jugs of earthenware, and poured generally into wooden mugs. Only the prior and subprior had silver goblets: glass there was none.

Again the voice rose above the din:

“Affect the fat soils of our marsh land, and there, maybe, find convenient prey amongst the idle and inebriate brethren who forget their vows, or the sottish loony who from the plough tail seek the ale house. And moreover there be your fiends, long and slim, and comely in garb, with tails of graceful curve, and horns like a comely heifer. Natheless their teeth be sharp and their claws fierce. But they hide them, for they would fain appear like angels of light, yet be they the demons of pride and cruelty, first-born of Lucifer, son of the morning . . .”

Here the sweets and pastries came in, fruits of the abbey gardens, skilfully preserved, and cunning devices of the baker: there was a church built of pie crust; a monk, baked brown and crisp, with raisins for his eyes, which, withal, filled his paunch, and, cannibal like, the good brethren ate him. Finally, that they, the brethren, might not be without a memento mori, was a sepulchre or altar tomb, likewise in crust, and when the top was broken, a goodly number of pigeons lurked beneath, lying in state:

“Which mop and mow, and chatter like starlings, but all, either naught in sense or naughty in meaning, oh these chattering goblins. Be not like them, my brethren—libera nos Domine.”

Here to those who sat at the upper board were next presented, by the serving brethren, dainty cups of hippocras, medicated against the damps and chills of the low grounds, or perchance the crudities of the stomach, or the cruel pinches of podagra dolorosa—

“Ah! will you say that agues, rheumatics, and all the other afflictions which do befall the brethren be simply bred of stagnant water and foul drinking?  Nay, I say these hobgoblins give us them, and that even as Satan was permitted to afflict holy Job, so they afflict you.  But we have not the patience of Job; would we had!  Oh my brethren, slay me the little foxes which eat the tender grapes; your pride, anger, envy, hatred, gluttony, lust, and sloth, and bring forth worthy fruits of penance; then may you all laugh at Satan and his misshapen offspring until in very shame they fly these fens—libera nos Domine.”

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Here the leader sang:

“Tu autem Domine, miserere nobis.”

And the whole brotherhood replied:

“Deo gratias.”

The supper was ended, and the chapel bell began to ring for the final service of the day. The period of silence throughout the dormitories and passages now began, and only stealthy footfalls broke the stillness of the summer night.

But the prior rang a silver bell: “tinkle, tinkle.”

“Send me the elder of the two brethren of Saint Francis, him with the twinkling black eyes and roundish face.”

And Martin was brought to him.

“Sit down, my young brother,” said Prior Roger, “and tell me where I have seen thy face before. I have gazed upon thee all through the frugal meal of which we have just partaken, for thy face is like a face I have seen in a dream. Not that I doubt that thou art here in flesh and blood, unlike the fiends of Croyland, of whom we have just heard.”

Martin smiled, and replied:

“My father, seven years agone, a noble earl found shelter here from the outlaws, from whom he was delivered by the self sacrifice of a woman, and the guidance of her son, an imp of some thirteen years.”

“I remember Earl Simon’s visit. Art thou that boy?”

“I am, my father.”

“Ah well! ah me! how time passes! But there is another remembrance which thy face awakens, of a death bed confession. Sub sigillo, perhaps I am wrong in putting the two things together. Sancte Benedicte ora pro me. So thou hast taken the habit of Saint Francis. Why didst not come to us, if thou wishedst to renounce the world and mortify the flesh?”

Martin was silent.

“And hast thou the gift of preaching? I do not mean of talking.”

“My superiors thought so, but they are fallible.”

“I should think so, very, but that is nought.  I hope I have better sense than to send for thee, poor boy, to teach thee to rebel against thy superiors, and perhaps after all we Augustinians are too hard upon Franciscans and friars of low degree—only we want to get to heaven our own way, with our steady jog trot, and you go frisking, caracolling, curvetting, gambolling along.  Well, I hope Saint Peter will let us all in at the last.”

Martin was silent, out of respect to the age of the speaker.

“Thou art a modest boy; come, tell me, who was thy father?”

“An outlaw, long since dead.”

“And thy mother?”

“His bride—but I know not of what parentage.  There is a secret never disclosed to me, and which I shall never learn now, only I am assured that I was born in holy wedlock, and that a priest blessed the union.”

“Did thy mother marry again?”

“She was compelled to accept one Grimbeard, a chief amongst the ‘merrie men’ who succeeded my father as their leader.”

“Now, my son, I know why I looked at thee—I knew thy father.  Nay, I administered the last rites of Holy Church to him.  I was travelling through the woods and following a short route to the great abbey of Battle, when a band of the outlaws burst forth from an ambush.

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“‘Art thou a priest, portly father?’ they said irreverently.

“‘Good lack,’ said I, ’I am, but little of worldly goods have I. Thou wilt not plunder God’s ambassadors of their little all?’

“’Nay!  But thou must come with us, and thy retinue must tarry here till we bring thee back.’

“‘You will not harm me?’ said I, fearing for my throat.  ’It is as thou hearest a hoarse one, and often sore, but it is my only one.’

“They laughed, and one said:

“’Nay, father, we swear by Him that died that we will bring thee safe here again ere sundown.’

“So they led me away, and anon they blindfolded me, and led my horse.  What a mercy poor Whitefoot was sure footed, and did not stumble, for the way was parlous difficult.

“And at last they took the bandage from off mine eyes, and I saw I was in their encampment, in the innermost recesses of a swampy tangled wood.  There, in a sort of better-most cabin, lay a young man, dying—wounded, as I afterwards learned, in an attack upon the Lord of Herst de Monceux.

“A goodly man of some thirty years was he, and a goodly end he made.  He told me his story, and as the lips of dying men speak the truth, I believed him.  He was the last representative of that English family which before the Conquest owned this very island and its adjacent woods and fields {24}.  He was very like thee—he stands before me again in thee.  Didst thou never hear of thy descent before?”

“That he was of the blood of the old English thanes I knew, but fallen from their once high estate.  Had he lived he might have possessed me with the like feelings which prompted him:  hatred of the foreigner, rebellion to God’s dispensation, which gave the land to others.  Even now as I speak, Christian though I am, I feel that such things might be, but I count them now as dross, and seek a goodlier heritage than Michelham.”

“Poor lad!  What has brought thee here again?”

“The desire to do my Master’s will, and to preach the gospel to my kindred.  For if Christ shall make them free, then shall they be free indeed.”

“Hast thou heard of thy mother?”

“That she was dead.  The message came through Michelham.”

“I remember an outlaw came here one day and sought me. He bade me send word to the boy we had (he said) stolen from them, that his mother was no more. We did so; but who was thy mother by birth?”

“I know not.”

“But I know.”

“Tell me, father.”

“It is a sad story.”

“Let me hear it.”

“Not yet. Go forth tomorrow. Seek thy kindred, and if thou livest thou shalt know. Tell me, what is thine age?”

“I have seen twenty years.”

“When thou hast attained thy twenty-first birthday, I may reveal this secret—not before. Until then my lips are sealed; such was the will of thy father.”

“Shall I find the outlaws easily?”

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“I know not; they have been much reduced both in numbers and in power, and give small trouble now to the nobles and men of high degree.  Many have been hanged.”

“Does Grimbeard yet live?”

“I know not.”

“Father, I start on my search tomorrow; give me thy blessing and pray for me.”

Martin could not sleep.  He stood long at the window of his cell in a dreamy reverie. The story of the last Thane of Michelham, as related in the Andredsweald, had often been told around the camp fires, and although he was only in his thirteenth year when he left them, it was all distinctly imprinted in his memory.  Oh! how strange it seemed to him to be there on the spot, which but for the conquest of two centuries agone would perhaps have still been the home of his race!  But he did not indulge in sentimental sorrow.  He believed in the Fatherhood of God, and that all things work for good to them that love Him.

What a dawn it was!  A reddening of the eastern sky; a low band of crimson; then rays like an aurora shooting upwards into the mid heavens; then such tints of transparent opal and heavenly azure overspread the skies all around, that Martin drank in the beauty with all his soul, and almost wept for joy, as he thought it a foretaste of the new heavens and the new earth, wherein he hoped to dwell, and whereon his heart was already surely fixed.  And as he gazed upon the distant woods, wherein dwelt the kindred he came to seek, he prayed in the words of an old antiphon:

“O Day Spring, brightness of the Eternal Light and Sun of Righteousness, come and lighten those that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death.”

## Chapter 17:  The Castle Of Fievrault.

It was the province of Auvergne in France.  Through the forest, deep and gloomy, rode our Hubert and his squire, with the six men-at-arms, a few days after their departure from England.  They had gained the soil of France, and had found the town in Auvergne which bore the name of the De Fievrault family, and early in the following morning they started for the old chateau, which they were forewarned they would find in ruins, to seek the fated sword.

It was added that the place was haunted, and that they would do well to return before nightfall.

The road which led thither was evidently but seldom trodden.  It abounded in sunken ruts, wherein lurked the adder.  It led by sullen pools, where the bittern boomed and the pike swam, his silver side glittering like a streak of light beneath the dark surface, as he

sought his finny prey.  Now it was marshy and muddy, now it was tangled with thorns, now impeded by fallen trees.  So thick was the verdure that the sky could not often be seen.

“I should be sorry, Almeric,” said the young knight to his squire, “to traverse this route by night.  Yet unless we make better use of our legs it will happen to us to have the choice either of encountering the wolves of the forest or the phantoms of the castle.”

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“Are not those the towers?” said the young squire, pointing to some extinguisher-like turrets which just then came in sight.

“Verily they be, and if we make haste we may reach them by noontide.”

But between them and the object of their journey lay a deep fosse or moat, and the rusty drawbridge was suspended by its chains to the walls of the towers.

“Blow thine horn, Almeric.”

It was long blown in vain, but at length an old man in squalid attire, with long dishevelled gray locks and matted beard, appeared at the window of the watch tower above.

“Whom seek ye here, in the haunted Castle of Fievrault?”

“The sword of its last lord, that I may bear it to the Holy Land in his name, and lay it on the Holy Sepulchre of our Lord.”

“Thou art the man the fates foretell.  Lo, I will let down the bridge, and thou mayst enter.”

“What a squalid old man!  Can he be the sole inhabitant?” said Almeric in a whisper.

The rusty machinery creaked, the bridge sank into its appointed place, and at the same moment the portcullis was heard to wind up with a grating sound.  The little troop entered the courtyard through the gateway in the tower.

A ruined castle! the dismantled towers rose around them with the great hall, the windows broken, the casement shattered.  Ivy grew around the fragments, and embracing them, veiled their squalidness with its green robe, making that picturesque which anon was hideous.  But company gives confidence, and our little troop rode, laughing and talking, into the haunted Castle of Fievrault.

“I have no food,” said the old man.

“We need none; we have brought both meat and wine.  Wilt thou share it?  Thou look’st as if a good meal might do thee good.”

“I have eaten my frugal meal already, and desire none of your cates and dainties.  Lo, I am ready to conduct you to the hall where hangs the sword of the man whom thy father slew one Friday long ago, and it will be well for thee but to tarry while thou takest it and then depart.”

“We will eat our nuncheon, with your leave, in the castle hall.”

“I cannot say you nay.”

He took them to the half-dismantled dining hall, where hung the portraits of the old lords of Fievrault rudely limned, and conspicuous amongst them those of the founder of the house, and his loathly lady; the painter had not flattered them.

There hung several swords, rusty with age and disuse, two-handed weapons which it required a giant strength to wield; huge battle-axes, maces, clubs tipped with iron spikes, ancient suits of armour, rusty and unsightly, as old clothing of that sort is apt to become after the lapse of years.  There was no vacant hook now, for at the end of the row hung the sword of the ill-fated Sieur de Fievrault, the last of his grim race.

The Englishmen gazed upon the portraits, which they regarded with insular irreverence (what were French knights and dames to them?), then without awe spread the contents of their wallets on the board, and feasted in serenity and ease.

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When it was over the wine produced its usual exhilarating effect. Song and romaunt were sung until the shadows began to turn towards the east and the hues of approaching evening to suffuse the shades of the adjacent wilderness. Then the old servitor came up to Hubert:

“It is time, my lord, to take the sword thou hast come to seek, and to go, unless thou wishest to be benighted in the forest.”

“My lord,” said Almeric, “we have come abroad in quest of adventures, and as yet found none to relate around the winter fireside when we get home again; and it is the humble petition of your poor squire and men-at-arms that we may remain in the castle this night and see what stuff the phantoms are made of, if phantoms there be.”

Hubert smiled approval.

“My Almeric,” he said, ’I have ever been of opinion that ghostly apparitions are delusions, and always thought that I should like to put the matter to a test. Wherefore I welcome your proposal with joy, for I doubted whether any of you would willingly stay with me. We will remain here tonight.”

“Nay,” said the old withered retainer of the house of Fievrault; “bethink thee, my lord, of what befell thy own father.”

“And for that very reason his son would fain avenge him,” said Hubert flippantly, “and flout the ghosts, if such things there be. And if men—Frenchmen or the like—see fit to attire themselves in masquerade, no coward fear will blunt the edge of our swords.”

“Wilful must have his way,” said the old servitor with a sigh. “What is to be will be, only remember, all of you, the old man has warned you, and only permits you to remain because he has no power to send you forth.”

“Nay, be not so inhospitable.”

“A churl will be a churl,” said Almeric.

The old man shook his head sadly, and went about his business, whatever that may have been.

The party now broke up to examine the castle, and to make sure that all was as it seemed, and that no earthly inmates were there to play pranks in the night. They ascended the ruined towers, and gazed upon a wilderness of leaves, as far as the eye could reach, save where a wild fantastic range of mountains upreared its riven peaks in the dim distance, the Puy de Dome, the highest point. Then they descended the steps and explored the vaults and dungeons: dismal habitations dug by the hands of cruel men in the solid rock upon which the castle was built. In one they shuddered to behold

a human skeleton, from which the rats had long since eaten the flesh, chained by steel manacles around its wrists and ankles to the wall, and hence still retaining its upright position:  and in each of these dark chambers they found sufficient evidence of the fell character of the house of Fievrault.

In one large cell, which had evidently been the torture chamber, they found the rusty implements of cruelty—curious arrangements of ropes and pulleys; a rack which had fallen to pieces with age; a brazier with rusty pincers, which had once been heated red hot therein, to tear the quivering flesh from some victim, who had long since carried his plaint to the bar of God, where the oppressors had also long since followed him.

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Hubert and his followers shuddered; but they were a little more hardened to the sight of such things, which were not unknown in those times even in “merry England,” than we should be.

“Where does that trap door lead to?” said Almeric, pointing to an arrangement of two folding doors in front of a rude image.

“It looks firm.”

“Nay, trust it not.  Here is a rude stump, once used as a seat.  Roll it upon the trap doors.”

The round, short log was rolled on the trap, which gave way at once.  Down went the log, and, after what seemed minutes to those above, came a hollow boom.  It had reached the bottom.  The oubliette—Almeric shuddered, and the colour faded from his face.

“What if I had tried the strength with my own weight!” thought he.

They returned to the upper air.  The sun had set, and the shades of night were gathering around the hoary pile, and, with deepening shades, every soul present felt a sense of gloom and depression creep over him; a sort of apprehension which had no visible cause, and could not easily be explained, but which led one to start at shadows, and look round at each unexpected footfall.

For over all there came a sense of fear,
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said as plain as whisper in the ear—
“This place is haunted.”

“Bring wood.  Kindle a fire on the hearth here.  Set torches in those cressets.  Bring out the remains of our dinner.  There is yet plenty of the vin de pays; let us eat drink, and be merry.”

Wood was plentiful, pine torches easily procured in such a locality, and soon the hall was bright with the firelight and vocal with the sound of voices in melody.  So the hours sped on until it was quite dark.  It was a very still night, but the clouds were thick, and there were no stars abroad.

At length they had burned all the wood which had been brought in.

“Go, Tristam, and bring more wood from the great pile in the courtyard,” said Hubert.

Tristam, a grizzled man-at-arms, went out.

All at once a cry of horror was heard.  All started to their feet, but before they could run to Tristam's aid the door was dashed open, and he ran in, his hair erect with horror, and his eyes starting from their sockets.

"It is after me!" he shrieked, as he slammed the door behind him.

"What was it?" said Hubert, while the sight of the man's infectious terror sent a thrill through all of them.

But he couldn't tell; he only stood and gibbered and shuddered, as if he had lost his senses, then crept to the innermost corner of the large fireplace, where they made room for him, and moaned like some wounded animal.

"The wood must be brought," said Hubert.  "We are not going to let the fire go out, nor to be frightened at shadows.

"Almeric, you will come with me and fetch it."

"Yes, master," said Almeric, not without a shudder, which did not promise well.

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“Say a Pater and an Ave, Almeric.  Sign thyself with the Cross.  Now!”

And they went forth.

The night was, as we have said, intensely dark, and they each carried a fat, resinous pine torch, which diffused a lurid light around.  The stones of the courtyard were slimy from long neglect; and the light, drizzly rain which was falling churned the dust and slime into thin mud.  As they drew near the wood pile, Hubert going boldly first, they both fancied a presence—a presence which caused a sickening dread—between them and the pile.

“Look, master,” said Almeric, in tones half choked with horror.

Hubert followed the direction of Almeric’s glance, and saw that a footmark impressed itself in the slime before their own advancing tread, just as if some invisible being were walking before them.  So sickening a dread, yet quite an inexplicable one, a dread of the vague unknown, came upon them that, brave men as they were, they could not proceed to the wood pile, and, like Tristam, returned empty handed.

“Where is the wood?” was the general cry.

“Let no one go out for wood tonight,” said Hubert.  “We must break up the forms, the floors, nay, our dining board, to sustain the fire—for fire we must have.  Now, remember we are warriors of the Cross, pledged to a holy cause, and that no demon can hurt us if we are true to ourselves.  Join me in the holy psalms of the night watch, then spread our cloaks and sleep here.”

They said the well-known compline psalms, familiar then in England from their nightly use.  Then, replenishing the fire at the expense of some rude oaken benches, and barring the door, they all strove to sleep.  A watch seemed needless.  The fear was that they would all be found watching when they should be sleeping.

But yet whether from extreme fatigue or any other cause, they did all fall asleep.

In the dead hour of the night Hubert alone awoke, with the consciousness that someone was gazing upon him.  He looked up.  There was the figure which had so often tormented his poor father, the slain Frenchman, the last Sieur de Fievrault, pale and gory, his hand on the wound in his side.

“Speak, dread phantom!  What dost thou want with me?  I go to do thy bidding, to fulfil thy vow.”

“Thank God!  Thou hast spoken, and I may speak, too.  Thou goest to do my bidding in love for thy father, to fulfil my vow.  Alas, many trials await thee.  Canst thou face them?”

“I can do all man can do.”

“So I imagine from thy bold bearing in this haunted castle of my ancestors. It is well. Only go forward, whatever happens. Thou shalt not perish. Thou shalt deliver thy father and me, condemned as yet to walk this lower earth, till the vow my own misconduct made me unworthy to fulfil is fulfilled by thee. Fare thee well, and fear not.”

And the figure disappeared.

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Hubert felt a sense of blessed relief, under which he fell asleep again, and did not awake until aroused by a cry of terror. He started up. Almeric and all the men were on their feet, like frenzied beings, gazing into the darkness which enveloped the end of the hall. Then they rushed with a wild cry at the door, which they unbarred with eager hands, and issued into the darkness. He heard a heavy fall, as if one, perhaps two, had missed the steps and gone headlong into the courtyard.

Terror is contagious, but Hubert saw nothing as yet to fear.

“Come back, ye cowards! Shame on ye!” he cried, but cried in vain—he was alone in the haunted hall.

The fact was that Hubert felt as if he personally had made his peace with the mysterious haunters of the castle, and had nothing to fear. So he did not stir, but was even able to sleep again until aroused by the aged janitor, just as the blessed light of dawn was pouring through the oriel window.

“I warned you, my lord,” he said.

“You did. The fault, and the punishment, too, is ours. But where are my men?”

“Here is one,” said the janitor, leading Hubert to the cell over the gateway which he occupied himself, where on a couch lay poor Almeric with a broken arm; broken in falling down the steps.

“And where are the rest?” said Hubert after expressing his sympathy to the wounded squire.

“In the forest; they were raving like madmen in the courtyard, and I opened the gates and let them out to cool their brains. They will doubtless be here anon.”

“What didst thou see, Almeric, that frightened thee out of thy reason?”

“Ask me not! I may tell thee anon, but let us leave this evil place,” said Almeric.

“We must wait for our men—I will go out and blow my horn without the barbican.”

He blew a mighty blast, and after awhile first one and then another responded to the appeal, looking thoroughly ashamed of themselves; till four were in presence. But the fifth never arrived; doubtless he had met some mishap in the forest.

“The wolves have got him,” said the old man. “There is an old she wolf with a litter of cubs not far off, and I heard a mighty howling there-a-way after the gates were opened. If he staggered in her way in the darkness she would be sure to tear him to pieces.”

They sought for him in vain, but could not risk having to pass another night in the place. Almeric was able to sit his horse with difficulty, Hubert taking the reins and riding at his side and supporting him from time to time with his arm. The sprightly lad was quite changed.

“I know not what it was,” he said, “but it was something in that darkness, an awful face, a giant form, a deathly thing of horror, and we lost our presence of mind and sought absence of body. That is all I can say. It was something borne upon our wills and we could not resist. I shall never want to try such experiments again.”

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Even our Hubert, brave as he had been, was changed. He understood his father's affliction better, nor was he ever quite so light hearted and frivolous again. The joy of youth was dimmed. Yet he often thought that the apparition of the slain Frenchman might have been but a dream sent from heaven, to encourage him in his undertaking on his father's behalf.

## Chapter 18: The Retreat Of The Outlaws.

The day was fine, and in the sun the heat was oppressive, but a grateful coolness lay beneath the shades of the forest, as our two brethren, Martin and Ginepro, pursued their way under the spreading canopy of leaves in search of the outlaws, whom most men preferred to avoid.

Crossing the Dicker, a wild tract of heath land which we have already introduced to our readers, and leaving Chiddinglye to the left, they entered upon a pathless wilderness. Mighty trees raised their branches to heaven, whose trunks resembled the columns in some vast cathedral. There was little underwood, and walking was very pleasant and easy.

And as they went they indulged in much pleasant discourse. Ginepro related many tales of "sweet Father Francis," and in return Martin enlightened his companion with regard to the manners and customs of the natives into whose territories they were penetrating; men who knew no laws but those of the greenwood, and who were but on a par with the heathen in things spiritual, at least so said the neighbouring ecclesiastics.

"All the more need of our mission," thought both.

They were now in a very dense wood, and the track they had been following became more and more obscure when, just as they crossed a little stream, a stern voice called, "Stand and deliver."

They looked up. There were men with bended bows and quivers full of arrows on either side. They had fallen into an ambush.

Martin was quite unalarmed.

"Nay, bend not your bows. We be but poor brethren of Saint Francis, who have come hither for your good."

"For our goods, you mean. We want no begging friars or like cattle."

"But I have a special message for thee, Kynewulf, well named; and for thee, Forkbeard; and for thee, Nick."

“Ah!  Whom have we got here?”

“An old friend under a new guise.  Lead me to your chieftain, Grimbeard, who, I hope, is well.  Or shall I show you the road?”

“Yes, if you know it.  Art thou a wizard?”

“Nay, only a poor friar.  Am I to lead or follow?”

“Lead, by all means.  Then we shall know that thou canst do so.”

Martin, nothing loth, walked forward boldly, Ginepro more timidly by his side.  They were such wild-looking outlaws.  At last they reached a spring, and Martin left the beaten path, ascended a slope, and stood at the entrance to a large natural amphitheatre, not unlike an old chalk pit, such as men still hew from the side of the same hills.

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But if the hand of man had ever wrought this one, it had been in ages long past, of which no record remained. The soft hand of nature had filled up the gaps and seams with creeping plants and bushes, and all deformities were hidden by her magic touch. Around the sides of the amphitheatre were twenty to thirty low huts of osier work, twined around tall posts driven into the ground and cunningly daubed with stiff clay. In the centre of the glade was a great fire, evidently common property, for a huge caldron steamed and bubbled over it, supported by three sticks placed cunningly so as to lend each other their aid in resisting the heavy weight, in accordance with nature's own mechanics, which she teaches without the help of science {25}.

Before the fire, on a sloping bank, covered with the softest skins, lay the aged chieftain whom we met before. But now seven years had added their transforming touch, tempus edax rerum. His tall stature was diminished by a visible curve in its outline. His giant limbs and joints were less firmly knit.

A light hunting shirt of green, confined around the waist by a silver belt, superseded the tunic of skins we saw him wear before, and over it was a crimson sash. These were doubtless the spoils of some successful fray or ambush, for the woods did not produce the tailors who could make such attire; and in the belt was stuck a sharp, keen hunting knife, and on his head was a low, flat cap with an eagle's feather. There were eagles then in "merrie Sussex."

"Whom hast thou brought, Kynewulf? What cattle are these?"

"Guests, good captain," replied Martin, "who have come far to seek thee, and who have brought thee a special message from the King of kings."

Grimbeard growled, but he had his own ideas of hospitality, and had his deadliest enemy come voluntarily to him, trusting to his good faith, he could not have harmed him. So he conquered his discontent.

"Hospitality is the law of the woods. Stay and share our fare, such as it is, the pot luck of the woods, then depart in peace."

"Not till we have delivered our message."

"Ah, well, my merrie men are the devil's own children, but if you will try your hand at converting them I will not hinder you."

Not a word was said before dinner, and Martin, feeling that after partaking of their hospitality they would be upon a different footing, said but little. But the curiosity which was excited by his knowledge of their names and of this their summer retreat was only suspended for a brief period.

The al-fresco entertainment was over, the dinner transferred on wooden spits from the caldron to huge wooden platters.  Game, collops of venison skilfully roasted on long wooden forks, assisted to eke out the contents of the caldron.  Strong ale, or mead, was handed round, of which our brethren partook but sparingly.  When the meal was over Grimbeard spoke:

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“We generally Test awhile and chew the cud after our midday meal, for our craft keeps us awake a great deal by night; and perhaps your tramp through the woods has made you tired also. Rest, and after the sun has sunk beneath the branches of yon pine you may deliver the message you spoke about.”

Then the hoary chieftain retired to the shade of his hut, as did some of the others to theirs, but the majority reclined under the spreading beeches, as did our two brethren.

They slept through the meridian heat. One sentinel alone watched, and so secure felt the outlaws in their deep seclusion that even this precaution was felt to be a mere matter of form.

And at length a horn was blown, and the whole settlement awoke to active life.

“Call the brethren of Saint Francis,” said the chief. “Now we are ready. Sit round, my merrie men.”

It was a picture worthy the pencil of that great student of the wild and picturesque, Salvator Rosa; the groups of brawny outlaws, with their women and children, all disposed carelessly on the grass, with the background of dark hill and wood, or of hollow rock, while Martin, standing on a conspicuous hillock, began his message.

With wondrous skill he told the tale of Redeeming Love. His enthusiasm mounting as he spoke. The bright colour reddening his face, his eyes sparkling with animation, is beyond our power to tell, and the result was such as was common in the early days of the Franciscan missions. Women, yea, and men too, were moved to tears.

But in the most solemn appeal of all, suddenly a woman’s voice broke the intensity of the silence in which the preacher’s words were received:

“My son—my own son—my dear son.”

The speaker had not been at the dinner, and had only just returned from the woods, wherein she often wandered. For this was Mabel, the chieftain’s wife, or “Mad Mab,” as they flippantly called her, and only on hearing from afar the unwonted sound of preaching in the camp had she been drawn in. The voice thrilled upon her memory as she drew nearer, and when she entered the circle—we may well say the charmed circle—she stood entranced, until at last conviction grew into certainty, and she woke the enchantment of the preacher’s voice by her cry of maternal love.

She was not far beyond the prime of life. Her face had once been strikingly handsome; Martin inherited her bright colour and dark eyes; but time had set its mark upon her, and often had she felt weary of life.

But now, after one of her monotonous rambles, like unto one distraught in the woods, had come this glad surprise. A new life burst upon her—something to live for, and, rushing forward, she threw her arms around the neck of her recovered boy.

“My mother,” said he in an agitated voice. “Nay, she has been long dead.”

But as he gazed, the same instinct awoke in him as in her, and he lost self control. The sermon ended abruptly, the preacher was conquered by the man. The hearers gathered in groups and discussed the event.

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“This explains how he knew all about us!”

“It is Martin, little Martin, who should have been our chieftain.”

“The last of the house of Michelham!”

“Turned into a preaching friar!”

Grimbeard mused in silence. At last he gave a whispered order.

“Treat them both well, to the best of our power. But they must not leave the camp.”

“Mother,” said Martin, “why that cruel message of thy death? Thou hadst not otherwise lost me so long.”

“It was for thy good. I would save thee from the life of an outlaw or vagabond, and foresaw that unless I renounced thee utterly, thy love would mar thy fortunes, and bring thee back to my side.”

“My poor forsaken mother!”

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Grimbeard now approached.

“Well, young runaway, thou hast come back in strange guise to thy natural home. Dost thou remember me?”

“Well, step father, many a sound switching hast thou given me, which doubtless I deserved.”

“Or thou hadst not had them. Well said, boy, and now wilt thou take up thy abode again with us? We want a priest.”

“I am no priest, only a preacher, and my mission is to the Andredsweald at large, and the scattered sheep of the Great Shepherd therein.”

“Only thou knowest our whereabouts too well. We may not let thee go in and out without security, that our retreat be not made known.”

“Father, I have eaten of your bread, and once more of my own free will accepted your hospitality. Even a heathen would respect your secret, still more a Christian brother. If I

can persuade you to cease from your mode of life, which the Church decrees unlawful, well and good. But other weapons than those of the Gospel shall never be brought against you by me."

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They had a long conversation that afternoon, wherein Grimbeard maintained that the position of the "merrie men," who still kept up a struggle against the Government in the various great forests of the land, such as green Sherwood and the Andredsweald, were simply patriots maintaining a lawful struggle against foreign oppressors. Martin, on the other hand, maintained that the question was settled by Divine providence, and that the governors of alien blood were now the kings and magistrates to whom, according to Saint Paul, obedience was due. If two centuries did not establish prescriptive right, how long a period would?

"No length of time," replied Grimbeard.

"Ah well, then, step father, suppose the poor Welsh, who once lived here, and whom my own remote forefathers destroyed or drove from these parts, were to send to say they would thank the descendants of the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes to go back to their ancient homes in Germany and Denmark, and leave the land to them according to the principle you have laid down. What should you then say?"

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Grimbeard was fairly puzzled.

“Thou hast me on the hip, youngster.”

After this conversation Martin was so fatigued by the day’s walk and all the subsequent excitement, that his mother prepared for him a composing draught from the herbs of the wood, and made him drink it and go to bed; a sweet bed of fragrant leaves and coverlets of skins in one of the huts, where she lodged her dear boy, her recovered treasure—happy mother.

The following morning, overcome by the emotions of the preceding day, Martin slept long. He was dreaming of the battle of Senlac, where he was heading a charge, when he awoke to find that the sounds of real present strife had put Senlac into his head.

He sat upright, a confused dream of fighting and struggling still lingering in his distracted mind. No, it was no dream; he heard the actual cry of those who strove for mastery: the exulting yell:

“Englishmen, on! down, ye French tyrants!”

“Out! out! ye English thieves!”

“Saint Denys! on, on! Saint Michael, shield us!”

Then came the sound of fiercer strife, the cry of deadlier anguish.

For there with arrow, spear, and knife,
Men fought the desperate fight for life.

Martin slipped on his garb, and hurried to the scene. He looked, gained a sloping bank, and there—

That morning, a merry young knight and his train set out from Herstmonceux Castle to go “a hunting,” and in the very exuberance of his spirits, like Douglas of old, he thought fit to hunt in the woods haunted by the “merrie men,” as he in the Percy’s country. Such a merry young knight, such a roguish eye.

But he had not ridden far into the debatable land when the path lay between two sloping, almost precipitous banks, crowned with underwood. All at once a voice cried:

“Stand! Who are ye? Whence come ye? What do ye here in the woods which free Englishmen claim as their own?”

A shaggy form, a bull-like individual, stood above them. The young knight gazed upon his interlocutor with a comic eye.

“Why, I am Ralph of Herstmonceux, an unworthy aspirant to the honours of chivalry, and conceive I have full right to hunt in the Andredsweald without asking leave of any king of the vagabonds and outlaws, such as I conceive thee to be.”

“Cease thy foolery, thou Norman magpie.

“Throw down your arms, all of you.  Our bows are bent; you are in our power.  You are covered, one and all, by our aim.”

“Bring on your merrie men.”

Not one of the waylaid party had put arrow to bow.  This may seem strange, but they had sense enough to know (as the reader may guess), that the first demonstration of hostility would bring a shower of arrows from an unseen foe upon them.  That, in short, their lives were in the power of the “merrie men,” whose arrowheads and caps they could alone see peering from behind the tree trunks, and over the bank, amidst the purple heather.

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What a plight!

“Give soft words,” said the old huntsman, who rode on the right hand of our friend Ralph, “or we shall be stuck with quills like porcupines.”

But Ralph was hot headed, and threw a lance at the old outlaw, giving, at the same time, the order:

“Charge up the banks, and clear the woods of the vermin.”

The dart missed Grimbeard, and immediately the deadly shower which the old man had so keenly apprehended descended upon the exposed and ill-fated group, who, for their sins, were commanded by so mad a leader.

A terrific scene ensued. The horses, stung by the arrows, reared, pranced, and rushed away in headlong flight down the stony entangled road; throwing their riders in most eases, or dashing their heads against the low overhanging branches of the oaks. Half the Normans were soon on the ground. The outlaws charged: the lane became a shambles, a slaughter house.

Ralph and two or three more still fought desperately, but with little hope, when there appeared the sudden vision of a grey friar, who thrust himself between the knight and Grimbeard, who were fighting with their axes.

“Hold, for the love of God! Accursed be he who strikes another blow.”

“Thou hast saved the old villain’s life, grey friar,” said mad Ralph, parrying a stroke of Grimbeard’s axe, but this was but a bootless boast, for the conflict was not one with knightly weapons, but with those of the forest. The train of Herstmonceux were but equipped for the hunt and in such weapons as they possessed the outlaws were far better versed than they, for with boar spear or hunting knife they often faced the rush of wolf or boar.

“Martin! Boy, thou hast saved the young fop.

“Dost thou yield, Norman, to ransom?”

“Yea, for I can do no better, but if this reverend young father will but stand by and see fair play, I would sooner fight it out.”

“Dead men pay no ransom, and they are not good to eat, or I might gratify thee. As it is I prefer thee alive.”

Then he cried aloud:

“Secure the prisoners.  Blindfold them, then take them to the camp.”

The fight was over.  The prisoners, five in number, were blindfolded, and in that condition led into the camp of the outlaws; Martin keeping close by their side, intent upon preventing any further violence from being offered, if he could avert it.

Arrived at the camp, the captives were consigned to a rough cabin of logs.  Their bandages were removed; a guard was placed before the door, and they were left to their meditations.

They were only, as we have said, five in number.  Six had escaped.  The others lay dead on the scene of the conflict.

Meanwhile, Ralph was puzzling his brains as to where he had seen the grey friar before, who had so opportunely arrived at the scene of conflict.  He inquired of his companions, but their wits were so discomposed by their circumstances and by apprehensions, too well founded, for their own throats, that they were in no wise able to assist his memory.  Nor indeed could they have done so under any circumstances.

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It was but a brief suspense. The outlaws had but tended their own wounded, washed off the stains of the conflict, refreshed themselves with copious draughts of ale or mead, ere they placed a seat of judgment for Grimbeard under a great spreading beech which grew in the centre of the camp, and all the population of the place turned out to see the tragedy or comedy which was about to be enacted. Just as, in our own recollection, the mob crowded together to see an execution.

Grimbeard was fond of assuming a certain state on these occasions. He dressed himself in all his rustic finery, and seated himself with the air of a king on his rude chair of honour. By his side stood Martin, pale and composed, but determined to prevent further bloodshed if it were in mortal power to do so.

“Bring forth the prisoners.”

They were led forth; Ralph looking as saucy and careless as ever.

“What is thy name?” asked Grimbeard.

“Ralph, son of Waleran de Monceux.”

“And what has brought thee into my woods?”

“Thy woods, are they? Well, thou couldst see I came to hunt.”

“And thou must pay for thy sport.”

“Willingly, since I must. Only do not fix the price too high.”

“Thy ransom shall be a hundred marks, and till then thou must be content with the hospitality of the woods. Now for thy followers—three weeks ago the sheriff hung two of my best men as deer slayers, and I have sworn in such cases to have life for life. If they hang, we hang too. If they are merciful, so are we. Now I am loth to slay an Englishman. Hast thou not any outlanders here?”

“If I had, dost think I should tell thee? Why not take me for one?”

“Thou art worth a hundred marks, and they not a hundred pence,” laughed Grimbeard. “It is not that I respect noble blood. I have scant cause. A wandering priest who came to say mass for us told us the story of Jephthah and the Gileadites; I will try the effect of a Shibboleth, too.

“So bring the prisoners forward, one by one, my merrie men.”

The first was evidently an Englishman.

“Say, what food dost thou see on that table yonder?”

“Bread and cheese.”

“It is well; thou shalt be Sir Ralph’s messenger, and shall be set free, upon a solemn promise to do our behests.

“Now set forth the next in order, and let him say, ‘Shibboleth.'”

It was an olive-skinned rogue, fresh from Southern France, who stepped forward this time, impelled by his captors.  Asked the same question, he replied:

“Dis bread and dat sheese {26}.”

“Hang him,” said Grimbeard, and hanged he would doubtless have been, for a dozen hands were busy at once in their cruel glee; some seizing upon the victim, some mocking his pronunciation, some preparing the rope, two or three boys climbing the tree like monkeys, to assist in drawing it over a sufficiently stout branch to bear the human weight, while the poor Gaul stood shivering below; when Martin threw his left arm around the victim, and raised his crucifix on high with the other.

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“Ye shall not harm him, unless ye trample under foot the sign of your redemption.”

“Who forbids?” said Grimbeard.

“I, the representative by birth of your ancestral leaders, and one who might now claim the allegiance you have paid to my fathers for generations. But I rest not on that,” and here he pleaded so eloquently in the name of Christ, that even Grimbeard was moved; he could not resist a certain ascendency which Martin was gaining over him.

“Let them go, all of them. Blindfold them and lead them out in the road. Only they must swear not to come into our haunts again, either with hawk and hound or with deadlier weapons.

“There! I hope it may be put to my account in purgatory, my Martin. You are spoiling a good outlaw. Have your way, only this gay popinjay of a knight must stay until his ransom be paid. We can’t afford to lose that. But no harm shall befall him. Beside, we may want him as hostage in case this morning’s work bring a hornets’ nest about our ears.”

“Ralph, you are safe. Do you remember me?” said Martin.

“I remember a young fellow much like thee at Oxford, who defended my poor pate against the boves boreales, as now from latrones austroles. Verily, thou art born to be a shield to addle-pated Ralph. But art thou indeed a grey friar?”

“Yes, thank God.”

“And that was how it was we lost you, and wondered you never came near us again to share the fun. Father Adam had won you. Well, it is a good fellow lost to the world.”

“And gained to God, I hope.”

“I know nought of that. Only tell me, my Martin, what life am I to lead here?”

“Only give your parole and you will be free within the limits of the camp. I know their customs, being born amongst them.”

“Oh, wert thou! I wish thee joy of the honour. How, then, didst thou get to Oxford?”

“It is a long tale; another day I will tell thee. Now, wilt thou come with me, and give thy word to Grimbeard not to attempt to escape till thy messenger returns?”

It was done, and Ralph and Martin strolled around the camp in conversation that entire evening. Martin now learned that the death of an elder brother had recalled his former

acquaintance from Oxford to figure as the heir apparent of Herst de Monceux:  hence the occasion of their meeting under such different auspices.

## Chapter 19:  The Preaching Friar.

The system of the early Franciscans bore a very remarkable likeness to that devised by John Wesley for his itinerant preachers, if indeed the former did not suggest the latter. They were not to supersede the parochial system, only to supplement it.  They were not to administer the sacraments, only to send people to their ordinary parish priest for them, save in the rare cases of friars in full orders, who might exercise their offices, but so as not to interfere with the

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ordinary jurisdiction. The consent of the bishop of the diocese was at first required, and ordinarily that of the parish priest; but in the not infrequent cases where a slothful vicar would not allow any intrusion on his sinecure, his objections were disregarded. When the parish priest gave consent, the church was used if conveniently situated; otherwise the nearest barn or glade in the woods was utilised for the sermons. Like certain modern religionists, they were free and easy in their modes, frequently addressing passers by with personal questions, and often resorting to eccentric means of attracting attention. But unlike their modern imitators, they acted on very strict subordination to Church authority, and all their influence was used on behalf of the Church; although they strove as their one great aim to infuse personal religion into the dry bones of the existing system, which they fully accepted, while teaching that “the letter without the spirit killeth.”

In short, their system was thoroughly evangelical at the outset, although it grievously degenerated in after days.

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Martin’s health was still far from strong. He yet felt the effects of the terrible attack of the black fever or plague the preceding spring; and now he was once more prostrated by a comparatively slight return of the feverish symptoms, the after effects of his illness.

But he had found his nurse now. What a delight it was to his mother to take his head, “that dear head,” upon her knee, and to fondle it once more, as if he were a child again. Now she had her reward for all her loving self denial in sending him away and feigning herself dead.

In the summer time, especially if the weather were warm and genial, the greenwood was not a bad place for an invalid, and Martin was as well attended as if he had been in the infirmary at Michelham, and with far more loving care. But under such care he rapidly gathered strength, and as he did so used it all in his master’s service. The impression he produced on the followers of his forefathers was profound, but he traversed every corner of the forest, and not an outlying hamlet or village church escaped his ministrations, so that shortly his fame was spread through all the country side.

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We must now pay a brief visit to Walderne.

The first few months after the departure of Hubert brought little change in the dull routine of daily life there. Drogo speedily returned after the departure of his rival, and his whole energies were spent in making himself acceptable to his uncle, Sir Nicholas. He attended him in the hunt. He assisted him in the management of the estate. He looked after the men-at-arms, the servants, and the general retinue of a medieval castle. The days had passed indeed when war and violence were the natural occupation of a baron, and when the men-at-arms were never left idle long together, but they were almost within memory of living men and might return again. So the defences of the castle were never neglected, and the arts of warfare ceased not to be objects of daily study in the Middle Ages.

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The Lady Sybil never trusted Drogo thoroughly. She had strong predispositions against him: and quite accepted Hubert's version of the quarrel at Kenilworth which, under Drogo's manipulation, assumed a much more innocent aspect than the one in which it was presented to our readers.

Sir Nicholas was at last won over to believe that the youth was not so bad after all, the more so as Drogo disavowed all further designs or claims upon the inheritance of Walderne, now that the proper heir was so happily discovered. Harengod would content him, and when the clouds had blown over, he trusted that there would always be peace between Harengod and Walderne.

So the months of summer sped by. News arrived of Hubert's visit to Fievrault, and of the dread portents described in a former chapter, whereat was much marvel. Nought was said of the prophecy, for Hubert did not wish to put such forebodings in the minds of his relations. He had rather they should look hopefully to his return. Poor Hubert!

Then they heard, a month later, of his departure from Marseilles. The news was brought by a pilgrim who had just returned from the Holy Land, and met Hubert and his party about to embark, purposing to sail to Acre, in a vessel called the Fleur de Lys, near which spot lay a house of the brethren of Saint John, to which order his father owed so much. The reader may imagine how this good pilgrim, who had achieved his task, and come home crowned with honour and glory, was welcomed.

He himself, "by the blessing of our Lady," had escaped all dangers, had worshipped at all the Holy Places, paying the usual tribute demanded by the Paynim. It was a time of truce, and if only Hubert were as fortunate as he, they might hope to see him within another twelve months.

But the months passed on. Autumn deepened into winter. The leaves put on their gayest and rarest garb of russet and gold to die, like vain things, clothed in their best. Winter, far more severe than in these days, bound the earth in its icy grasp. And still he came not.

The spring came on again, and on a fine March day, one of those days when we have a foretaste of the coming summer, a deep calamity befell the House of Walderne. Sir Nicholas was thrown from his horse while hunting, and only brought home to die: he never spoke again.

The reader may imagine the desolation of the Lady Sybil, thus deprived of the helpmeet on whom she had leaned so long and loved so well. They buried him in the vaults of the Castle Chapel, which his lady had founded. There his friends and retainers followed him, with tears, to the grave.

And now the very site of that chapel is hidden in a deep wood.  It lies in the dell beneath Walderne Church, and may be traced by those who do not fear being scratched by brambles.  There is no pathway to it.  Sic transit.

Not long after the death of Sir Nicholas, a palmer arrived at the castle who had more to tell than usual, but not of a reassuring character—he had been at Saint Jean d'Acre.

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Here the voice of the Lady Sybil was heard, and there was instant silence.

“How long ago was it that he had left Acre?”

“It might be six months.”

“Had he heard of a young English knight, for whom all their hearts were very sore:  Sir Hubert of Walderne?”

“No, and yet if the knight had arrived at Acre he must have heard of it, for all travellers sought the hospitality of the brethren of Saint John, with whom he lived for six months as a serving brother, waiting upon their guests.”

Dead silence.  After a while the lady spoke.

“And had he not heard of the arrival of a vessel from Marseilles, called the Fleur de Lys?”

“Lady,” he replied, “the name brings a sad remembrance of my voyage homeward to my mind.  Off the coast of Sicily is a mighty whirlpool, which men call Charybdis, where Aeneas of old narrowly escaped shipwreck.  When the tide goes down the whirlpool belches forth the fragments of ships which have been sucked down, and when it returns the abyss again absorbs them.

“Here, then, I stood one day, for we had landed at Syracuse, on the rocks which commanded the swelling main, and at high tide I saw the hideous wreckage flow forth from the dark prison.  One portion, a figurehead, came near me in its gyrations.  It was the carved figure of the Fleur de Lys.”

“And you know no more?”

“Only that the natives said a French vessel of that name had been vainly striving, on a stormy day, to pass safely through the straits, and evade the power of the Charybdis; that she was drawn in, and that every soul perished.”

A sudden tumult:  Lady Sybil had fainted, and was conveyed to her chamber.

From that day the health and spirits of the Lady of Walderne sank into a state which gave great anxiety to her maidens and retainers; she was not indeed very old in years, but still no longer did she possess the elasticity of youth.  All her thoughts were absorbed by religion.  She heard mass daily, and went through all the formal routine the customs of her age prescribed; went occasionally to the shrine of Saint Dunstan at Mayfield, and to sundry holy wells, notably that one in the glen near Hastings, well known to modern holiday makers.  But while she was thus striving to work out her own salvation she knew little of the vital power of religion.  It was the mere formal fulfilment

of duty, not the spontaneous offering of love; and her burdened and anxious spirit never found rest.

Yet had she not herself built a chapel, and given nearly the half of her goods to the poor, like Zaccheus of old?  While, unlike him, she had never wronged any to whom she might restore fourfold.  Well, like those of Cornelius, her prayers and alms had gone up before God and brought a Peter.

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About four miles from her home was a favourite nook to which she oft resorted. In a hollow of the hills, which rise gently to their summit behind Heathfield, overshadowed by tall trees, environed by purple heather, was a dark deep pond: so black in the shade that its waters looked like ink. But it had all the resplendency of a mirror, and was indeed called “The mirror pond;” the upper sky, the branches of the trees, were so vividly reflected that any one who had a fancy for standing upon the head, on the brink of the pool, might have easily believed his posture was correct, and that he looked up into the azure void.

At the north end of this sheltered and sequestered dell was a rustic seat, looking over the pond; and hard by was a large crucifix, life size, so that the devout might be stirred thereby to meditation.

Here came the Lady Sybil, and sat by the side in the arbour one beautiful day; the autumn of the year of grace, at which we have now arrived—twelve hundred and sixty. And she sat and mused upon her dead husband, and her absent nephew, and strove to learn the secret of true resignation, as she gazed upon the representation of suffering Love Incarnate.

All at once she heard a voice singing:

Love sets my heart on fire,
Love of the Crucified:
To Him my heart He drew,
Whilst hanging on the tree,
From whence He said to me,
I am thy Shepherd true;
I am thy Bridegroom new.

The sweet plaintive words struck her with deep emotion. And as she listened eagerly, lo, the branches parted, and two brethren of Saint Francis came out upon the edge of the pond.

She paused as they knelt before the rood. At length they rose, and approached the arbour wherein she sat.

“Sister,” said the foremost one, “hast thou met Him of Nazareth? for I know He has been seeking thee!”

What was it which made her gaze upon the speaker with such surprise? Have any of my readers ever met a member of a well known, and perchance much loved, family, whom they have never seen before, and felt struck by the familiar tones of the voice, and by the mien of the stranger? She looked earnestly at our Martin, but of course

knew him not, only she wondered whether this were the “brother” of whom Hubert had spoken.

“I know not whether He has found me, but I have long been seeking Him,” she said sadly.

“Then, my sister, thou dost not yet know what He is to those who find?”

Quam bonus es petentibus
Sed quid invenientibus {27}!

“How may I find Him?  I seek Him on the right hand and He is not there, and on the left and He is not to be found.  Oh, tell me all about Him, and how I may find rest in that Love!”

And there, beside that mirror pond, did a heart all afire with Divine Love kindle the dry wood, all ready for the blaze, in the heart of another.  After the long colloquy, which we omit, the lady added:

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“Dost thou not know my nephew Hubert?  Art thou not his friend Martin?”

“I am, indeed.  Tell me, hast thou yet heard aught of my brother Hubert?”

“Nought!  I might say naught, so sad are the tidings a wandering palmer brought us,” and she told him the story of Charybdis.

“Lady,” he said, ’I hope better things.  Nay, I am persuaded his race is not yet run, and that I shall yet see him again in the flesh; weaned by much affliction from some earthly dross which yet encrusts his loving nature.”

“What reason hast thou to give?”

“Only a conviction borne upon me.”

“Wilt thou not return with me?”

“I may not.  I have a mission at Mayfield, whither I am bound.”

“But thou wilt come soon?”

“On Sunday, if I may, I will preach in the chapel of thy castle.”

Need we add how eagerly the offer was accepted?  So they parted for the time.

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It was a day of wondrous beauty, the first Sunday in July that year.

Sweet day, so calm, so fine, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky.

The little chapel was full at the usual hour for the Sunday morning service, which, with our forefathers, was nine o’clock, the hour hallowed by the descent of the Comforter on the day of Pentecost.  The chaplain said mass.  After the creed Martin preached, and his discourse was from the epistle for the day, which was the fourth Sunday after Trinity.

“Ah,” he said, “this day is indeed beauteous, as were the days in Eden.  It is a delight to live and move.  There is joy in the very air; yet beneath all lies the mystery of pain and suffering.

“Gaze forth from the height, beside the mill at Cross-in-Hand, upon God’s beauteous world. See the graceful downs beyond the forest, stretching away as far as eye can reach, like a fairy scene. How lovely it all is; but let us penetrate beneath the canopy of leaves and the cottage roof. Ah, what suffering of man or beast they hide, where on the one hand the wolf, the fox, the wild cat, the hawk, the stoat, and all the birds and beasts of prey tear their victims, and nature’s hand is like a claw, red with blood—and on the other, beneath the cottage roofs, many a bed-ridden sufferer lies groaning with painful disease, many children mourn their sires, many widows and orphans feel that the light is withdrawn from the world, so far as they are concerned.

“And yet is not God good? Doth He not love man and beast? Ah, yes; but sin hath brought death and pain into the world, and the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in bondage until now.

“But meanwhile He hath made suffering the path to glory, and our light affliction, which is but for a moment, shall be rewarded with an eternity of joy, if we but put our whole trust in Him who was made perfect by sufferings, and but calls His weary servants to tread the road He trod before them.”

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And so, with an eloquence unsurpassed in the experience of his hearers, he drew all hearts to the Incarnate Love who wept, bled, died for them, and bade them see that Passion pictured in the Holy Mysteries, which were about to be celebrated before them, and to give Him their hearts' oblation in union with the sacrifice.

After the service the noon meat was spread in the castle hall, and afterwards Martin was invited to a private conference with the Lady Sybil. She received her nephew, as she already suspected him to be, in a little chamber of the tower long since pulled down. The scent of honeysuckle was borne in on the summer night air, and the rays of a full moon shone brightly through an open casement. At first the conversation was confined to the topic of Martin's discourse, which we here omit, but afterwards the dame said:

"My child, for thou art but a child in years to me, tell me why it is thy voice seems so familiar, and even the lineaments of thy countenance?"

Martin was embarrassed and silent. He did not wish just now to reveal the secret of his relationship.

"Tell me," said she, "doth thy mother yet live?"

"She doth."

"And proud must she be of her son."

He was still silent.

"Brother Martin," said she, "I had a sister once, a wilful capricious girl, but of a loving heart. We lost her early. She did not die, but yet died to her family. She ran away and married an outlaw chieftain. Our father said, leave her to the life she has chosen, and forbade all communication: but often has my heart yearned for my only sister."

She continued after a long pause:

"I heard that her husband, for whom she left us, died of wounds received in a foray, and that she actually married his successor, a man of low degree. That by her first husband, who was said to be of noble English blood, she had one child, a son."

Again a long pause:

"And since I have been told that that son has reappeared, a brother of Saint Francis. The report has spread all through these parts. Tell me, is it true?"

Martin saw that all was known, and concealed himself no longer.

“It is true, aunt,” he said.

She embraced him, while the tears streamed down her cheeks.

“Oh, my Martin:  Hubert is no more:  and thou shouldst have been Lord of Walderne.”

“I seek a better inheritance, and I have not lost my hope of Hubert’s return.”

“I shall never see him, and I cannot trust Drogo, although he be the nephew of my late dear lord.  I fear he will make a bad Lord of Walderne.”

“Then, my lady, leave the place simply in trust for Hubert, in case ought happen to you. Again I say Hubert will return.”

“What Drogo takes charge of, he will keep.”

“Then confer with the neighbouring gentry, with Earl Warrenne and others, and ask their advice how to secure the property for the true heir.”

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“It is wisely thought, and shall be done,” she replied. “And now, my dear nephew, tell me all about my poor sister. Can she not be regained to her home, rescued from the wretched life of the woods?”

“I fear it is useless, while Grimbeard yet lives; besides a wife’s first duty is to her husband. I live in hope that he may be brought to submit to the authorities whom God has seen fit to place in trust over this land: then, if his pardon can be secured, all will be well.”

What further they said we may not relate. Only that, with her ear glued to the door, sat one of the tire women, drinking in all their conversation from the adjoining closet.

What could it avail to the wench? Nought personally, perhaps, but the lady was surrounded by the creatures of Drogo, and hence what she said in the supposed secrecy of her bower (boudoir), might soon be reported in his ear, and stimulate him to action.

It was a dismal dell—no sunlight penetrated its dark recesses, overgrown with vegetation, overshadowed by dark pines, filled with nettles and brambles. Herein dwelt one of those wretched women supposed to hold special communion with Satan by the credulous peasantry, and whose natural death was the stake. But often they were spared a long time, and sometimes, by accident, died in their beds. Love charms, philtres, she sold, and it was said dealt in poisons, but the fact was never brought home to her, or Sir Nicholas would have hanged, if not have burned her. As it was she owed a longer spell of time, wherein to work evil, to the intercession of the Lady Sybil.

And now she was about to return evil for good. A dark visitor, a young man veiled in a cloak, sought her cell one day. There was a long conference. He departed, concealing a small phial in his pouch. She dug a hole in the earth, after he was gone, and buried something he had left behind.

The reader must imagine the rest.

It was again the Sunday morn, and Martin preached for the last time before Lady Sybil at Walderne Castle, and spent the day there. And in the evening the lady summoned him to another private conference. She told him she felt it very much on her mind to have all things in order, in case of sudden death, such as had befallen her dear lord, Sir Nicholas: and therefore had arranged to go on the morrow to Lewes, to see Earl Warrenne of Lewes Castle, with whom she would take advice how to secure Walderne Castle and its estates for Hubert in the event of his return. She would also see the old Father Roger at the priory, and together they would shape out some plan.

At length the old dame said:

“Martin, my beloved nephew, wilt thou fetch my sleeping potion from the hall? I shall take it more willingly from thine hands. The butler places it nightly on the sideboard.”

Let us precede Martin by only one minute.

Ah! What is that shadow on the stairs? The likeness of one that pours the contents of a small phial into a goblet. A light is behind him and casts the shadow—The thing vanishes as Martin turns the corner. The sleeping potion was there, as left by the majordomo for his mistress, ere he retired early to rest, to be up with the lark.

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Martin himself gave it to his aunt. She drank it slowly, observed that it had an unusual taste, but not an unpleasant one.

“Martin,” she said, “hast told my sister, thy mother, all that I have said?”

“I have repeated your kind words.”

“And that her home is open for her, should she ever wish to return hither? which may God grant.”

“I have.”

“And I will take care that a clause in her favour is put into my will, which within the week will be witnessed by Earl Warrenne.”

Alas! man proposes but God disposes. On the following morning the Lady Sybil did not arise at the usual time, nor did she, as was her wont, appear at the morning mass in her chapel. At length, alarmed by the continued silence, her handmaids ventured to the bedside to arouse her. She lay as in a peaceful sleep, but stirred not as they approached. They became alarmed, touched her forehead; it was icy cold. Then their loud cries brought the household upstairs, Martin, Drogo, and all; and the truth forced itself upon them. She slept that sleep:

Which men call death.

Shall we describe the grief of the household? Nay, we forbear. All the retainers: all the neighbourhood, followed her to the tomb. Martin stood by the open grave; his head bowed in grief; he loved to comfort others, but felt much in need of a consoler himself.

Blessed are they which die in the Lord,
for they rest from their labours.

He said a few touching words from this text to those that stood around, as they mourned and wept, and comforting them was comforted himself.

But what of her plans for the future? They died with her. None living could gainsay the existing will, and the well-known intentions of Sir Nicholas and his widow, that Drogo should hold all till Hubert returned—in trust for him.

But would he then release his hold?

Whether or not, there was no alternative, and Drogo became lord de facto of Walderne. The Father Roger was now a monk professed, and could hold no property, nor did he see any reason for disputing the will which made Drogo tenant in charge for his son Hubert. He knew nought of the change of mind in Lady Sybil—only Martin knew this—-

and Martin could not prove it. Therefore he let things take their course, and hoped for the best. But he determined to watch narrowly over his friend Hubert's interests, for he still believed that he lived, and would return home again.

"We are friends, Drogo?" said Martin, as he left Walderne to go to the greenwood.

"Friends," said Drogo. "We were friends at Kenilworth, were we not? Ah, yes, friends certainly: but I fear I may not often invite you to spend your Sundays here. I am not fond of sermons—keep to the greenwood and I will keep to the castle. But if the earthen pot come into collision with the brazen one, the chances are that the weaker vessel will be broken."

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## Chapter 20:  The Old Man Of The Mountain.

Ah, where was our Hubert?

No magic mirror have we, wherein you may see him; yet we may lift the veil, after the fashion of storytellers.

It is a scorching day in summer, the heat is all but unbearable to Europeans as the rays fall upon that Eastern garden, on the slopes of Lebanon, where a score of Christian slaves toil in fetters, beneath the watchful eyes of their taskmasters, who, clothed in loose white robes and folded turbans, are oblivious of the power of the sun to scorch. There is a young man who toils amidst those vines and melons—yet already he bears the scars of desperate combats, and trouble and adversity have wrought wrinkles on his brow, and added lines of care to a comely face.

A slave toiling in an Eastern garden—taskmasters set over him with loaded whips—-alas! can this be our Hubert?

Indeed it is.

The story told by the pilgrim was partly true.  The Fleur de Lys had been wrecked on the coast of Sicily, but Hubert and two or three others escaped in an open boat.  They were a night and day on the deep, when a vessel bound for Antioch hove in sight, and made out their signals of distress.  They were taken on board, and arrived at Antioch duly, whence Hubert despatched a letter to his friends at Walderne (which never arrived); and then in the exquisite beauty of the Eastern summer—“when the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds has come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land; when the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell”—in all this beauty Hubert de Walderne and the three surviving members of his party set out to traverse the mountainous districts of Lebanon on their way to Jerusalem.

They engaged a guide, who feigned himself a Christian, and, in company with other pilgrims, all of course armed, travelled through the wondrous country beneath “The hill of Hermon” on their road southward.  Near the sources of the Jordan, while yet amongst the cedars of Lebanon, their guide led them into an ambush; and after a desperate but unavailing resistance, they were all either slain or taken prisoners.  Hubert, his sword broken in the struggle, was made captive, after doing all that valour could do, and bound.  He saw his faithful squire lying dead on the field, and the other two survivors of the party which had set out in such high hope from Walderne, captives like himself.

Resistance was impossible.  Their captors would have released them for ransom; but who was near to redeem them?  So they were taken to Damascus, and, in the absence of such ransom, were exposed in the slave market.  Oh, what degradation for the young

knight!  Hubert prayed for death, but it never came.  Death flies the miserable, and seeks the happy who cling to life.

An old man with a flowing beard, and of great austerity of manner, had come to inspect the slaves.  He selected only the young and comely, and Hubert had the misfortune to be one so distinguished.  All men bowed before the potentate, whoever he was, and Hubert saw that he had become the property of “a prince among his people.”

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Hubert was taken away, leaving his two fellow countrymen behind him—taken away, joined to a gang of slaves like himself: and at eventide, under the care of drivers, they formed a caravan, and set out westward, making for the distant heights of Lebanon. He was the only Englishman in the party, but close by was a young Poitevin, whose downcast manner and frequent tears aroused the pitying contempt of our Hubert, who thus at last was moved to address him:

“Cheer up, brother. While there is life there is hope.”

“Not for those who become the slaves of the Old Man of the Mountain.”

Hubert started: the “Old Man of the Mountain”—he had often heard of him, but had thought him only a “bogy,” invented by the credulous amongst the crusaders and pilgrims. He was said to be a Mohammedan prince of intense bigotry, who collected together all the promising boys he could find, whom from early years he trained in habits of self devotion, and, alas! of cruelty; eradicating in them all respect for human life, or sympathy for human suffering. His palace was on the slopes of Lebanon, and was well supplied with Christian slaves from the various markets; and it was said that those who continued obstinate in their faith were, sooner or later, put cruelly to death for the sport of the amiable pupils, to familiarise them with such scenes, and render them callous to suffering.

And when his education was finished, the “Old Man” presented each pupil with a dagger, telling him that it was for the heart of such or such a Christian warrior or statesman, and sent him forth. The deeds of his pupils are but too well recorded in the pages of history {28}.

Into the hands of this worthy man our Hubert had fallen, and even his hopeful temperament—always buoyant under misfortune—could not prevent him from sharing the despondency he had so pitied, and a little despised.

In the evening, they arrived at a caravansary, and there the slaves were told to rest, chained two and two together, and, furthermore, huge bloodhounds stalked about the courtyard, within and without, and if a slave but moved, their watchful growl showed what little chance there was of escape.

Little? Rather, none.

In the morning, up again, and away for the west, until the slopes of the mountains were attained on the third day, and the palace of the “Old Man” soon appeared in sight.

A grand Eastern palace—cupolas, minarets gleaming in the setting sun—terraces, fountains, cloistered arcades, cool and refreshing—gardens wherein grew the vine, the fig, the pomegranate, the melon, the orange, the lemon, and all the fruits of the East—-

wherein toiled wretched slaves under the watchful eyes of cruel overseers and savage dogs.

When they arrived they were all put to sleep in cells opening upon a courtyard with a tank in the centre.  They were supplied with mats for beds, and chained, each one by the ankle, to a staple in the wall.  And without the dogs prowled and growled all night.

# Page 109

Poor Hubert!

In the morning the “Old Man” appeared, and the slaves were all assembled to hear his words:

“Come, ye Christians, and hearken unto me, for ye shall hear my words—sweet to the wise, but as goads to the foolish. Ye are my property, bought with my money, and is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? But there is one God, and Mohammed is His prophet; and to please them is more to me than diamonds of Golconda or rubies of Shiraz.

“Therefore, I make proclamation, that every slave who will embrace the true faith of Islam shall be free, only tarrying here until we be assured of his knowledge of the Koran and steadfastness of purpose, when he shall go forth to the world, his own master, the slave of none but God and His prophet.

“But if there be senseless Jews, or unbelieving Nazarenes, who will not accept the blessing offered them, for six months shall they groan beneath the taskmaster, toiling in the sun; and then, if yet obstinate, they shall die, for the edification and warning of others, and the manner of their death shall be in fit proportion to their deserts.

“Hasty judgment beseemeth not a man. Ere the morrow’s sun arise, let your decision be made.”

The day was given to work in the burning sun, doubtless as a foretaste of what awaited the obstinate Christian. During the day troops of lithe, active boys of all ages from ten to twenty, had pranced about the garden—bright in face, lively and versatile in disposition; but with a certain cruel look about their black eyes and swarthy features which was the result of their system of education.

And they had not been sparing of their remarks about the slaves:

“Fresh food for the stake—fresh work for the torturers.”

“Pooh! They will give way and become good Mussulmen. Bah! Bah! Most of them do, and deprive us of the fun.”

That night Hubert and the young Alphonse of Poitou lay chained side by side.

“What shall you do in the morning, Sir Englishman?” said young Alphonse, after many a sigh.

“God helping us, our course is clear enough—we may not deny our faith.”

“Perhaps you have one to deny,” said the other, with another sigh. “For me, I have never been religious.”

“Nor have I,” said Hubert. “I always laughed at a dear companion who chose the religious life, even while I admired him in my heart. But when it comes to denying one’s faith, and accepting the religion of Mohammed, it seems to me there is no more to be said. I have got at least as much religion as may keep me from that, although I am not a saint.”

“I wish I had; but it is fearful: the toil in the sun, the chains, the silence, the starvation, and then the impalement, the scourging to death, the stake—or whatever else awaits us—at the end of the six months; while all these scoffing youngsters, whose savage mirth we have heard ringing about the place, are taught to exult in one’s sufferings—the bloodthirsty tyrant. But might we not in so hard a case pretend to become Mussulmen, and, as soon as we can escape, seek absolution and reconciliation to the Church?”

# Page 110

“He has said, ’Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny.’ I never read much Scripture, but I remember that the chaplain at Kenilworth, where I once lived as a page, impressed so much as this upon my mind. No; I shall stand firm, and take my chance, God helping me.”

So they awaited the morning. And when it came, they were all marshalled into the presence of the “Old Man of the Mountain.”

“Yesterday you heard the terms, today the choice remains—liberty and the faith of the prophet; slavery and death if you remain obstinate. Those who choose the former, file off to my right hand; those who select the latter, to my left.”

There were some thirty slaves. A moment’s hesitation. Then, at the signal from the guards, about twenty, amongst whom was Alphonse, stalked off to the right. Ten, amongst whom was Hubert, passed to the left.

“Your selection is made. Every moon the same choice will be repeated, until the end of the sixth, when no further grace will be granted; and the death he has chosen awaits the unbeliever.”

From this time the situation of the few who remained faithful became unbearable. They slept in the cells we have described, as best they could, rose at the dawn, and laboured under the guardianship of ferocious dogs and crueler men till the sun set, and darkness put an end to their unremitting toil. Only the briefest intervals were allowed for meals, and the food was barely sufficient to maintain life. Conversation was utterly forbidden, and at night, if the slaves were heard talking, they were visited with stripes.

The cells in which they now slept were single ones. Once only in many days Hubert was able to ask a fellow sufferer:

“What happens in the end?”

“We are impaled on a stake, I believe, after the fashion of the Turcomans; or perhaps burnt alive; or the two may be combined. God help us. Although He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”

“God bless you for those words,” replied Hubert.

The merry laughter of boys filled the place at times, between their hours of instruction, for the youngsters had all the European languages to study amongst them, for the ends the founder of this “orphan asylum” had in view. But nothing was done to make them tired of their work, or unfaithful in their attachment to the principles they were to maintain with cup and dagger.

Once or twice slaves disappeared, generally weak and worn-out men.

“Their time is come,” said the others in a terrified whisper.

And on such occasions a few shrieks would sometimes break the silence of a summer day, followed by the derisive laughter of youthful voices.  Yet these martyrs might have saved themselves by apostasy at any moment—save, perhaps, at the last, when the appetite of the cruel Mussulmen had been whetted for blood, and must be satiated—yet they would not deny their Lord.  Their behaviour was very unlike the conduct of an English officer in the Indian Mutiny, who saved his life readily by becoming a Mussulman, with the intention, of course, of throwing his new creed aside as soon as he was restored to society, and laughed at the folly of those who accepted his profession thereof.

# Page 111

But Hubert, careless of his religious duties as he had been, and almost afraid of appearing religious, could not do this, no more than Martin would have done.

Oh, how he thought of Martin.  And oh, how earnestly he prayed in those days.

And here we grieve to be forced to leave our Hubert awhile.

## Chapter 21:  To Arms!  To Arms!

Three years had passed away since the death of the Lady Sybil of Walderne.

A great change had passed over the scene.  War—civil war—the fiercest of all strife—-had fairly begun in the land.  Lest my readers should marvel, like little Peterkin, “what it was all about,” let me briefly explain that the royal party desired absolute personal rule, on the part of the king, unfettered by law or counsellors.  The barons desired that his counsellors should be held responsible for his acts, and that his power should be modified by the House of Lords or Barons, if not by the Commons as well; the latter idea was but dawning.  In short, they desired a constitutional government, a limited monarchy, such as we now enjoy.

The Pope had been called upon to mediate, and had decided in favour of the King, and absolved him from his oath and obligations to his subjects, especially those “Provisions of Oxford.”  Louis IX, King of France (afterwards known as Saint Louis), had been appealed to, but, though a very holy man, he was a staunch believer in the divine right of kings; and he, too, decided against the barons.

What were they to do?  Most of the barons were in submission, but Earl Simon said:

“Though all should leave me, I and my four sons will uphold the cause of justice, as I have sworn to do, for the honour of the Church and the good of the realm of England.”

They changed their standing point, and, to meet the condemnation which both Pope and King of France had awarded to the “Provisions of Oxford,” took their stand upon Magna Carta instead.

But here they fared no better.  In March 1264 a parliament had been summoned to meet at Oxford by the king, that he might there undo what the barons had done in 1258.  At this period the action of our tale recommences.

Drogo was still lord of the Castle of Walderne.  No news had reached England of Hubert these three long years, and hence no one disputed the title of Drogo to present possession.  His steps had been taken with all the craft of a subtle fox.  One by one he had removed all the old dwellers in the castle, and, so far as was possible, the outside

tenantry also, and substituted creatures of his own—men who would do his bidding, whatsoever it were, and who had no local interests or attachment to the former family.

And, little by little, his rule had been growing as hard and cruel as that of a medieval tyrant could be.  The dungeons were reopened which had long been closed; the torture chamber, long disused, was refitted, as it had been in the dreadful days of King Stephen; the defences had been looked to, the weapons furbished, for, as a war horse sniffs battle afar off, so did Drogo.

# Page 112

Need I tell my readers which side Drogo took? He had never, since the day he was expelled from Kenilworth, ceased to hate Earl Simon, and now he declared boldly for the king, and prepared to fight like a wildcat for the royal cause.

But Waleran, Lord of Herstmonceux, the father of our Ralph, espoused the popular side warmly, as did all the English men of Saxon race—the “merrie men” of the woods, and the like.

But the great Earl de Warrenne of Lewes was a fierce royalist. So was the Lord of Pevensey.

Already the woods were full of strife. Whensoever a party met a party of opposite principles, there was instant bloodshed. The barons’ men from Herstmonceux pillaged the lands of Walderne or Pevensey. The burghers of Hailsham declared for the earl, as did most burghers throughout the land; and Lewes, Pevensey, and Walderne threatened to unite, harry their lands, and burn their town. The monks of Battle preached for the king, as did those of Wilmington and Michelham. The Franciscans everywhere used all their powers for the barons, for was not Simon de Montfort one of them in heart in their reforms?

So all was strife and confusion—the first big drops of rain before the thunderstorm.

Drogo was at the height of his ambition. He had added Walderne to his patrimony of Harengod. He had humbled the neighbouring franklins, who refused to pay him blackmail. He had filled his castle with free lances, whose very presence forced him to a life of brigandage, for they must be paid, and work must be found them, or—he could not hold them in hand. The vassals who cultivated the land around enjoyed security of life with more or less suffering from his tyranny; but the independent franklin, the headmen of the villages, the burgesses of the towns (outside their walls), the outlaws of the woods, when he could get at them all, these were his natural sport and prey.

He had a squire after his own heart, named Raoul of Blois, who had come to England in the train of one of the king’s foreign favourites, and escaped the general sentence of expulsion passed at Oxford in 1258.

One eventide—the work of the day was over, and Drogo and this squire were taking counsel in the chamber of the former; once the boudoir of Lady Sybil in better days.

“Raoul,” said his master, “have you heard aught yet of the Lady Alicia of Possingworth?”

“Yes, my lord, but not good news.”

“Tell them without more grimace.”

“She has placed herself under the protection of the Earl of Leicester.”

Drogo swore a deep oath.

“We were too weak, my lord, to interrupt the party, and we did not know in time what they were about.  But one thing I heard the demoiselle said, which you should hear, although it may not be pleasant.”

“Well!”

“Although my first love be dead, I will never marry a man who poisoned his aunt.’”

# Page 113

“They have to prove it—let them.”

“My lord, the old hag who sold you the phial, as she says, yet lives, and I fear prates.”

“She shall do so no longer. Get a party of half a dozen of your tenderest lambs ready for secret service. We will start two hours before dawn, when all the world is fast asleep. See that you are all ready and call me.”

All lonely stood the hut—in the tangled brake—where dwelt a sinful but repentant woman. For one had broken in upon her life, and had awakened a conscience which seemed almost non-existent until he came—our Martin. And this night she tosses on her bed uneasily.

“Would that he might come again,” she says. “I would fain hear more of Him who can save, as he said, even me.”

She mutters no longer spells, but prayers. The stone seems removed from the door of that sepulchre, her heart. Towards morning sleep, long wooed in vain, comes over her—and she dozes.

It wants but an hour to dawn, but the night is at its darkest. The stars still drift over the western sky, but in the east it is cloudy, and no morning watch from his tower could spy the dawning day.

Eight men emerge from the deep shade of the tangled wood. In silence they approach the hut, and first they tie the door outside, so that the inmate cannot open it.

“Which way is the wind?” whispers the leader.

“In the east.”

“Fire the house on that side.”

They have with them a dark lantern, from which a torch is fired and applied to the roof of light reeds on the windward side. We draw a veil over the quarter of an hour which followed. It was what the French call un mauvais quart d’heure.

The sun had arisen for some hours when the solitude of the forest was broken by the tread of three strangers—travellers, who trod one of its most verdant glades. The one was a brother preacher of the order of Saint Francis. The second, a knight clad in hunting attire. The third, the mayor, the headman of the borough of Hamelsham.

“The cottage lies here away,” said the first. “We shall see the roof when we turn the end of the avenue of beeches.”

“Do you not smell an odour unusual to the forest?”

“The scent of something burnt or burning?”

“I have perceived it.”

“Ah, here it is,” and the three stopped short. They had just turned the corner to which they had alluded. A thin smoke still arose from the spot where the cottage had stood.

They all paused; then, without a word, hurried on ward by a common impulse. They only found the smoking embers of the dwelling they had come to seek.

“This is Drogo’s doing,” said Ralph of Herstmonceux.

“Could he have heard of our intentions?” said the mayor.

“No, but—he might have learned that poor Madge was a penitent, and then—” said Martin.

“Well, our work is done, and as the country is not over safe so near the lion’s den—”

# Page 114

("Wolf's den, you mean," interrupted Ralph—)

"And we have come unattended, the sooner we retire the better."

"Too late!" said a stern voice:  and Drogo stood before them.

"My Lord of Walderne, this is ill pleasantry," said Ralph.

"'Pleasantry,' you call it, well.  So it is for those who win."

He whistled shrill,
And quick was answered from the hill;
That whistle garrisoned the glen,
With twice a hundred armed men.

In short, the three travellers were surrounded on all sides.  Their errand had been betrayed by one of Drogo's outlying scouts.

"What is thy purpose, Drogo?" said Martin.

"Do ye yield yourselves prisoners?"

"On what compulsion?"

"Force, the right that rules the world."

"And what pretext for using it?" said Ralph, drawing his sword.

"I should advise thee not to touch thy weapon, unless thy skill is proof against an arrow. In a word, Ralph of Herstmonceux, art thou for the king or the barons?"

"Thou knowest—the barons."

"And I for the king; no more need be said.  Yield to ransom.

"I will not give my sword to thee," and Ralph flung it into a pond.

"And what right hast thou to arrest me?" said the mayor.

"Good mayor, hast thou not stirred up thy town of Hamelsham, thy puissant butchers and bakers, to resist the good king and to send aid to the rebellious Earl of Leicester, may the fiends rive him!  Wherefore I might, without further parley, hang thee to this beech, which never bore a worthier acorn."

"Yes, hang him for the general amusement," said several deep voices.

“Nay, dead men pay no ransom, and we will make his beer-swilling, beef-eating brother burghers pay a good sum for his fat body.

“Thou hast thy choice, mayor.  Ransom or rope?”

“Seeing I must choose, ransom; but rate me not too high, I am a poor man.”

They laughed immoderately.

“We have borrowed a hint from the outlaws, and unless thy brethren pay for thee soon, we will send thy worthless body to them in installments, first one ear, then the other, and so on.”

“Our Lady help me!”

“Brother, be patient.  Heaven will help us, since there is no help in man,” said Martin. “And now, Drogo, whom I knew so well of old, and in whom I see little change, what is thy charge against me?”

“A very serious one, brother Martin, and one I grieve to bring against such an eloquent preacher of the Gospel, but my conscience compels me.”

“Thy conscience!”

“Yes, I can afford to keep one as well as thou.  Dost thou think thou art the only creature who has a soul to be saved?”

“Go on without further blasphemies.”

“Well then, I grieve to say that it is my painful duty to arrest thee on a charge of murder.”

“Of murder!” cried all three.

# Page 115

“Yes, of the murder of his aunt, the late lamented Lady of Walderne.”

“Good heavens!” cried the knight and mayor.

“Oh heaven and earth, this slander hear!” said Martin.

“Do not swear, it misbecomes a friar.”

“Thou didst murder her thyself.”

“Nay:  who gave her the sleeping draught the last night?  I have just discovered that it contained poison supplied by the old witch who lived here, and whom I have duly punished by fire.  But whose hand, administered it?”

Martin turned pale.

“I ask,” continued Drogo, “who gave her the draught?”

“It was I, but who poisoned it?”

“Satan knows best, but thou hast owned it.

“I call thee to witness, most valiant knight, and thee, O Mayor of Hamelsham, that you both hear him—confitentem mum, as Father Edmund used to say at Kenilworth.

“Ah, I have him on the hip.  Away with them to Walderne:  the deepest dungeon for the poisoner.”

## Chapter 22:  A Medieval Tyrant.

Drogo did not venture to bring in his prisoners by the light of day, for although he had collected together a large flock of black sheep, yet did he not dare openly to consign a preaching friar to those dungeons of his.

The men he had with him on the spot were certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, distinguished even in Walderne Castle for their wickedness; yet even they had their superstitions, and imagined it would bring bad luck to arrest the ecclesiastic, travelling in the garb of his order.

But Drogo’s will was law, and they obeyed.  They detained the prisoners in an outlying farmhouse until dark, then thrusting a labourer’s smock over Martin’s robe, led their prisoners to the castle.

Prisoners were no novelty there, many of these free lances were born in camp, and had the inherited habits of generations of robbers, so that it was to them a second nature to mutilate, imprison, and torture, and slay. They looked upon burghers and peasants as butchers do on sheep, or rather they looked upon them as beings made that warriors might wring their hidden hoards from them, by torture and violence, or even in default of the gold hang them for amusement, or the like. They had about as much sympathy for these men of peace as the pike for the roach—they only thought them excellent eating.

As for the knight—he was a knight, and must be treated as such, although an enemy. As for the burgher—well, we have discussed the case. As for the friar—they did not like to meddle with the Church. They dreaded excommunication, men of Belial though they were.

The knight was confined in a chamber high up in the tower, from whence he could see:

The forest dark and gloomy,

And under poetic inspiration compose odes upon liberty. The burgher and friar were taken downstairs to gloomy dungeons, adjacent to each other, where they were left to solitude and silence.

# Page 116

Solitary confinement! it has driven many men mad:  to be the inmate of a narrow cell, without a ray of light, groping in one corner for a rotten bed of straw, groping in the other for a water jug and loaf of black bread, feeling unclean insects and reptiles struggle beneath one's feet:  oh, horrible!

And such was our Martin's fate.

But he was not alone, his God was with him, as with Daniel in the lion's den, and he never for one moment gave way to despair.  He accepted the trial as best he might, and bore the chilling atmosphere and scanty fare like a hero.  Yet he was a prisoner in the castle of his fathers.

And the unjust accusation of Drogo gave him deep pain.  The very thought that his hand actually had administered the fatal draught was in itself sufficiently painful.

"Vengeance is mine, I will repay," and Martin left it.

The poor burgher in the next cell, groaning in spirit, needs far more compassion.  He was Mayor of Hamelsham, and great in the wool trade.  He had at home a bustling, active wife, mighty at the spindle and loom.  He had two sons, one of twelve, one of five; three daughters, one almost marriageable; he had six apprentices and twelve workmen carding wool; he had the town business to discharge; he sat upon the bench in the town hall and administered justice to petty offenders.  And here was he, torn from all this, and consigned to a dungeon in the hold of a fierce marauding young "noble."

To the knight above Drogo paid his first visit on the following day, and bowed low before Ralph of Herstmonceux.

"The fortune of war has made thee my captive, but knightly fare and honourable treatment are awaiting thee, until the day when it pleases thee to redeem thyself, and deprive us of the light of thy presence."

"Thanks!  For one whose lessons in chivalry were so abruptly broken off, thou hast learnt thy language well.  But just now it would be more to the point if thou wilt tell me what it will cost me to get out of thy den."

Drogo winced at the allusion to his expulsion from Kenilworth, and charged fifty marks the more.

"We fix thy ransom at a hundred marks {29}."

"Why, it is a king's ransom!"

"And thou art fit to be a king."

“And what if I cannot pay it?”

“We shall feel it our unpleasant duty to hand thee over to the royal justice, as one notoriously in league with the rebel barons.”

“May I send a messenger to my castle?”

“At once.  I will place my household at thy disposal.”

“And the friar and the mayor; does my ransom include their freedom?”

“By no means:  every tub must stand on its own bottom.”

“But they were my companions, travelling as it were, not being fighting men, under my protection.”

“Perhaps it would expedite matters if thou wouldst inform me on what errand ye were all bent?”

# Page 117

Ralph was silent, and Drogo departed with the same ceremonious politeness, laughing at it in his sleeve.

“Now for the burgher,” said he.

A light shone in the dark prison beneath, and the mayor looked into the face of his fierce young captor.

“What brought thee into my woods, fat beast?”

“I knew not they were thine, or I had perchance not intruded. Now tell me, lord, at what price I may redeem my error, for I have a wife and children, to say nothing of apprentices and workmen, who long sore for me!”

“‘When the cat’s away the mice will play.’

“They will get on merrily without thee. One question thou must answer before we let thee go: On what business came ye hither?”

The mayor hesitated.

“S’death, dost keep me waiting? We have a torture chamber close at hand. Shall I summon the torturers? They will fit thy fat thumbs with a handsome screw in a moment.”

Poor mayor! Martyrdom was not his vocation, and he owned it.

“Nay, it can do no harm. We came to witness the last confession of a dying woman, who had some crime on her soul, which she wished to depose before fitting witnesses.”

“Of what nature?”

“I was not told. I waited to learn.”

“Why didst thou hesitate to say this just now?”

Poor mayor! He stammered out that he hoped he hadn’t offended therein.

“The fact is that you knew the men, your companions, came as my enemies, and suspected that the lies that witch, whom Satan is just now basting, meant to tell, affected me! Don’t lie, or I will thrust the lie down thy throat, together with a few spare teeth; my gauntlet is heavy.”

“It was so,” said the terrified citizen of Hamelsham.

“Ha! ha!  Well, it matters little to me what thou mayest say, or what thy silly townsfolk think of me:  the gudgeons probably talk much evil of the perch, but I never heard that it hurts him much, or spoils his digestion of those savoury little fish.  But thou must pay for it:  I fix thy ransom at one hundred marks.”

“Good heavens!  I have not as many pence!”

“Swear not, most fat and comely burgher.  The money must be raised, or I will send the good citizens of Hamelsham their mayor bit by bit, an ear to begin with.  A man waits without, give him thy instructions to thy people.  Farewell!”

And the young bully strolled into the next cell, which was Martin’s, a keeper opening the door and shutting it upon him until the signal was given to reopen it; for Drogo did not wish the coming conversation to be overheard.

“So I have got thee at last?”

“Thou hast my body.”

“It is a comfort that it is a body which can be made to pine, to feel, to suffer.”

“I am in God’s hands, not thine.”

“I advise thee not to look for help to so distant a quarter.  Martin!  I have always hated thee, both at Kenilworth and Walderne.  Revenge is a morsel fit for the gods.”

# Page 118

“What hast thou to revenge?”

“Didst thou not plot to oust me of mine inheritance, the night before the doting old woman died up above? It cost her her life.”

“For which thou must answer to God.”

“Nay, thine hand, not mine, administered it. Ha! ha! ha!”

“And what dost thou seek of me now?”

“Nothing, save the joy of removing an enemy out of my path.”

“I am no man’s enemy.”

“Yes, thou art mine, and always hast been. Didst thou not plot against me with that old hag, Mother Madge, whom I have sent to her master in a chariot of fire?”

“I heard her confession of that particular crime.”

“So did I, through eavesdroppers. Well, thou knowest too much; and shalt never see the sun again. It is pleasant is it not—the fresh air of the green woods, the sheen of the sun, the songs of the birds, the murmur of the streams, the scent of the flowers.

“Ah, ah!—thou feelest it—well, it shall never again fall to thy lot to see, hear, and smell all these. Here shalt thou linger out thy remaining days; thy companions the toad, the eft, the spider, the beetle; and when thou diest of hunger and thirst, which will eventually be thy lot, this cell shall be thy coffin. Here shalt thou rot.”

“And hence shall I rise, in that case, at the day of resurrection. Nay, Drogo, thou canst not frighten me. I am not in thy power. Thou canst not tame the spirit. Do thy worst, I wait God’s hour.”

Drogo was beside himself by rage at this language on the part of a captive, and he would have struck him down on the spot but for something in Martin that awed him, even as the keeper, who calls himself the lion king, tames the lion.

“We shall see,” he said, and left the cell.

“My lord, do not harm him,” said the man. “If a hand be laid upon him the men-at-arms will rebel. They fear that it will bring a curse upon them.”

“The fools, what is a friar but flesh and blood like others?”

“I would sooner hang or fry a hundred wretched burghers, or behead a score of knights, than touch this friar.”

“I see how it is.  I must contrive to starve or poison him,” thought the base lord of the castle.

As he ascended the stairs he heard the sound of a trumpet, or rather a horn.  Loud cries of surprise and alarm greeted his ears.

He went out on the watch tower.  The woods were alive with men:  they issued out on all sides—the “merrie men” of the woods.

Drogo saw at once that they had come to seek Martin.  He took hold of a white flag, and advanced to the tower above the central gateway—to parley—for he feared the arrows of the marksmen of the woods.

“Whom seek ye?”

“One whom thou hast wrongfully imprisoned.  The friar Martin.”

“I have not got him here.”

“But thou hast, and we have come to claim him.”

“Choose three of your number.  They may come and confer with me in the castle upon his disappearance.  God forbid that I should lay hands on His ministers.”

# Page 119

“Dost thou pledge thy honour for their safety?”

“Do ye doubt my honour? Oh, well; so ye may well do, if ye think I would have touched brother Martin.”

He was so plausible that they were ashamed of their distrust, and selected three of their foremost men, who forthwith entered.

The gates were shut behind them.

And then, oh, shame to say! They were seized from behind, their arms bound behind their backs, and, in spite of their protests, led out on the watch tower, where was a permanent gibbet, and, in sight of all their comrades, hung over the battlements.

“That is how my honour bids me treat with outlaws,” laughed Drogo.

A flight of arrows was the reply, which penetrated every crevice, and made six troopers stretch their bodies on the ground.

“Keep under cover,” shouted Drogo. “There will be a fine gathering of arrows when all is done, and it will be long before these old walls crave for mercy. Keep up your courage, men. The fools have no means of besieging the place, and ere another sun has set, the royal banner will appear for their dispersion and our deliverance.”

For he had heard from a sure hand that the royal army had reached Tunbridge, en route for Lewes, and would pass by Walderne, tarrying, perchance, for the night. Hence his daring defiance of the sons of the soil.

## Chapter 23: Saved As By Fire.

And all this time the true heir of Walderne was leading the degraded life of an unhappy and most miserable slave in the palace of the “Old Man of the Mountain,” in the far off hills of Lebanon.

The six months passed away, and still they spared our Hubert. Others were taken away and met their most doleful fate, but the more youthful and active slaves were spared awhile, not out of pity, but because of their utility; and Hubert’s fine constitution enabled him still to live. But he could not have lived on had he not still hoped. The tremendous inscription seen by the poet over the sombre gate of hell was not yet burnt into his young heart: All ye that enter here, leave hope behind.

Some lucky accident, perhaps an invasion of the crusaders, might deliver him; but otherwise he would not despair while God gave him life. Again, irreligious as some may

think his former life, he had great belief in the efficacy of the prayers of others.  The thought that his father and Martin were praying for him continually gave him comfort.

“God will hear them, if not me,” he thought.

Yet he did really learn to pray for himself more earnestly than he would once have thought possible.

But when a year had nearly passed away in the wearying bondage, he was summoned to the presence of the “Old Man.”

“Christian,” said the latter, “hast thou not borne the heat and burden of slavery long enough?”

“Long enough, indeed, my lord, but I cannot buy my liberty at the expense of my faith.”

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“Not when the alternative is a bitter death?”

“No.”

“Thy constancy will be tried.  We have borne with thee full long.  At next full moon thou wilt have had a year’s reprieve.  Thou must prepare to worship the true God and acknowledge His prophet, or die.”

“My choice is made.”

“Thy time shall come at the close of the year.  Go.”

And Hubert was led away.

And now he was tempted to yield to despair, when he was sustained by what may be called a miraculous interposition.

It was dark night and he lay in his cell, the watchmen without, the yet more watchful dogs prowling and growling around; when all at once he heard footsteps approaching his wretched bed chamber.

Who could it be?  The dogs gave no sign; the oppressors generally slept at that hour, and seldom disturbed a captive’s nightly rest.  The door opened, and—He beheld his father!

Yes, his father:  haggard and worn with grief, but with a light as of another world over his worn features.

“Be of good cheer, my son; God permits me to come to thee thus, and to bid thee hold firm to the end, and thou shalt find that man’s extremity is His opportunity.”

“Art thou really my father?”

And while he spoke in tones of awe and wonder the vision vanished.  It was of God’s appointment, that vision, given to confirm the faith and hope of one of His children. Such was Hubert’s belief {30}.

It was afterwards ascertained that on that very night, the father Roger dreamt that he saw his son in a gloomy cell, a slave condemned to apparently hopeless toil or death, and addressed him as in the text.

The final night arrived, the moon was at its full, and for the last time, as it might be, the slave gazed upon the glowing orb shining in the deep blue sky, with a brilliancy unknown in these northern climes.  But it recalled many a happy moonlit night in the

olden times to his mind; in the chase, or on the terrace at Kenilworth; and that night when, all alone, he faced a hundred Welshmen.

“Shall I ever see my native land again?”

It seemed impossible, but “hope springs eternal in the human breast.” All at once he became conscious of a lurid light mingling with the milder moonbeams, then of the scent of fire, then of a loud cry, followed almost immediately by a louder chorus, all of alarm or anguish. Then the trampling of many feet and shouts, which he knew enough of their language to interpret—the palace was in flames.

“Would they come and summon the slaves to help, or let them stay till the fire perchance reached them in their wretched cells?”

The doubt was soon solved. Hasty feet entered the courtyard without. The doors were opened one after another—

“Come and bear water; the palace is on fire!”

The slaves, thirty in number, were led through divers passages and courts to the very front of the burning pile—blazing pile, we should say. There it stood before him, in all its solemn and sombre Eastern beauty—cupolas, minarets, domes, balloon-shaped spires, but the flames had seized a firm hold of the lower halls, and were bursting through the windows, adding a fearful brilliancy to its aspect.

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The slaves were instantly formed in line to pass leathern buckets from hand to hand, filled with water from the fountain. Even at this extremity two guards with drawn scimitars walked to and fro in front of the row, each looking and walking in the contrary direction to the other, changing their direction at the same moment as they went and returned, so that no slave was for a moment out of sight of the watchmen with the keen bright weapons. And every man knew, instinctively, that the least movement which looked suspicious might bring the flashing blade on his devoted neck, bearing away the trunkless head like a plaything.

Still, Hubert could use his eyes, and he gazed around. In the centre of the brilliantly-lighted court was a small circular erection of stone, like an inverted tub, with iron gratings around it. The flat surface, the disc we may call it, was half composed of iron bars like a grate, supported by the stonework, and in the centre ran an iron post with rings stout and strong, from which an iron girdle, unclasped, depended.

What could it be meant for?

“Ah, I see, it is the stake put in order for me tomorrow.”

He looked at the courtyard. There were seats tier upon tier on either side, with awnings over them. In front there was a low wall, and the ground appeared to fall somewhat precipitously away from it. Beyond the moonlight disclosed a glorious view of mountains and hills, valleys and depths.

All this he saw, and his mind was made up either to escape or die on the spot by the flashing scimitar, far easier to bear than the fiery death designed for him on the morrow.

And while he thought, a loud cry drew all eyes elsewhere. At a window, right above the flaming hall, appeared the agonised faces of some of the hopeful pupils of the “Old Man,” forgotten and left, when the rest were aroused: and so far as human wit could judge, the same death awaited them which they were to have gazed upon with pitiless eyes, as inflicted upon a helpless slave, on the morrow. They had probably been looking forward to the occasion, as a Spaniard to his auto da fe, as an interesting spectacle.

Oh, how different the feelings of the spectators and the victims on such occasions; when humanity sinks to its lowest depths, and cruelty becomes a delight. God preserve us from such possibilities, which make us ashamed of our nature, whether exhibited in the Mussulman, the Spaniard, or the Red Indian. But we must not moralise here.

All eyes were drawn to the spot. The “Old Man” himself, now first heard, cried for ladders: it was too late, the building was tottering; it bent inward, an awful crash, and—

At that moment the eyes of both guards were averted, drawn to the terrible spectacle; and Hubert sprang upon the nearest from behind. In a moment he had mastered the scimitar, and the next moment a head, not Hubert's, rolled on the blood-stained pavement. He lingered not an instant, but with the rush of a wild beast flew on the other sentinel, a moment's clashing of blades, the skill of the knight prevailed, and the Moslem was cleft to the chin.

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“Away, slaves! one bold rush! liberty or death!”

And Hubert leapt over the wall.

He rolled down a declivity, not quite a precipice. Fortunately for him his course was arrested by some bushes, and he was able to guide himself to the bottom, where he descended into a deep valley, through which a cold brook, fed from the snows of Hermon, trickled merrily along.

He was not alone. Two or three other escaped fugitives came crashing through the bushes, and stood by his side; but Hubert was the only man armed. He had been able to retain the scimitar so boldly won.

Above them the palace still blazed, and cast a lurid light, which was reflected from the cold snowy peak of Hermon, and steeped in ruddy glare many an inaccessible crag and precipice.

“Do any of my brethren know the country?”

At first no one answered. Each looked at the other. Then one spoke diffidently:

“If we follow this stream we shall eventually arrive at the waters of Merom.”

“But remember that meanwhile men and dogs alike will hunt us, and that only one is armed, although the arm that freed us might sustain a host,” said another.

“We must efface our track and then hide. Let each one walk in the brawling bed of the torrent; it leaves no scent for the dogs to follow,” said Hubert.

They descended slowly and painfully amidst loose rocks and boulders, avoiding many a pitfall, many a black depth, until the dawn was at hand. Just then they heard a deep sound, like a cathedral bell, booming down the valley.

“What bell is that?”

“No bell, it is the deep bay of the bloodhounds.”

“But they can find no trace.”

“They are on the track we left, far above, before we entered the stream. If they cannot scent us in the water, they will have the sense to follow us downstream, keeping a dog on each bank in ease we leave it.”

“What shall we do?” asked the helpless men.

Above them the rocks rose wild and horrent, apparently inaccessible, but the keen eye of our Hubert detected one path, a mere goat path, used perhaps also by shepherds.

“Follow me,” he said, and leaving the stream ascended the path, a veritable mauvais pas.  At the height of some two hundred feet it struck inward through a wild region.

“Here we must make a stand at this summit,” said Hubert, “and meet the dogs.  I will give a good account of them.”

He descended a little way to a point where the dogs could only ascend by a very narrow cleft in the rocks, and there he waited for the first dog.  Soon a hideous black hound appeared, and with flashing eyes and gaping jaws sprang at our hero.  He was received with a sweep of the scimitar, which cleft his diabolical head in twain, and he rolled down the deep declivity, all mangled and bleeding, to the foot, missing the path and falling from rock to rock, so that when he was found by the party who followed they could not tell by what means he had received his first wound.

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And when the other dogs arrived at the spot, which was deluged in gore, after the wont of their race they would follow the scent no farther.

Meanwhile our little party of five rescued captives went joyfully forward with renewed hope, until midday, when they found a cool spot by the side of the streams leading to the waters of Merom—the head waters of the Jordan. And there, under a date tree which afforded them food, they watched in turn until the sun was low; after which they renewed their journey.

Soon they left the smaller lake behind, and followed the waters of the Upper Jordan to the Sea of Galilee, skirting its western shore, so rich in sacred memories, with the ruins of Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Magdala, and other cities, long ago trodden: By those sacred feet once nailed, For our salvation, to the bitter rood.

In the evening they rested amidst the ruins of Enon, near Salim; and on the morrow resumed their course, avoiding the great towns; begging bread in the villages—a boon readily granted. And in the evening they saw the promontory of Carmel, and reached the Hospital of Saint John of Acre, where Hubert's father, Sir Roger, had been restored to health and life.

Sir Hugh de Revel, Grand Master of the Order of Saint John, heard of the arrival of five Christian fugitives, escaped from the palace of the "Old Man of the Mountain," and naturally curiosity led him to interrogate them. To his astonishment he found one of them a knight like himself, and, to his further surprise, recognised the son of an old acquaintance, Sir Roger of Walderne.

All was well now.

"Thou must perforce fulfil thy pilgrimage, although thou hast lost the sword which was to have been taken to the Holy Sepulchre."

"My brother," said the prior then present, "dost thou remember that a party of pilgrims arrived here a year since, who said that, in the gorges of Lebanon, they had come upon the scene of a recent conflict, and found a broken sword, which they brought with them and left here?"

"Bring it hither, Raymond," said Sir Hugh to a sprightly page.

It was brought, and to his joy Hubert recognised the sword of the Sieur de Fievrault, which he had broken on a Moslem's skull in the desperate fight wherein he was taken prisoner. With what joy did he receive it! He could now discharge his father's delegated duty.

"Rest here awhile, and when thy strength is fully restored, start with better omens on thy journey to Jerusalem."

Oh, the rest of the next few days in that glorious hospital, with its deep shady cloisters, with its massive walls and its beauteous chapel, wherein, on the following day, which was Sunday, as Hubert was told, for he had long since lost count of time, he returned thanks to God for his preservation, and took part once more in the worship of a Christian congregation, and knelt before a Christian altar.  The walls of that chapel were of almost as many precious stones as Saint John enumerates in describing the New Jerusalem.  Its rich colouring, its dim religious light, its devout psalmody; oh, how soothing to the wearied spirit.

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And then he reclined that afternoon in a delicious Eastern garden, rich with the perfume of many flowers, shaded by spreading trees, vocal with the sound of many fountains; and there, at the request of the fraternity, he related his wondrous adventures to the men who had erst heard his father's tale.

The time of his arrival was between the sixth and the seventh, or last, crusade; during which period Acre, situated about seventy miles from Jerusalem, had become the metropolis of the Christians {31} in Palestine, after the loss of the Holy City. It was adorned with noble buildings, aqueducts, artificial harbour, and strong fortifications. From hence such pilgrims as dared venture made their hazardous visits to Jerusalem, which they could only enter as a favour, granted in return for much expenditure of treasure and submission to many humiliations; and thus Hubert was forced to accomplish his father's vow, setting forth so soon as his strength was restored.

## Chapter 24: Before The Battle.

The civil war had been long delayed, after men saw that it was inevitable, but when it once begun there was no lack of activity on either side. Two armies were moving about England, and the march of each was accompanied (says an ancient writer) with plunder, fire, and slaughter. In time of peace men would believe themselves incapable of the deeds they commit in time of war: "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" as one said of old when before the prescient seer who foresaw in the humble suppliant the ruthless warrior.

The one army, the royal one, was reinforced by the forces of the Scottish barons, under men whose names became afterwards historical, such as John Balliol and Robert Bruce. Prince Edward, a master of the art of war, although still young, and already marked by that sternness of character which distinguished his latter days, was in chief command, and he pursued his devastating course through the Midlands. Nottingham and Leicester, whence his great opponent derived his title, opened their gates to him. He marched thence for London, but Earl Simon threw himself into the city, returning from Rochester, which he had cleverly taken by means of fire ships which set the place in a blaze.

Edward marched vice versa, from London to Rochester, relieved the castle, which still held out for the king after the town had been taken. Thence Edward marched to Tunbridge, on the northern border of the Andredsweald, en route for Lewes.

It was the ninth of May, in the year 1264, and the morning sun shone upon the fresh spring foliage of the Andredsweald, upon castle, town, and hamlet, especially upon our favourite haunt, the Castle of Walderne, and the village of Cross-in-Hand on the ridge above. Even then a windmill crowned that ridge. Let us take our stand by it:

And all around the widespread scene survey.

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What a glorious view as we look across the eddying, billowy tree tops of the forest to the deep blue sea, sixteen miles distant, studded with the white sails of many barks which have put out from land, lest they should be seized by the approaching host, and confiscated for the royal service, for the sailors have mainly espoused the popular cause, and dread the medieval press gang. How many familiar objects we see around —Michelham Priory, Battle Abbey, Wilmington Priory, Pevensey Castle, Lewes Castle —all in view.

There, too, opposite us, is the highest of the eastern downs, Firle Beacon. It is smoking like a volcano with the embers of the bale fire, which men lit last night, to warn the natives that the king was coming. There is yet another volcano farther on. It is Ditchling Beacon; and, yes, another still farther west; Chanctonbury Ring, with the rounded cone. And on this fair clear morning we can indistinctly discern a thin line of smoke curling up from Butzer, on the very limits of Sussex, and in view of the Isle of Wight and Carisbrooke Castle.

Turn eastward. The ridge continues towards Heathfield, Burwash, and Battle, and beyond the sun glistens on Fairlight over Hastings, where another beacon has blazed all night to tell the ships that the royal enemy is in the forest.

Now look northward and northeast. There is the heathy ridge which attains its greatest height at Crowborough, ere it descends into the valley of Tunbridge, and a little eastward lies Mayfield, rich in tradition. We can see the palace of the Archbishop of Canterbury, founded by Dunstan. There a royal flag flaunts the breeze: yes, the king is taking his luncheon, his noontide meal, and soon the thousands who encamp around the old pile will swarm up the ridge to the point where we are standing, for they will sleep at Walderne tonight, on their road to Pevensey.

The day wears away. Drogo paces the battlements of the watchtower with excited steps—the royal banner will soon be seen surmount ing that ridge above the castle. Yes, there is a messenger spurring downwards as fast as the sandy road will permit him; see, he is galloping as for dear life—look at the cloud of dust which he raises. The “merrie men” have disappeared in the woods, and Drogo descends to meet him; just as the rider enters beneath the suspended portcullis into the court of the castle, he reaches the foot of the stairs.

“What news? Speak, thou varlet!”

“The king approaches. Already he is within sight from the upper windows of the windmill.”

“Throw open the gates, man the battlements, let pennon and banner wave; here will we receive him. Get me the keys to deliver to my liege.”

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Then Drogo paid a visit to the kitchen to see that the men cooks were getting forward with the banquet, that the oxen and fatlings, the spoils of a successful foray upon the farmyards of hostile neighbours—the deer, the hares, and partridges of the woods—the fish of the mere, were being successfully roasted, boiled, baked, stewed, or the like, for the king's supper. Then he interviewed the butler about the supplies of malmsey, clary, mead, ale, and the like. Then he saw that the adornments of the great hall were completed, the banners, the armour, the antlers of the deer, suspended becomingly around the walls, the floor strewn with fresh rushes, the tapestry arranged in comely folds.

When all this was done the trumpets from the battlements announced that the royal army was descending from the heights above. It was a glorious sight that the gazer looked upon from the battlements:

On lance, and helm, and pennon fair,
That well had borne their part.

The boast of chivalry! The pomp of power! The woods fairly glistened with lances and spears reflecting the rays of the setting sun. The green of the foliage was relieved by banners of every hue, in bright contrast against the darker verdure, the tramp of war horses, the thunder of armed heels, the buzz of a myriad voices. And now the royal guard descends the gentle slope which rises just above the castle to the north, and approaches the drawbridge.

Outside they halt. Drogo kneels in front of the gateway, the keys of his castle in his hand.

The guard opens, and the king dismounts from his horse, somewhat stiffly, as if weary with riding, and receives the keys from the extended hand with a sweet smile and a few kind words.

Let us gaze on the features of that king of old; gray haired, prematurely gray; the eyebrows unlike in their curvature, giving a quaint expression to the face, a mild and good-tempered face, but somewhat deficient in character, forming the strongest contrast to that tall commanding figure on his right hand, with the stern and manly features, the greatest of the Edwards—a born king of men.

"Rise up, Sir Drogo, thou worthy knight."

"My liege, the honour of knighthood is not yet mine own."

"Ah, and yet so loyal!"

“For that reason, sire, not yet a knight; I was a page at Kenilworth, and was expelled for my loyalty to my king, because I could not restrain my indignation at the aspersions and misrepresentations I daily heard.”

“Ah, indeed,” said the king, “then shalt thou receive the honour from my own hands,” and he gave him a slight blow with the flat of the sword, which he then laid upon the reverently inclined head, and added, “Rise up, Sir Drogo of Walderne.”

“Methinks knighthood is too sacred to be thus hastily bestowed,” muttered Prince Edward.

“Nay, my son, we have few loyal servants in the Andredsweald, and those who honour us will we honour {32}.”

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The followers of Drogo made the place resound with their acclamations. The multitude cried, “Largesse! Largesse!” and by Drogo’s direction coins (chiefly of small value) were freely scattered to the accompaniment of the cry:

“Long live Sir Drogo of Walderne.”

Then the royal standard was displayed on the watchtower, over the banner of Walderne, and the common soldiers, in their thousands, pitched their tents and kindled their fires on the open green without, while those of gentler degree entered the castle, which was not large enough to accommodate the rank and file.

The banquet that night was a goodly sight. The king sat at the head of the board—his brother, King Richard, on his right hand (the King of the Romans), Edward, afterwards “The Hammer of Scotland,” on his father’s left. Next to King Richard sat John Balliol, and next to Prince Edward, Robert Bruce, father of the future king of Scotland, and a great favourite both with prince and king.

Drogo did not sit down at his own board. He preferred, he said, to play the page for the last time, and to wait upon his king, which was honour enough for a young knight. On the morrow he would attend the king to Lewes with fifty lances, where he trusted to justify the favour and honour which he had received.

Shall we once more go over the old story, and tell of the songs of the gleemen, the music of the harpers, of wine and wassail, of healths and acclaims, which made the roof, the oaken roof, ring again and again? Nay, we have tired the reader’s patience with scenes of that sort enough already.

But while the two kings, so like each other in features, were yet feasting, Edward, with his chief captains, held a council of war in another chamber, and Drogo stood before them. They questioned him closely of the state of the inhabitants of the forest: their political sympathies and the like. They inquired which barons and land holders were loyal, and which disaffected. They discussed the morrow’s journey, the roads, the chances of food and forage for the multitude. In short, they acted like men of business who provide for the morrow ere they close their eyes in sleep.

Then Drogo informed them that he had three prisoners, on whom he claimed the royal judgment: traitors, and disaffected men whom he had apprehended in the act of travelling the country, in order by their harangues to stir up the peasantry to resist the royal arms.

“Who are these doughty foes?”

“Sir Ralph, son of the rebellious baron of Herstmonceux; the mayor of the disaffected town of Hamelsham; and a young friar, formerly a favourite page of the Earl of Leicester.”

“Why didst thou not hang them on the first oak big enough to sustain such acorns?”

“I reserved them for the royal judgment, so close at hand.”

“Let us see them ere we depart in the morning, and we shall doubtless make short work of them.”

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Night reigned without the occasional challenge of the sentinel alone broke the hush which brooded during the hours of darkness over the host encamped at Walderne.

Morning broke with roseate hues. All nature seemed to arise at once. The trumpets gave their shrill signal, the troops arose to life and action, like bees when they swarm; the birds filled the woods with their songs, as the glorious orb of day arose over the eastern hills.

Breakfast was the first consideration, which was heartily yet hastily despatched. Then in the hall, their hands bound behind them, stood the three prisoners; the knight dejected, the mayor and friar pale with privation and suffering. Our Martin's health was not strong enough to enable him well to bear the horrors of a dungeon.

"You are accused of rebellion," said the stern Edward, as he faced them. "What is your answer?"

Few men dared to look into that face. Its frown was so awful, it is recorded that a priest upon whom he looked once in displeasure and anger, died of fear—yet he was never intentionally unjust.

Ralph spoke first—he felt that courageous avowal of the truth was the only course.

"My prince," he said, "we must indeed avow that our convictions are with the free barons of England, and that with them we must stand or fall. If to share their sentiments is rebellion, rebels we are, but we disclaim the word."

"And thou, Sir Mayor?"

"I am but the mouthpiece of my fellow citizens. I have no freewill to choose."

"And thou, friar of orders grey?"

"Like all my brethren, I hold the cause of the Earl of Leicester just," said Martin quietly.

Like the stark and stern conqueror of two centuries before, Edward respected a man, and he stifled his rising anger era he replied:

"They are traitors, but I scorn to crush three men who (save the burgess, perhaps) will not lie to save their forfeit necks, while fifteen thousand men are in the field to maintain the like with their swords. I will measure myself with the armed ones first, then I may deal with knight, mayor, and friar. Till then, keep them in ward."

Drogo was deeply disappointed. He had hoped to witness the execution of Martin, which he could not carry out himself, owing to the "superstitious" scruples of his followers, and to gain this he would have sacrificed the ransoms of the other two. He

loved gold, but loved revenge more; and hatred was with him a stronger passion than avarice.

And now the trumpets were blown, the banners waved in air, the royal army moved forward for Lewes, and prominent in its ranks were the newly-made knight and his followers.

He left his victims in durance, remitted to their dungeons—the only chance of getting rid of Martin seemed secret murder.  But before starting from home he left secret instructions, which will disclose themselves ere long.

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As the thought of unmanly violence against an imprisoned captive came into his mind, by chance his hand came into contact with a hard object in his pouch or gypsire. He drew it forth. It was the key of Martin's dungeon.

"Oh, joy! Oh, good luck! It would take twelve smiths to force that door—meanwhile Martin would die of starvation and thirst."

Should he send it back?

"No, no!"

He clutched that key with joy. He kissed it, he hugged it.

"I may perish in the battlefield, but he dies with me. Martin, thou art mine. Thy doom is sealed, and all without design."

Thanks to the saints, if any there be, or rather to the opposite powers.

We will not follow the royal army on its onward march to the seacoast, where they hoped to secure the two Cinque Ports—Winchelsea and Pevensey, so as to keep open their communications with the continent. How Peter of Savoy, the then lord of the "Eagle," entertained them at the Norman castle, which had arisen on the ruins of Anderida; how they sacked Hamelsham and ravaged Herstmonceux. Then, finally, took up their quarters at Lewes; the king, as became his piety, at the priory; the prince, as became his youth, at the castle with John, Earl de Warrenne; to await the approach of the barons.

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There, in that priory, anticipating the rest which awaiteth the people of God, the once fiery and headlong prodigal, Roger of Walderne, spent his peaceful old age. He was quite happy about his gallant son, and felt assured that he should not die until he had once more clasped him to his paternal breast, when he would joyfully chant his Nunc Dimittis.

On that very night when Hubert thought that his father came to his cell, with assurance of hope, the father too dreamed that he saw his son in that cell, and gave him the comforting assurance related; and when he awoke he said;

"Hubert my son is yet alive. I shall see him ere I die. I had given the first born of my body for the sin of my soul, but God hath provided a better offering, and Isaac shall be restored."

But yet another strange occurrence confirmed his hope and faith. For a long time the ghostly apparition had ceased to trouble him. Its appearances had been but occasional since he took refuge in the house of God, but still it did sometimes reappear. The sceptic will see in the spectre but the pangs of conscience taking a bodily form, but even if only the creature of the imagination, it was equally real to the sufferer.

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One day he especially dreaded. It was the anniversary of the fatal day when he had slain Sir Casper de Fievrault, for never had that day passed unmarked, never did his conscience fail to record his adversary's dying day. It was strange that, in those fighting days, a man should feel the death of a foe so keenly, and Sir Roger had slain many in fair fight. But this particular case was exceptional. It had been on a day of solemn truce that, maddened by a real or supposed insult, he had forced his foe to fight, and met objections by a blow. And they were both sworn soldiers of the Cross, pledged not to engage in a less holy warfare. Thence the remorse and the dread penalty; under such an one many a man has sunk to the grave {33}. Therefore, as we have said, he dreaded the advent of the fatal day.

It came, and Sir Roger faced the ordeal alone in his cell, when, lo! in the dead hour of the night, his tormentor appeared, but no longer armed with his terrors. His face was changed, his features resigned and peaceful.

"I come but to bid thee farewell, for so long as thou art in the flesh. Thy son has fulfilled thy vow. He has placed my sword on the altar of the Holy Sepulchre, and I am released. Thou hast thy reward and my forgiveness. May we meet where strife is no more! Him thou shalt yet see in the flesh, as thy reward."

And he disappeared.

Was it a dream? Well, if so, it gave the father not merely hope but certainty. He was happy at last, and waited patiently the fulfilment of the vision.

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It was the night before the battle. Evensong had been sung with more than usual solemnity. It had been attended by King Henry in person, who was very devout, and by his son and brother, and all their train; and special prayers had been added, suitable to the crisis, to the God of armies and Lord of battles.

So soon as the service began it was customary to shut the great gates of the priory. Just as the boom of the bell had ceased, and the gates were closing, a knight strode up, who had but just arrived, as he said, from over sea, and had but tarried to put his horse in good keeping.

He was allowed to pass, not without scrutiny.

"Art thou with us or against us?" said the warder.

“I am a soldier of the Cross,” was the reply, and a few more words were whispered in the ear.

The warder started back.

“Verily thy father’s heart will be glad,” he exclaimed.

Brother Roger, now so called, sat in his cell.  He was little changed; but in place of the dread, the ghastly dread, which had once given his face a haggard and weird look, resignation had stamped his features with a softer expression.

The dread shadow, whether born of remorse or otherwise, had been removed.  No more did the dead lord of Fievrault trouble him; but the old monk, erst the venturous soldier, felt as if he had purchased this remission with the banishment of his dear son, as if he had given “the first born of his body for the sin of his soul.”

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And the impending events had roused up the old martial spirit—the half-forgotten life of the camp came back to him, and with it the thought of the boy who would have yearned to distinguish himself on the morrow, had he been there:  the light hearted, pugnacious, thoughtless, but loving Hubert.

And while he mused, the door opened, and the prior entered.  It was Prior Foville—he who built the two great western towers of the church.

“Stay without,” whispered the prior to someone by his side; “joy sometimes kills.”

The old monk gazed upon the prior with wonder, his face had so strange an expression.  It was like the face of one who has a secret to tell and can hardly keep it in.

“What is it, my father?  Hast thou brought joy or sorrow with thee?”

“Joy, I trust.  We have reason to think thy gallant son is not dead.”

The father trembled.  He could hardly stand.

“I know he is alive, but where?”

“On his way home.”

“Nay!”

“And in England!”

“Father, I am here.”

Hubert could restrain himself no longer.

The old man gazed wildly upon him, then threw his arms around his recovered boy, and raising his eyes to heaven, murmured:

“Father I thank Thee, for this my son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found.”

## Chapter 25:  The Battle Of Lewes.

The barons, on their side, prepared with sober earnestness for the struggle.  They were not fighting for personal aggrandisement, but, as an old writer says, “they had in all things one faith and one will—love of God and their neighbour.”  So unanimous were they in their brotherly love, that they did not fear to die for their country.

It was the dead of night, and a horseman rode towards the village of Fletching. He was armed cap-a-pie, like one who might have to force his way against odds. His armour was dark, and he bore but one cognisance on his shield, the Cross. He was quite alone, but he knew that farther along he should find a sleeping host. The stars shone brightly above him, the country lay buried in sleep, scarcely a light twinkled throughout the expanse.

The sound of a deep bell tolling the hour of midnight reached him. It was from the priory which he had left an hour or more previously.

“Ere that hour strike again, England’s fate will have been decided,” he said, as if to himself, “and perhaps my account with God and man summed up before His bar. Well, I have a good cause, and a clear conscience, and I can leave it in God’s hands.”

And soon from the crest of a low hill he looked down upon the camp of the barons. There were many lights, and the murmur of voices arose.

Just then came the stern challenge.

“Who goes there?”

“A crusader, who as a knight received his spurs from Earl Simon, and now comes to fight by his side to the death for the liberties of England.”

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“The watchword?”

“I have it not—twelve hours have not passed since I landed in England after an absence of years.”

“Stand while I summon the guard.”

In a little while a small troop approached, their leader the young Lord Walter of Hereford, who had been present, as it chanced, when our hero was knighted. He recognised him with joy.

“The Earl of Leicester will be overjoyed to see you. He has long given you up for lost.”

“He has not forgotten me?”

“Even yesternight he wished you were present to fight by his side.”

Our poor Hubert felt his heart throb with joy and pride.

As they descended into the camp Hubert perceived the Bishop of Worcester, Walter de Cantilupe, riding through the ranks, and exhorting the soldiers to confess their sins, and to receive absolution and the Holy Communion; assuring them that such as fell would fall in God’s cause, and suffer on behalf of the truth. Behind him his followers distributed white crosses to the soldiers, as if they were crusaders, which they attached to their breasts and backs. In this war of Englishmen against Englishmen there was need of some such mark to distinguish the rival parties.

All through the camp religious exercises were proceeding, and when at last Walter of Hereford brought our hero to the tent of Earl Simon, they found him prostrate in fervent prayer.

“Father and leader,” said the young earl with deep reverence, “I have brought thee a long-lost son.”

The earl rose.

“My son! Hubert! Can it be thou, risen from the dead?”

“Come to share thy fate for weal or woe, my beloved lord. From thy hands I received knighthood: at thy side will I conquer or die.”

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The dawn was at hand.  The birds began their matin songs, when the stern blast of the trumpet drowned their tiny warblings.

The army arose as one man.  At first all was confusion, as when bees swarm, which was rapidly reduced into order, as the leaders went up and down with the standard bearers, and the men fell into their ranks.  When all was still the earl, the great earl, came forth, armed cap-a-pie, mounted on his charger.  The herald proclaimed silence. The deep, manly voice was heard:

“Beloved brethren!  We are about to fight this day for the liberty of this realm, in honour of God, His blessed Mother, and all the Saints, for the defence of our Mother Church of England, and for the faith of Christ.

“Let us therefore pray to our Lord God, that since we are His, He would grant us victory in the battle, and commend ourselves to Him, body, soul, and spirit.”

Then the Bishop of Worcester gave the Benediction, after which the vast multitude arose as a man, took their places, and began their onward march.  Scouts of the royal army, out foraging, saw them, and bore the tidings to King Henry and Prince Edward at the priory and the castle, and the opposing forces arose in their turn.

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Before the hour of prime, the earl, by whose side throughout that day rode our Hubert, descried the towers of the priory from the summit of a swelling ridge, and beheld soon after the army of the prince issuing forth from the west gate, and that of the king from the priory below. Earl Simon divided his forces into three parts: the centre he placed under the young Earl of Gloucester, whom he had that morning knighted; the right wing under his two sons, Simon and Guy; the left wing was composed of the Londoners. He himself remained at the head of the reserve behind the centre, where he could see all the field and direct operations. There was no smoke, as in a modern battlefield, to obstruct the view.

Prince Edward commanded on the right of the royal troops, and was thus opposed to the Londoners, whom he hated because of their insults to his mother {34}; and Richard commanded the left wing, and was thus opposed to Simon and Guy, the sons of the great earl. The centre was commanded by Henry himself, not by virtue of his ability in the field, but of his exalted rank. The royal standard of the Dragon was raised; a token, said folk, that no quarter was to be given.

This was a sign for the attack, and it was begun by that thunderbolt of war, Prince Edward, who charged full upon the Londoners. The poor light-armed cits were ill prepared for the shock of so heavy a brigade of cavalry; and they broke and yielded like a dam before a resistless flood. No mercy was shown them. Many were driven into the Ouse on the right, and so miserably drowned; others fled in a body before the prince, who pursued them for four miles, hacking, hewing, quartering, slaughtering. Just like the Rupert of the later Civil Wars, he sacrificed the victory to the headlong impetuosity of his nature.

Now let us turn to the left. On the crest of the hill, which there rose steeply, were the tents and baggage of the barons. Over one of these floated Earl Simon's banner, and close by was a litter in which he had been carried during a recent illness, but which now only contained four unfortunate burgesses of London town who were detained as hostages because they had attempted to betray the city to King Henry.

Towards this height the foolish Richard directed his charge, fully believing that the head and front of all the mischief, Simon himself, was in that litter, and that he should crush him and the rebellion together. But such showers of stones and arrows came from the hill that his forces were disorganised, and when Earl Simon suddenly strengthened his sons by the reserve, their united forces crushed the King of the Romans and all his men. They descended with all the impetus of a charge from above, and the enemy fled.

Then the earl might have made the mistake which Prince Edward made on the opposite side, and followed the flying foe; but he was far too wise. He saw on his left the centre under the Earl of Gloucester, fighting valiantly on equal terms with the royal centre under King Henry. He fell upon its flank with all the force of his victorious array: one

deadly struggle and the royal lines bent, curved, broke, then fled in disorder, the old king galloping furiously towards the priory, fleeing in great fear for dear life.

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Yet more ludicrous was the fate of his brother Richard, King of the Romans, who, while Henry reached the priory wounded, had taken refuge in the windmill, where he was being baited, almost in joke, by the victorious foes, amidst cries of:

“Come out you bad miller!”

“You to turn a wretched mill master!”

“You who defied us all so proudly!”

“You, the ’ever Augustus!”

At length the poor badgered king, seeing that they were preparing to set the mill on fire and smoke him out, surrendered to a follower of the Earl of Gloucester, Sir John Bix, and came out all covered with flour, while men sang:

The King of the Romans gathered a host,
And made him a castle of a mill post.

Meanwhile the camp on the hill, with the banner and the aforesaid litter, had aroused the attention of Prince Edward, just returning from harrying the Londoners.

“Up the hill, my men,” he said. “There is the very devil himself in that litter.”

The camp was stoutly defended, but after a while the defenders were forced to fly by superior force. Then the prince’s men rushed upon the litter, Drogo of Walderne foremost. They thought they had got the great earl.

“Come out, Simon, thou devil, thou worst of traitors,” they cried.

Within were only the four shrinking, timid burgesses, and Drogo and his band dragged them out, shrieking in vain that they were for the king, and cut them to pieces, poor unfortunates. But they did not find Earl Simon, and only slew their own friends; and when the confusion was over they looked down upon the battlefield, where one glance showed them that the main battle was lost, and the barons in possession of the field.

In vain Edward besought his men, now much reduced in numbers, to make another charge. They saw the enemy waiting with levelled lances to receive them, and felt that the position they were asked to assail was impregnable.

Edward was a most affectionate son, and was very anxious to learn the fate of his royal father, so he determined to force his way to the priory at all hazards, and made a circuit of the town so as to reach the sacred pile from the unassailed quarter. Night was now approaching, and the prince’s party had to fight their way at every step with the victorious horsemen of the barons. Edward’s giant strength and long sweeping sword

made him a way over heaps of corpses strewn before him, but others were less fortunate.

Hard by the river, on the eastern side of the town, and beneath the high cliffs which rise almost precipitously to the isolated group of downs, there was a terrible charge, a hand-to-hand melee. Drogo of Walderne and Harengod, his sword red with blood, his lance couched, was confronted here by a knight in sable armour, his sole cognisance—the White Cross.

They rode at each other. Drogo's lance grazed his opponent's casque: the unknown knight drove his missile through corselet and breast, and Drogo went down crashing from his steed. The combat went sweeping on past them, the desperate foes fighting as they rode. Edward and his horsemen, less and less in number each minute, still riding for the priory, straining every nerve to reach it; the others assailing them at every turn.

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The Earl of Warrenne, William of Valence, Guy of Lusignan, and Earl Bigod of Norwich, were separated from the rest of the band, and, despairing of attaining the prince again, rode across the low alluvial flats for Pevensey.

By God, who is over us, much did they sin,
That let pass o'er sea the Earl of Warrene,
Much hath he robbed us, by moor and by fen,
Our gold and our silver he carried hath henne {35};

Sang the citizens of Lewes afterwards of black Earl John.

Let us return in the shadows of the evening, while the prince gains the priory with a few of his followers, by sheer valour, while the rest are drowned in the river, or lost in the marshes—let us return to the place where Drogo de Harengod went down before an unknown foe.

"Dost thou know me?" said the conqueror, bending over the dying man and raising his helm.

"Art thou alive, or a ghost?" says a conscience-stricken voice.

"Nay, I am Hubert of Walderne, the cousin thou hast hated and injured. But our quarrel is settled now; thou art a dying man."

"Nay, not dying. I must live to repent.

"Oh, the key! the key! Throw this key into the moat!

"Nay, he will haunt me. Tell me, am I really dying? Nay, if it cost me my soul, I will not baulk my vengeance. Besides, it is too late!

"Martin!"

A rush of blood came to his lips, and Drogo of Harengod fell back a corpse on the blood-stained grass. Hubert gazed upon him a moment, then loosed the armour to give him air, but it was all over.

"God rest his soul. Our enmity is over, but what did he mean about the key?"

He felt in the gypsire of the dead enemy. There was a key, unsightly, rusty, and heavy.

"Why, I remember this key. It is the key of the dungeon at Walderne. Whom can he have got there? Why is it here? What did he mean about Martin?"

A horrible dread seized him—he could not resist the impulse which came upon him to ride to Walderne at once.  He sought Earl Simon, obtained a troop, and started immediately through the dark and gloomy forest for Walderne.

## Chapter 26:  After The Battle.

We trust our readers are anxious to learn the fate of Martin, whom, much against our will, we left in such grievous durance at Walderne Castle.

Drogo had only left a score of men behind him to defend the castle in case of any sudden assault; which, however, he did not expect.  Before leaving he had called one of these aside, a fellow whose name was Marboeuf.

“Marboeuf,” he said, ’I know thou hast the two elements which, between ourselves, ensure the greatest happiness in this world—a good digestion and a hard heart.”

“You compliment me, master.”

“Nay, I know thy worth, and hence I leave all things in thy hands:  my honour and my vengeance.”

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“Thy vengeance?”

“Yes.  If I live I shall expect to find all as I left it when I return hither.  If I die, and thou receivest sure news of my death, slay me the three prisoners.”

“What!  The friar and all!”

“Is his blood redder than any other man’s?  It seems to me thou art afraid of the Pope’s gray regiment.”

“Nay, I like not to slay priests and friars.  It brings a man ill luck if he meddle with those.”

“Then I must appoint Thibault.  He may have an easier conscience, but I had thought that bloodshed, if nothing else, had bound us together.”

“Nay, it shall not be said that I forsook my lord in his need.  If thou fallest in the coming battle, I will sacrifice the three to thy ghost.”

“So shall I rest in peace, like the warriors of old time, over whose tomb they slew many victims and cut many throats.  I believe in no creed, but the old one of our ancestors suits me best, and I hope I shall find my way to Valhalla, if Valhalla there be.”

When the last stragglers of the royal army had been swallowed up in the recesses of the forest, Marboeuf began to ponder over his engagement.  But presently up came the janitor of the dungeons.

“Hast thou the key of the friar’s dungeon?”

“Nay.  The young lord has not left it with me.”

The men looked at each other.

“He locked it himself, this morning, and put the key into his gypsire.”

“And he has gone off with it.  Doubtless he will send it back directly he finds it there.”

“I doubt it.”

“Shall we send after him?”

“No!” said Marboeuf.

“He is a friar.  We must not let him starve.”

“Humph!  It will not be our fault.  I tell thee thou dost not yet know our lord, and too much zeal may only damage you in his goodwill.”

The gaoler retreated, and went slowly down to the dungeons. He walked along the passage moodily. At length he heard a voice breaking the silence:

Yea, though I walk
through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;
Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

The man felt moved. It seemed to him as if he were near a being of another mould, and old memories of years long past were awakened in his mind—how once such a friar had found him wounded almost to death in the battlefield, and had saved the body, like the good Samaritan, and striven to save his soul. How he had vowed amendment and forgotten it, or he had not been found herding with such black sheep as Drogo and his band. And earlier thoughts, how when his mother had fallen sick of the plague, another friar had tended her dying moments, when every other earthly friend had failed her for fear of infection.

“He shall not perish if I can help it, and it may be put to my account in purgatory.”

“Father,” he cried.

“My brother,” was the reply, “what hast thou to ask?”

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“What food hast thou?”

“Yet half a loaf, and a cruse nearly filled with water.”

“It is all thou mayst get till my lord return.  He has taken the keys.  Use it sparingly.”

For a moment there was silence, then a calm voice replied:

“He who fed Elijah by the ministry of the ravens will not fail me.”

“But if Sir Drogo be absent many days thou mayst starve.”

“Though he slay me, yet will I put my trust in him.”

“I do believe he will be saved, by a miracle if needs be,” muttered the man.  “The saints will never let him starve, he is one of them.”

The second day passed, and Martin’s bread and cruse yet held out.  But his gaoler was very uneasy, and wandered about the dark passages like a restless spirit.  Neither could he help breathing his despair to Martin, as hours passed away and no messenger returned from Drogo with the key.

But the answer from the captive was always full of hope.

“Be of good cheer, for there has been with me an angel of God, who has assured me that the tyranny will soon be overpast.  Meanwhile I feel not the pangs of hunger.”

The fourth day from the departure of the royal army arrived.  No one had as yet brought back the key.  It was a day of awful suspense, for although no sound of artillery announced the awful strife, yet it was generally known that a battle was imminent, and was probably going on at that moment.  They sent two messengers out at dawn of day, and one returned at eventide, breathless and sore from long running.

He had been on that group of downs which lies eastward of Lewes, of which Mount Caburn is the highest point, and from which Walderne Castle was visible.  There they had raised a beacon fire, and he had left his comrade to fire it in case the king lost the battle.  But ere he departed he had seen, as he thought, the royal array in hopeless confusion.

The afternoon brought another messenger, who confirmed the evil tidings, but was in hope that the prince, yet undefeated and then rampaging on the hill amongst the baggage, might retrieve the fortune of the day.  When sunset drew nigh many of the garrison of Walderne betook themselves to the elevation on which the church is placed, whence they could see the Castle of Lewes through an opening, and watched, fearing to see the bale fire blaze, which should bid them all flee for their lives, unless they were

prepared to defend the castle, to be a refuge in case their lord might survive and come to find shelter amongst them.

On this point there were diverse opinions.  A waggon had gone out in the early morning to collect forage and provisions by way of blackmail—at this moment it was seen approaching the gateway below.

The sun had set, and the shades of evening were falling fast.  All at once a single voice cried, “Look! the fire!” and the speaker pointed with his finger.

The eyes of all present followed his gesture, and they saw a bright spot of light arise on the summit of the downs, distant some twelve miles.

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“It is the signal.  All is lost!  The rebels have won, and we must fly for our lives.”

“They may be merciful.”

“Nay, we have too black a name in the Andredsweald.  We should have to answer for every peasant we have hanged or hen roost we have robbed.”

“That would never do.  By ’r lady, what injustice!  Would they be so bad as that?”

“We will not wait to see.”

All at once loud outcries arose from the castle below.  They looked aghast, for it was the sound of fierce strife and dread dismay.  What could it be?

They started to run to the help of their comrades, when a thousand cries, a wild war whoop, burst from the arches of the forest and in the dim twilight they saw numberless forms gliding over the short space which separated the castle from the wood.

“The merrie men!”

“The outlaws!”

“The wild men of the woods!”

The discomfited troopers paused—turned tail—fled—leaving their comrades to their fate, whatever it might be.

Let us see.

The waggon aforesaid had approached the gateway in the most innocent manner.  It creaked over the drawbridge.  It was already beneath the portcullis, when the driver cut the traces and thrust a long pole amidst the spokes of the wheel.  At the same instant a score of men leapt out, who had been concealed beneath the loose hay.

All was alarm and confusion.  The few defenders of the castle were overpowered and slain, for the gross treachery practised upon the “merrie men” a few days earlier had hardened their hearts and rendered them deaf to the call for pity or mercy.  The few women who were in the castle fled shrieking to their hiding places.  The men died fighting.

“To the dungeons!  Show us the way to the dungeons, and we give you your life,” cried their leader—Kynewulf—to an individual whose bunch of keys attached to his girdle showed his office.

“The friar is safe below, unhurt.  I will take you to him.  But I have no key.”

“Where is it, then?”

“Sir Drogo has taken it with him.”

“We will have it open.

“Friar Martin, art thou within?”

“Safe and uninjured.  Is it thou, Kynewulf?  Then I charge thee that thou do no hurt to any here.  They have not injured me.”

“Not injured thee, to place thee here!  Well, we will soon have thee out.  We have promised Grimbeard to bring thee to him, or forfeit our lives.  He is dying.”

“Dying!  And I not there!  What has chanced?”

“He was hit by one of those arrows the treacherous Drogo shot from the wall while the flag of truce was yet flying, when we first came to demand thee.  But we must work to relieve thee.”

And toil they did, but all in vain.  They had no tools to force that iron door.

Meanwhile a sound of scuffling drew other members of the band to a chamber in the tower, where the good knight Ralph de Monceux was confined, and as they approached they heard a heavy fall and found Marboeuf lying dead on the floor, his skull cleft asunder, whilst over him stood Ralph, axe in hand.

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The “merrie men” knew their bold captive.

“Ah!  How is this?  What ox hast thou felled?”

“Only a butcher who came in to slay me, but I avoided the blow, flew suddenly at his wrist and mastered the weapon, when I gave him what at Oxford we called quid pro quo, as we strewed the shambles with boves borealis.”

They did not understand his Latin, but they knew Marboeuf, who, as the reader will comprehend, seeing all was lost, had striven to perform his vow, and happily had begun first with this dexterous young knight.  Hence they found the poor mayor of Hamelsham safe and sound, only a little less afraid of the “merrie men” than of Drogo; for often had they rifled the castle and robbed the hen roosts of his town.

But all their efforts failed to open Martin’s door, and they were at their wits’ end what to do.  They heard a rumour that the battle was lost, so they set men to watch, and prepared an ambush in his own caste yard for Drogo, in case he should survive the fight and come to hide, with especial instructions to take him alive, as they intended to hang him from his own tower.

Meanwhile, through the dewy night, amidst the thousand odours of the woods, rode Hubert and his fifty horsemen.  They stayed not for brake, and they slacked not for ford.  All the loving heart of Hubert went before him to the rescue of the friend of his boyish days; suffering, he doubted not, cruel wrong and unmerited imprisonment in a noisome dungeon.  And ere the midnight hour he arrived amidst the familiar scenes, and saw at length the towers rise before him in the faint light of a new moon.

The sound of his horses must have been heard, but no challenge of warder awaited them.  When the party arrived they found the drawbridge down, the gates open.  What could it mean?

“It may be treachery.  Look to your arms ere you ride in,” cried Hubert.

They entered the court through the gateway in the Barbican tower.  Instantly the gates slammed behind them, the portcullis fell, and, as by magic, the windows and courtyard were crowded with men in green jerkins with bended bows.

“What means this outrage,” cried Hubert aloud, “upon the heir of Walderne as he enters his own castle?”

“That you are in the power of the merrie men of the greenwood.  If you be Drogo of Walderne, surrender, and spare bloodshed:  all who have never harmed us to go free.”

“Then are we all free.  My men are from Kenilworth, and can never have harmed you in word or deed.  As for Drogo, he fell by my hand this day in fair combat.”

“Who art thou, then?”

“Hubert, son of Roger of Walderne, and I seek my brother Martin—Friar Martin—whom you all must know.”

Instantly every hostile demonstration ceased.  The doors were thrown open, and the men who, a moment before, were about to fly at each other’s throats, mingled freely as friends.

“Martin is below,” they said.  “Have you smiths who can force a door?”

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“Lead me to him.  *Here is the key*.”

Down the steps they flew, almost tumbling over each other in their eagerness.  The key was applied, the rusty bolt flew back, and Hubert was clasped in Martin’s arms.

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For a long while the spectators of this joyful meeting waited in the courtyard of the castle, which was thronged by men who had only been restrained by a merciful Providence from bending their deadly weapons against each other.  Now their thoughts were thoughts of peace, yet they hardly understood why and wherefore.

But after a while there was a commotion in the great hall, and soon Martin stood on the summit of the steps, worn and pale, leaning on the stout shoulders of Hubert.  Their eyes were both swimming in tears—but tears of joy.  Cheers and acclamations rent the air, and it was a long while ere silence was restored for the voice of the late prisoner to be heard.

“Men and brethren, I thank you for your great love to me, and for the desire wherewith ye have desired my freedom, and jeopardised your own precious lives in its cause.  And now, if I am welcome”—(loud cheers)—“so must be my dear brother Hubert, Lord of Walderne by the will of the Lady Sybil, a true knight, a warrior of the Cross, and a friend of the poor.” (Loud cheers again).  “Many of you will remember the night when he parted from you, when Sir Nicholas, who is gone, introduced him to you as his undoubted heir, and many have grieved over him, and said, ‘Full forty fathom deep he lies.’  But here he is in flesh and blood!” (Renewed cheers).

“And now, O men of the greenwood, whom I love so dearly, let me, a child of the greenwood, speak yet a few words about myself.  For I am not only the last represent alive of the old English house of Michelham, but also a son of the house of Walderne; Mabel, my mother, being the sister, as many know, of the Lady Sybil.  Ah, well.  I seek a more continuing city than either Walderne or Michelham, and I want no earthly dignities.  Wherever God gives me souls to tend is my home; and He has given it me, O men of the Andredsweald, amongst my countrymen and my kindred, and to Hubert I leave the castle right gladly.  Now let there be peace, and let men turn their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and hasten the glorious day when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of God and His Christ.”

“We will.  God bless Sir Hubert of Walderne.”

“God bless brother Martin.”

Drogo was forgotten, as though he had never lived, forgiven and forgotten. And the multitude dispersed, each man to his own home or haunt in the forest, leaving Sir Hubert in possession of the castle of his ancestors, and Martin his guest.

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Martin's first wish after his release was, as our readers will imagine, to visit his mother, and assure her of his safety in person. Kynewulf was in waiting to escort him. He had caused a litter to be constructed of the branches of trees, knowing that the severe strain Martin had undergone must have rendered him too weak for so long a journey; and the "merrie men" were only too eager to relieve each other in bearing so precious a burden.

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“You will find our chieftain very far from well,” said Kynewulf, as he walked by Martin’s side. “He was wounded by one of the arrows from the castle when we came to demand your liberation of Drogo, and the wound has taken a bad turn.”

“How does my poor mother bear it?”

“Like a true wife and good Englishwoman.”

No more was said. Martin lapsed into deep thought until the retreat of the outlaws was attained. There, on a couch strewn with skins and soft herbage, lay the redoubtable Grimbeard; and by his side, nursing him tenderly, Mabel of Walderne. But for this she had been with Martin’s rescuers at the castle, but she could not leave her dying lord, who clung fondly to her now, and would take food from no other hand.

The wound he had received had been thought slight, and neglected. Hence it had become serious, and since Kynewulf departed mortification had set in.

The mother rose and embraced her “sweet son.”

“Thank God!” she said, and led him to his stepfather’s side.

Grimbeard raised himself with difficulty, and looked Martin in the face.

“Martin is here,” he said. “Let my dying eyes gaze upon him again.

“Martin, I have longed for thee. Tell me more about Him thou lovest so deeply.”

“My father, He is waiting to receive and to bless thee. Cast thyself wholly on the Incarnate Love which embraced thee on the Tree. Say, for His sake, canst thou forgive all, even these Normans thou hast so hated?”

“Dost thou forgive the wretch who shut thee up, my gentle boy, in that dungeon?”

“Yes, verily, and pray to God to pardon him, too.”

“Then I may pardon my foes, although my life has been spent in fighting against them for England’s freedom. But I see we must submit, as thou hast often said, to God’s will; and if the past may be forgiven, my merrie men will be well content to make peace, and to turn their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; especially now Drogo has met his just doom, as they tell me, and thy friend is about to rule at Walderne. Thou must be the mediator between them and him.

“But oh! my son, it has been hard to submit to all this. All those I loved when young carried on the fight, and my own father bequeathed it to me as a sacred heritage. We

hoped to see England governed by Englishmen, and the alien cast out; and now I give it up. The problem is too hard for me. God will make it clear."

"My father," said Martin, "I, too, am the descendant of a long line of warriors, who have never before me submitted to the foreign yoke. But I see that the two peoples are becoming one: that the sons of the Norman learn our English tongue, and that the day is at hand when they will be proud of the name 'Englishmen.' Norman and Saxon all alike, one people, even as in heaven there is no distinction of race, but all are alike before the throne."

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“And now, my son, art thou not a priest yet?  I would fain make confession of my sins.”

“God will accept the will for the deed.  He is not limited to earthly means; and if thou truly repent of thy sins for the love of the Crucified, and believest in Him, all will be well.”

For Martin feared that there would be no time to fetch a priest, or he would not have questioned the universal precept of the church of his day; while his own faith led him to see clearly that God’s mercy was not limited by the accidental omission of the outward ordinance.

“I sent for Sir Richard {36}, the parish priest of Walderne, ere we left the castle, and he is doubtless on his way with the Viaticum,” said Kynewulf.

And while they yet spake the priest arrived, and the dying man received with simple faith the last sacraments of the Church.  After this his people gathered round him.

“Tell them,” he said, in stammering tones, for the speech was failing, “what I have said. With thy friend in the castle, and thou in the greenwood, there will be peace.”

Martin turned to the silent outlaws who stood by, and repeated his words.  They listened in silence.  The prospect was not new to them, for Martin’s long labours had not been in vain; but while Drogo was at Walderne, and the royal party triumphant, it seemed useless to hope for its realisation.  Now things had changed, and there was hope that the breach would be healed.

“His last prayer was for peace,” said Grimbeard.  “Should not mine be the same?  Oh, God, save my country, grant it the blessing of peace, and forgive a poor erring man, who sees, too late, that he has been fighting against Thy dispensation, for he can now say ’Thy will be done.’”

These were his last words, and although we have related them as if spoken connectedly, they were really only uttered in broken gasps.  The end came; the widow turned aside from the bed after closing the eyes.

“Martin,” she said, “thou alone art left to me.”

And she fell on his neck and wept.

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From the grave to the gay, from a death to a wedding, such is life. The same bell which tolls dolorously at a burial clangs in company with its fellows at a marriage on the next day. So the world goes on.

The scene was the priory of Saint Pancras at Lewes, where so lately the feeble old king had held his court. Now with his brave son he had gone into honourable captivity, for it was little better, and the followers of Earl Simon filled the place.

Before the high altar stood a youthful pair; Hubert of Walderne, now to be known as Radulphus, or Ralph; and Alicia de Grey, who had been sheltered from ill and Drogo as one of the handmaidens of the Countess Eleanor, in keeping for her true love.

The good prior, Foville, performed the ceremony and celebrated the mass Pro sponso et sponsa. The father, the happy and glad father, stood by, now fully delivered from his ghostly tormentor, his fondest wish on earth achieved. Earl Simon gave the bride away, while Martin stood by, so happy.

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It was over, and the aisle was strewn with the gay flowers of early summer, as our Hubert and his bride left the sacred pile. But one adieu to the father, who would not leave his monastery even then, but who fell upon Hubert's neck and wept while he cried, "My son, my dear son, God bless thee;" and the bridal train rode off to the castle above, where the marriage feast was spread.

Then Earl Simon to his onerous duties, and the happy pair to keep their honeymoon at Walderne.

Oh, the joy of that leafy month of June, in the wild woods, all loosed from care. Hubert seemed to have found true happiness, if it could be found on earth. And Martin, he too was happy, in his work of love and reconciliation.

It was an oasis in life's pilgrimage, when man might well fancy he had found an Eden upon earth again. And there we would fain leave our two friends and cousins.

Epilogue.

A few words respecting the fate of our chief characters must close our story. We need not tell our readers the future of the great earl—it is written on the pages of history. But his work did not die on the fatal field of Evesham. It lived in the royal nephew, through whose warlike skill he was overthrown, and who speedily arrived at the conclusion that most of the reforms of his uncle were founded upon the eternal principles of truth and justice. Hence that legislation which gained for Edward, the greatest of the Plantagenets, and the first truly English king since Harold, the title of the "English Justinian."

Hubert was not with his lord when he fell. He had been selected to be of the household of Simon's beloved Countess Eleanor, and he was with her at Dover when the fatal news of Evesham arrived. He could only cry, "Would God I had died for him," while the countess abandoned herself to her grief.

Edward soon sought a reconciliation with the countess, who, it will be remembered, was his father's sister; which being effected, she passed over to France with her only daughter, to join her sons already there; and King Louis received her with great kindness, while Hubert and his companions of her guard were received into the favour of Edward, and exempted from the sweeping sentence of confiscation passed in the first intoxication of triumph upon all the adherents of the Montforts.

Brother Roger died in peace at a great age, at the Priory of Lewes, growing in grace as he grew in years, until at last he passed away, "awaiting," as he said, "the manifestation of the sons of God," amongst whom, sinner though he had been, he hoped to stand in his lot in the latter days.

Ralph of Herstmonceux, who had been happily preserved from death at the battle of Evesham, followed his father to Dover, where they joined the countess in the defence of that fortress, and shared the forgiveness extended to her followers. So completely did Edward forgive the family, that we read in the Chronicles how King Edward, long afterwards, honoured Herstmonceux with a royal visit on his road to make a pious retreat at the Abbey of Battle. Ralph succeeded his father, and we may be sure lived on good terms with Hubert.

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Hubert followed the banner of Edward Longshanks both in Wales and Scotland ere he came home to his wife and children, satiated at last with war, and spent the rest of his days at Walderne. He died at a good old age, and was buried as a crusader in Lewes Priory, with crossed legs and half-drawn sword, where his tomb could be seen until the sacrilegious hands of the minions of Thomas Cromwell destroyed that noble edifice.

Mabel of Walderne retired, at her son's persuasion, to a convent at Mayfield, where she ended her days in all the "odour of sanctity," and Martin closed her eyes.

And lastly we have to tell of our Martin. He remained in the Andredsweald until he had completely succeeded in reconciling the outlaws to the authorities {37}, and he had seen them, his "merrie men," settle down as peaceful tillers of the soil, or enter the service of the knights and abbots as gamekeepers, woodsmen, huntsmen, and the like; at his strong recommendation and assurance that he would be surety for their good behaviour—an assurance they did their best to justify.

And how shall we describe his labour of love—his work as the bondsman of Christ? But after the death of his mother, his superiors recalled him to Oxford, as a more important sphere, and better suited to his talents; where the peculiar sweetness of his disposition gave him a great influence over the younger students. In short he became a power in the university, and died head of the Franciscan house, loved and lamented, in full assurance of a glorious immortality. And they put over his tomb these words:

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. —Vale Beatissime.

From the south wall of Walderne Church project or projected two iron brackets with lances, whereon hung for many a generation the banners of Sir Ralph (alias Hubert) and his son Laurence.

The boast of chivalry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth ere gave,
Await alike the inevitable hour,
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

## THE END.

Notes.

1
Rivingtons' Historical Biographies.

2
Demonology and Witchcraft.

3

See the Andredsweald, a tale of the Norman Conquest, by the same author.

4

He was the last lord of Pevensey of his race, all his land and honours being forfeited in 1235 for passing over into Normandy without King Henry the Third's license.

5

Lord of Lewes Castle from 1242-1304, a local tyrant.

6

There were then no family names, properly so called; the English generally took one descriptive of trade or profession, hence the multitude of Smiths; the Normans generally then name of their estate or birthplace, with the affix De.  Knight's Pictorial History, volume 2, page 643.

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7

His literary acquirements, unusual in the time, increased his influence and reputation. Knight's Pictorial History.

8

How did I weep in Thy Hymns and Canticles, touched to the quick by the voices of Thy sweet-attuned Church, the voices flowed into my ears and the truth distilled into my heart. Saint Augustine's Confessions volume 9 page 6.

9

Afterwards the site of the battle of Edgehill.

10

See his biography in Macmillan's Sunday Library.

11

Ethelflaed, Lady or Queen of the Mercians (under her brother Edward, son of Alfred), threw up certain huge mounds and certain stone castles, to defend her realm and serve as refuges in troublous times. One site was Oxford, and it is the first authentic event recorded in the history of the city—the foundation of the university by Alfred being abandoned by scholars, as an interpolation in Asser, the king's biographer.

12

The Rival Heirs, or the Third Chronicle of Aescendune.

13

Because in later times some poor Jews were burnt there.

14

Like those still seen at Tewkesbury Abbey, of similar proportions.

15

The date of the surrender was November 16, 1537. It was granted to Thomas Cromwell, February 16, 1538. It was at once destroyed by skilled agents of destruction, and the materials sold. Cromwell did not enjoy it long; he perished at Tower Hill by the axe, July 28, 1540.

16

The old hymn for Wednesday morning, according to Sarum use. I am indebted to the Hymnary for the translation.

17

The supposed name of the penitent thief. The author is not answerable for the non-elision of the vowel—the name is authentic; it stood on the site of the present Oriel College. See preface.

18

See Alfgar the Dane, chapter 24.

19

It was the Gospel for the day in Italy—not in England.

20

The Viaticum was the Last Communion, given in preparation for death, as the provision for the way.

21

Such an arrangement was made in the Egyptian Temple at On; at one particular moment on one day in the year, the rays admitted through a concealed aperture gilded the shrine, and the crowd thought it miraculous.

22

Adapted from a translation of a chorus in the Agamemnon by my lamented friend, the late Reverend Gerard Moultrie.

23

A mere tradition of the time, not historical.

24

See the Andredsweald, by the same author.

25

This is the same spot mentioned in the Andredsweald, chapter 9 part 2, as a retreat of the English after Senlac.

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26

A proclamation had just been put forth by the barons, that all foreigners should be expelled and lose their property; and much violence ensued throughout England, the victims being often detected by their pronunciation, as in our story.

27

How good to those who seek Thou art,
But what to those who find!
—Saint Bernard.

28

It was one of them who first stabbed Edward the First, when his queen saved him by sucking the poison from the wound, according to a Spanish historian.

29

Sixty-six pounds, 13 shillings, four pence; a large sum in those days.

30

It was afterwards ascertained that on the very night, the father, Roger, dreamt that he saw his son in a gloomy cell, a slave condemned to apparently hopeless toil or death, and addressed him as in the text.

31

Acre was stormed by the Moslems, *ad* 1291, and the Holy Land was lost with it.

32

How unlike the ceremonial of Hubert's knighthood!  But the approach of a battle justified the omission of the usual rites in the opinion of the many.

33

Witness the case of the Scotch judge—pursued under divers forms by the supposed apparition of a man he had hanged, until he died of fright—as recorded by Sir Walter Scott in Demonology and Witchcraft.

34

Whom they had pelted with mud as she passed under London

Bridge, calling her a witch.  Life of Simon de Montfort, page 126.

35

Old English for hence.

36

Parish priests were frequently styled Sir in those days. Father meant a monk or regular, as opposed to the secular, clergy.

37

His descent from noble families of either race—Michelham, the house of Ella, through his father; Walderne, of ancient Norman blood, through his mother, rendered him acceptable to both parties.