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CRANBROOK TALES.

BY

GEORGE G. BOOTH.

IN THE MIDST OF THE GARDEN OF OLD ENGLAND, IN THE HEART OF THE WEALD OF KENT, IN THE VALLEY OF THE CRANE, SNUGLY NESTLED AMONG THE HILLS LIES THE ANCIENT AND PICTURESQUE VILLAGE OF CRANBROOK, RICH IN THE GLORIOUS BUT RESTFUL BEAUTIES OF NATURE AND FULL TO THE BRIM WITH LEGENDARY AND HISTORIC LORE.

I HAVE BORROWED FROM ITS BOUNTIFUL STORE THESE HOME-LY TALES, WHICH I DEDICATE WITH AFFECTIONATE ESTEEM TO HENRY WOOD BOOTH. A CHILD OF THE WEALD, THE FATHER OF THE AUTHOR AND A CITIZEN OF THE GREAT REPUBLIC.

1902.

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A PILGRIMAGE TO CRANBROOK.



FROM the fog, smoke, crowd and ceaseless hum of London I flee southward to the beautiful land where spring in all her gentleness and beauty is blessing the "Garden of Old England" and covering it with glory.

Over the road where princes, kings and queens have traveled to the accompaniment of the clanging armor of attendants and guards, in the days when horses and men floundered in the muddy roads, stumbled over hidden roots and stones, on to the gates of Penshurst, to be greeted within those ancient castle walls by the earls and ladies of Leicester. On still further, winding my way over hill and dale, till the wells of Tunbridge slake my thirst in the precincts of the venerable Pantiles, so old that the origin of the inns and other buildings is lost in the memory of the days of ancient grandfathers.

I rest and dream under the same roof which gave shelter to England's greatest queen as a little girl, and from the same old windows I look out upon the green hills of Kent; here I drink in the refreshing beauties of a country of which one will always sing the praises who has once reveled in its glory. I look upon it in the tender freshness of spring-time, watered by many rains and warmed by the beaming sun, the early morning disclosing the dew heavy upon the grass heads and leaves,

and a misty cloud hanging in the thousand little valleys between a thousand little hills.

Each day I witness the birth of new leaves upon trees and shrubs; each day are brought to view myriads of wild flowers scattered broadcast over the meadows, sheltered in the hedges by the roadside, vying with the gardens already full to overflowing with golden-colored flowery prisoners, and everywhere is seen the blossom-laden branches of fruit trees, while the air is full of their sweet, refreshing perfume.

On again I go over the Kentish hills and meadows and never tire of turning to left and right to view some new charm, some picturesque winding hedge-bound roadway, relieved with gnarled oaks and blooming shrubs and trees; some tile-roofed cottage nestled in a cozy corner and o'ergrown with ivy; a hillside pasture with wool-laden sheep and hundreds of pretty, frolicking lambs; a landscape extending away for miles, with beauties far and away without number; groups of little children plucking primroses, daisies and buttercups; cattle grazing in sunshine and shade or plashing in the wayside rivulet; birds everywhere in hedge and tree and sky; farmers at work and babies at play.

And so I journey onward till from the hill-top in the distance is seen, nestled among the trees, the little old town of Cranbrook.

A great windmill disputes with the tower of St. Dunstan its claim to being the chief of man-made features of the pretty and interesting scene. The

quaint red roofs of the houses, glistening in the sunlight, add warmth and glory to the picture. The roadway is lost, not far distant, in the wealth of foliage. The tall pines of Angley Wood are to the westward, the towers of Sissinghurst hide themselves away among the hills. Old timbered houses, moss-covered and weary with the weight of years, vine-clad walls, plastered cottages, smoking chimney-pots, and the creaky sign of "The Duke of York" are passed before the aged door of the George Hotel swings upon its time-worn hinges. And the landlord, speaking a cheery welcome, leads the way up the proud old stairway to the room where witches were tried in days gone by, and from which Elizabeth addressed her loyal subjects of the weald, since which time the hungry traveler has been regaled with Kentish cheer.



THE LANDLORD'S TALE.



ALL England is full of strange tales of history and legend. From the remote and almost inaccessible hamlets in Wales to the village inn of the beautiful meadows of Kent the traveler may have shown to him the hiding or resting places of kings and queens, who for hundreds of years have lain mouldering in their tombs. And so I came to Cranbrook, a slumbering village gem in the weald of Kent, to see and hear stories of things both old and new.

I had already seen the red-tiled cottage, vine-covered and beautiful with the softening touch of time, where my father was born; had gone into the field where he had played, had gazed upon the great copper kettle which was the sign of the old shop where grandsire and great-grandsire had worked and laid the foundation for family fame and fortune, and was viewing with interest the time-worn things of antiquity in and about the ancient inn, the landlord proudly pointing them out, till we sat down upon an old carved chest near the window and I touched the spring of his memory and tongue with some happy word, and then I learned the tale I tell to you this day.

It was in the year A. D. 1573 that along the highway from Sissinghurst to Cranbrook rode two heavily accoutered servants of the queen. The night was already far spent; March winds and April showers had forgotten their respective places

in the calendar, and fought with each other furiously for supremacy.

John Farston and his aide, already tired and drenched to the very core, pressed on. Their weary and saddle-worn horses stumbled over the rugged, muddy, ill-kept road, for her majesty's service must be done, and as Farston hoped to some day gain the special favor of Elizabeth he spared neither horses, servant nor himself. Tomorrow at noonday his royal mistress would follow over the same road on her progress through the weald of Kent, and her comfort and care were in his untried hands. He vowed to do or die. He would not allow his thoughts to rest an instant on the idea of failure. To succeed as a trusty equerry meant promotion and greater honors, and more than all else to him, it meant the smiles and approval and, as he hoped, the love of a favorite lady-in-waiting to the queen.

Every little while a bright moon would peep through the sombre, scurrying clouds and every little while a dense black unbroken cloud would roll across the deep blue sky. Then the travelers would stumble over their journey in darkness like unto eternal doom. It was just at an instant like this, when the ears of their horses could not be seen, that the night air was pierced by a groan and a shriek that made two hearts stand still. The next instant John Farston was floundering in the mud frantically hanging to the bridle of his frightened steed.

"Where be you, master?" came in a confused

voice from Bud, the faithful servant, as he wiped the mud out of his eyes and mouth and struggled to free himself from the thorn hedge into which he had been thrown.

"Are you alive, Bud? Whoa there! curse your ears! whoa there! I say. Bud, are you dead or alive? What in the name of all the saints was that unearthly noise?" But there was no time for answer. Again a mighty groan, followed by the same heart-piercing shriek. One, two, three, in quick succession; and now both men and horses stood stock still, trembling from head to foot. A peal of thunder rolled across the troubled sky, and then another long-drawn-out groan that seemed to come from the very mouth of hell and from the throats of the eternally damned.

"Let us out of this," shouted John. "We are doomed on earth or hereafter if we do not leave this accursed place," and with a great effort he swung himself into the saddle, while the mud dripped from his spurs, pike and doublet to the wretched road-bed.

"Follow at my heels now, Bud, and if I go to perdition you will be sure to follow me. We can be no worse off than that poor devil being murdered over yonder by some smuggler, whose trail he has crossed."

As they groped along ever and anon the groan and shriek would pierce their very souls; but it came now, it seemed, from the stormy sky, and Bud remembered the story of the "death hounds" his grandmother told him about, just before his brother

fell from the cliff and was dashed to pieces. The two men now rode side by side for comfort and protection. They talked of the "death-hounds" and gloomily and slowly they went forward, expecting every step to put an end to all their hopes. And now louder than ever, from right above their heads, with a mighty gust of wind and a score of fleeting shadows against the black sky, came groans and shrieks and gusts of wind, like forty thousand screaming, flying devils, bats or vampires. Both men dodged and trembled and crouched upon their horses' necks. Then a streak of light peeped through the stormy sky and a friendly moon burst forth, casting its beams upon a mighty, whirling windmill which marked the outpost of the old town where their journey was to end that night. The air was rent with laughter. Even the horses pranced and sheepishly hung their heads as if they saw the great whirling, groaning, shrieking joker, that never did anything worse than frighten strange travelers on stormy nights and furnish food for themselves and fodder for their horses.

Under the archway of The George rode the queen's messengers, two sorry-looking troopers, stiff-jointed and worn by their long journey and ready for a pot of ale from the vats of the brewer hard by, and a downy bed. The old landlord of the inn led the way up the oaken stairs, carefully covered with hop straw to keep them clean for the visit of her majesty. As he followed, Farston's quick eye took in the preparations for the coming of the queen. The very air

seemed to smell of loyalty; his hopes rose high as he drove his heel into the home-made jack and tugged at his wet and heavy boots. He heaved and pulled and finally breathed a great sigh of contentment as he put the snuffer over his tallow dip and tumbled into bed, to be almost buried in its depths.

The sun was not up the next morning before the village was awake. A faint streak of light gave promise of a day to be thankful for. The commotion of servants and guests, rumbling cart-wheels and the early whang, whung of the parish church bell were not enough to rouse the dreaming troopers. They would have slept themselves into the notch of the headsman's block if a boisterous maid had not played a tattoo on the chamber door with her birch broom and called them names known only in the weald.

No time was lost by John Farston in making a hasty toilet. The dry mud was shaken from his clothes and he soon put in an appearance at the breakfast room, where his hunger was quickly satisfied. He then inspected her majesty's apartments, which were proudly shown him by the landlord's buxom wife. Everything proved to be faultless. This duty was lightened by the stories told in the great room. The queen's chair was placed just where the judge sat when, the week before, a witch was tried and condemned to be burnt at Maidstone. And then the tale of the two pious "heretics" whom Sir John Baker persuaded Queen Mary to let him burn, but whose

lives were saved just in the nick of time by the bells of the parish church announcing that the good Queen Elizabeth had ascended the throne.

All being well within, Farston and Bud mounted their horses and rode out to see the gaily decorated village streets. The morning was bright and fair; the wind had somewhat dried up the muddy road; everywhere were flags and emblematic devices; the townspeople were dressed in their best. From the George Inn to Curshorne the roadway was carpeted with rich blue broadcloth from the Cranbrook looms; loyal hands had woven the costly cloth; loyal hearts had sacrificed it to the service of their queen and were amply repaid when breathless riders told of her approach. Then soon in the distance the peal of the Heralds' trumpets was heard above the din and noise. The silver-steel armor of the guards glistened in the sunlight; the fresh green leaves upon the trees and hedges, the blossoms of springtime, the quaint houses and rosy-cheeked maidens made the picture a perfect one.

The night had been spent at Sissinghurst Castle, and the day being fair, the entire court followed the queen on foot, and rested only for a few moments near the spot where, in later years, a college bearing the name of the queen was to be erected to commemorate the event. As the cavalcade swung gaily into Stone street, a great song broke forth upon the air; the bells pealed merrily; the village brewer forgot the prudence which had made him rich and filled every one freely with sparkling cheer from vats along the roadside.

Up the broadcloth pathway came the procession. Right and left did the queen bestow her smiles, while courtiers cast silver coins to the urchins who marched along so gaily beside them in open-mouthed admiration and wonder.

On either side of the entrance to the inn where her majesty would rest sat John Farston and Bud, upon their well-groomed horses, motionless as statues, horse and man as one creature, not a whit the worse for the experience of the night before. Farston was hoping that the sun would continue to shine; that the refreshments would not meet with disfavor, and was nervously fearful for his own fate.

When the queen approached he trembled, and when her majesty spoke to him he was startled and nearly fell from his saddle, just recovering his composure in time to acknowledge his gratitude, and to steal a glance at his own fair lady, who was laughing gaily at his awkwardness, though secretly pleased with him and his success. His eyes rested on her, but a smile he would not venture, and then her cheeks were covered with blushes and she vanished within the doorway of *The George*.

Then came the dignitaries of the village to pay homage and present a silver-gilt cup, crowned by a lion supporting the queen's arms. Elizabeth received it graciously, and stepping out upon the balcony, she addressed the village folk, who crowded the streets and house tops, thanking them for their loyalty and devotion.

After this came a delegation of cloth weavers, then the iron workers, and afterwards the hop-

growers, representing the wealth and industry which had made the weald famous and had won clemency from kings and queens when they rebelled against taxes unjustly imposed.

They had aided in building the empire and in putting the good queen upon the throne, and Elizabeth had told them that she made the tiresome journey just to thank them for their great service, and the loyalty and pride of all Cranbrookers were kindled anew.

They followed the queen's coach and her knights and ladies and servants and guards up High street, and the children strewed wild flowers and fir branches on the roadway, while the bells of the parish church pealed merrily and a farewell shout rang over the Kentish hills as this notable day in the history of Cranbrook came to a joyous end. John Farston brought up the rear of the royal procession and Lady Mary lingered by his side for company, for the equerry had won the queen's favor, and it is believed he also won a bride.



THE GRAVE-DIGGER'S TALE.



THE GRAVE-DIGGER'S TALE.



JUST a few steps over the highway from the historic Cranbrook Inn! The day was waning fast, the sun only showing half his glowing face above the western horizon. Just a step or two, and I lazily went the way that took me immediately into the city of ancient dead. On each side were crumbling marble tombs, and in front of me the stone-flagged path wound its way, vanishing shortly on either side of the parish church, the tower of which cast a great shadow to the eastward.

Curiosity led me to the ever-interesting sundial, and groping my way among the sacred hillocks, I stood upon its granite base till I was lost to the world about me, gazing at the gently-fading shadows which recorded the dying moments of the day. I stood there dreaming of days and things gone by, and only wakened from my reverie when the grave-digger, passing by, accidentally struck his shovel against a slab and it fell from the old man's hands to go rattling, rocking and clanging on the pavement.

After restoring the well-worn implement of toil to his hand, I made some idle remark about its having fashioned the earthy beds of many men; but this was enough to cause him to fondle the homely tool and look intently upon the curved blade and then to ask me if I had been within the church, to which I replied: "I have."

"And did you see the red glove of Sir John Baker hanging high above his tomb?" I said: "I did." "Well," he slowly continued, "his was the first grave this old tool dug. It has been handed down from that bloody day to this. I carry it with me now when I go about, though it is too worn to be used, but for hundreds of years it has been the iron link between the generations of our family, and so I like to have it with me. Perhaps it is a little childish, but old men like me find much comfort in childish things."

We had unconsciously sat ourselves down upon a tombstone, and the longer we sat the less either of us was inclined to move, so after a time I said: "Tell me something about the red glove of Sir John Baker. Why is the hand alone red?"

"I have the story from my father," said he, "and, like the shovel I hold, it has been passed down to me; but there are many in Cranbrook who can tell much about the red glove and the man who wore it. Ask the keeper at the castle—for Sissinghurst was where he lived." But I urged him to tell me the tale as he knew it, and I now repeat it in my own way, though I would gladly give it the quaintness of his crude Kentish tongue, if I were able.

"Well," said he, "that glove"—and then he lapsed into silence again, soon to conclude that he must begin with Johnnie Baker, the child who was born and reared at Sissinghurst.

Thomas Baker was one of the very earliest settlers in Kent, and he it was who built the first

house at Sissinghurst. It was at this place that John Baker first saw an English sky and heard an English nightingale sing. There, as a child, he showed the strange traits of his character which clung to him all his life. With a voice and manner of peculiar gentleness he would call his pet dogs to him to stroke their heads and pat their panting sides, to comfort them with sympathetic words till they lay at his boyish feet—his slaves. Then, like thunder out of a clear sky, his other nature would come from its hiding place and the trusting brutes would receive a painful kick. They say he would take a beautiful dove from its perch in the cote and lay it against his breast, stroking gently its pearly feathers and cooing softly to it, till it too, would close its eyes in total submission; and then with a fiery flash he would seize its head and crush its tender life out with his hands, hurling its throbbing body into the air with laughter. He grew to be a man, handsome and daring, both loved and feared. In due time he was in high favor with the King, spending much time at court. Often he would return from London to visit the castle home, slowly going to decay.

As time went on, Baker became charmed with a cultured widow, who had an only daughter named Mary. "Madam Chester," like many an English girl, had married young, fascinated with a uniform of those sturdy, old-time warriors. Her husband had gone abroad in the country's service and had sacrificed his life in the King's cause, so that Jane Chester, although her daughter's years were num-

bered by seventeen, was still young and beautiful, and was the lamp around which many a gay butterfly fluttered. She, too, was strangely fascinated by the bold and dashing Baker, but when beyond the range of his piercing and masterful eye, one Henry Dartmouth held well in hand her heart-strings.

It was at this point that the tragic life of Sir John Baker began. He had arrived in London early in May. The castle halls rang alternately with merry songs and stern commands. Every servant he met or called approached him meekly, but with fear. On this particular day he wandered through the house, room after room, then out into the court-yard. Everywhere he found decay; everywhere he turned, some creditor would dog his footsteps, begging for his due. Bit by bit he had given up portions of the old estate to the more insistent, and now he seemed to realize that some new resolve was necessary.

In his desperation he sat down in the old, great hall and before his eyes came the face of the widow Chester. Many men, when the fates seem against them, instinctively turn to drink, but others find a quicker and more satisfying intoxication in beautiful woman. The vision was enough; and soon after, Sir John, stunning in his courtly attire, strode out of the castle gate bound for the customary haunts of his "beautiful Jane," as he was pleased to call her. He knew that about this hour she was wont to take a walk; sometimes going to the living cloisters of Glassenbury wood, passing

through to the highway, where frequently she was met by young Dartmouth. Baker resolved to this day spoil the meeting and put an end to the hateful rivalry.

It was not long before he came upon his quest, sitting beneath a great oak, her face turned upward and her ear inclined to the song of a bird, hidden in the branches far above her. To the gracious greeting of Sir John, she first gave a startled reply; then, as he fixed his eyes upon her and beamed his gentlest smile and spoke his softest words, she soon listed into calmness, and as he sat beside her on the gnarled root of the oak, she listened to the words which poured from his magic throat. He led her on by gentle steps to the threshold of love's conquest. Then he harkened to the music of the great trees in the distant wood, and wooed by the song, and she by the charm of his words, led her on till they were in the precincts of the woodland. Over the springy bed of moss and leaves they walked till buried in the depths of the mighty forest; and the beautiful woman at his side had been lulled into complete submission.

Then the boyhood trait of Sir John Baker took possession of his soul, and in his fiendish arms he seized the woman his better self had conquered, and bore her to the earth, his eyes flaming with passion, while through the gloomy labyrinth of trees sped the piercing cry of Jane Chester, to instantly fall upon the ears of Henry Dartmouth. The cry of anguish brought him running to the scene, his drawn sword held tightly in his hand.

And here the rivals met, over the unconscious form of this beautiful woman—the one a raging beast, the other the courageous defender of the helpless. It was here that Baker determined upon the destruction of his hated rival. Like a tiger, he sprang with gleaming sword at the breast of Dartmouth, who parried the murderous thrust and struck boldly at his adversary. Echoing through the woods, went the clash of sparkling steel; Dartmouth's blade plied with the courage of right; Baker's with the daring of evil blood. Jane Chester opened her eyes upon the raging scene only to swoon again as Baker's sword cut a deep gash in the cheek of Dartmouth, which was returned by a thrust not far from the region of his own heart. On went the fight with growing fury, the combatants weakening every moment from the loss of blood, till voices and hurried footsteps were heard in the distance and Sir John Baker, feeling himself vanquished, fled in terror, leaving the new-comers to stanch the wounds of his brave antagonist and to carry the widow Chester to her home.

After this Baker was compelled to quickly raise all the money he could on the remnants of Sissinghurst and flee to France. Dartmouth, seriously wounded, was tenderly nursed by the woman he had so valiantly fought for, and later they were married.

When some years after Queen Mary ascended the throne of England, Baker, who was yearning for home, felt safe in returning to his native country. So Cranbrook, one day, witnessed

his return alone, excepting one servant whom he brought with him from Normandy. He took up his abode in the deserted halls of Sissinghurst, and although he was known to have spent his all abroad, in time he began to buy back his scattered estate and restore the ruined buildings.

About this time many women began to disappear in strange and inexplicable ways. A single piercing shriek would be heard by some traveler from the direction of Angley or Glassenbury wood or the park at Sissinghurst, and another disappearance would be recorded on the church door. But the mystery continued.

Sir John, as his estate was restored, began again to hold up his lordly head and to go about as of old. His years had been added to by a few, but he was still the dashing gentleman, and strange as it would seem, the beautiful daughter of Lady Dartmouth, counting her years by twenty-four, was now the special object of his attentions. She loved beautiful clothes and was accustomed to go about wearing her rare and costly jewels. Often had Sir John paid court to her and told her of the many improvements he had made at Sissinghurst; had described the rare furniture he had brought from the continent and urged her to pay him a visit. She had constantly avoided fixing a time, till one day, when abroad with a companion and coming in sight of the red towers of the castle, she concluded to give him a surprise, much against the advice of her friend who reluctantly went with her up to the great oak door.

Upon the heavy iron knocker she rapped loudly, but no answer came. Again she rapped, and impatient at the delay she tried the latch and upon finding the door unlocked, she pushed it open and entered the gloomy hall.

She called loudly, "Sir John! Sir John!" but the only answer was a reverberating echo and a voice that came from a parrot at the stair-top, whose ghostly voice cried out, "Pee Poh, pretty lady, be not too bold or your red blood will soon run cold." Somewhat startled, but too cowardly to turn back, she went on, laughing gayly and pulling her companion by the hand, romping from room to room, in ringing accents calling frequently, "Sir John! Sir John!" As they returned to the great hall, in a deeply shadowed corner they saw a door which they had missed before, and thinking him there went boldly forward, but only to the threshold; neither could they turn for fright. Here upon the floor, in a stately row were the lifeless forms of some twenty women, and near them they saw the ghostly face of a friend who had only recently disappeared.

They turned to flee from the awful place when, upon passing a window, they saw the lord of the castle approaching the door with his servant, between them carrying the body of a woman.

In a dark recess of the great oak stairway they hid themselves, clinging frantically to each other. The great door swung open with a loud crash against the wall. In came Sir John, cursing his tardy and slavish servant at every step. On they

came past the stairway, where the hand of the murdered woman caught between the ballusters. Uttering a mighty oath, Sir John cut it off with his already gory sword, and as they pushed along it fell into the lap of Mary Chester. Upon the white and lifeless fingers were many rings, the precious stones gleaming in the pale light which filtered through the bars covering the narrow window. A scream, which would have been fatal, was suppressed. When the awful procession had passed out of sight, the terror-stricken visitors fled; but Mary Chester, impelled by some strange force clung to the bloody hand, wrapping it hastily in her silken gown.

Like frightened deer they ran, never stopping till within the door of Dartmouth's house. Then began the preparation for the final and tragic act in the life of Sir John Baker, who as usual made his appearance at his old haunts and among his chosen friends—the dove and the devil in one skin.

Mary Chester, like her mother, found a champion for her cause in a modest, but resolute lover, and together they secretly made their plans. Then calling together a number of trusty friends, they confided their purpose to them. In due time the infamous Baker received a delicate note from the fascinating Mary, bidding him attend a supper at her home with some friends, a few days later.

He rubbed his hands with glee when he read the lines; but little did he know their import, or never would he so eagerly have prepared for the festive occasion, nor would he so impatiently have

counted the days and hours till the moment he was sure he would number Mary Chester among his conquests.

It was a beautiful evening ; the Kentish air was balmy ; the insects hummed an evening chant ; the tree-toads croaked in harmony with the songsters of the fields. Sir John Baker went abroad well satisfied with himself and all the world, of which he felt he was so easily the master. The mocking friends met him at the door with a merry greeting and bade him enter. Beautiful women showered their sweetest smiles upon him. In turn, he feasted his eyes on their lovely forms and faces, and eagerly put forth his hands to the warm welcome of the charming Mary Chester. None the less cordial were the hearty hand-shakes of the stalwart companions of the fair sex ; so all went merrily, till around the great oak table in the lofty-timbered room, they sat on oaken benches. Brilliant was the scene, with a hundred flickering candles hanging in dazzling clusters from above them.

The seat of Sir John, the guest of honor, was in the center at one side ; the beautiful Mary opposite. The other guests were arranged in accordance with the plan, and the servants, all stalwart men, in brilliant costumes stood ready for the bidding of the mistress of the feast. Course upon course was disposed of ; wine from the vineyards of France and ale from English vats flowed freely. Speeches were made to the honor of Sir John that would fit in well with the subtle brilliancy of Mark Antony, till, as the evening waned, conversation was turned

to the subject of dreams, and then did Mary Chester call to mind "an awful dream" she had had, with Sissinghurst Castle as the place and Sir John as the chief actor.

Resting her elbows upon the table and clasping her burning cheeks in her shapely hands, with eyes fixed upon her victim, her bosom heaving with every breath, she told her dream, the vivid description increasing with each word. She told of the quiet walk with her friend, the visit to the castle, the parrot's warning, the bloody chamber in the castle, the entrance of Sir John and his servant with the murdered woman, the severed hand, the flight from the castle—a dream which "seemed so real," she said, "that she shuddered to think of it." And when she had finished, an appalling silence pervaded the great room, till the lord of Sissinghurst, with an easy laugh, said to his tormenter:

"Dreams are not living; they are fables."

"But is this a fable?" shrieked Mary Chester, rising from her seat and opening a silver casket, which during the feast had rested on the table between her and Sir John; and holding up the livid hand of the murdered woman, with its gleaming jewels upon the fingers, the life-blood of the victim still upon it in clots and streaks.

Then did Sir John, realizing his peril, turn pale and make as if he would draw his sword; and then did Mary Chester give the signal and all the male guests and servants, armed with pike and sword, surrounded him. Derisive laughter fell upon his ears; and off they led him along the country road

and through the old town streets, the whole company following, jeering and mocking. Then they lodged him in the room above the porch of the parish church and placed a guard of strong men to keep watch all through that memorable night. Then did Cranbrook town hear the story of his crimes; friends of his victims clamoring loudly for vengeance, women and children joining in the cry.

At the intersection of Stone and High streets, a great iron column was planted; a mound of earth was heaped about its base; piled upon this were the loads of fagots carried there by the raging populace; and to the doleful tolling of the great bell in the tower of St. Dunstan's the armed guards led Sir John Baker from his prison to the stake, where, lifted high above the thousands of stern and vengeful faces, they bound him firmly with chains. Then a hundred torches in eager hands, were rushed forward to set alight his funeral pyre, and as the flames shot up and enveloped his stalwart frame, the people of Cranbrook shouted:

“So perish the deeds of Bloody Baker! so perish the lord of Sissinghurst!”

But from the cloud of smoke and the roaring torrent of flame came the voice of the dove, breathing only words of forgiveness, contrition and sorrow; for the devil had deserted his dwelling place in the hour of doom and pain. Then from the surging mob came tears of anguish and groans of vengeance, strangely mingled. So the fire died out, and anon they buried him beneath the pavement within these holy walls, and this old shovel dug the hole. In

time, a monument was raised above his charred and crumbling bones; and high above this they hung his flag; and the woman's hand they placed within the glove and hung it there also, where you can see it now, darkly stained with blood.

Time has crumbled away and buried from view much of the memory of Sissinghurst, as the ivy now covers its shattered walls; but the legend of Bloody Baker will live on to the end of time.

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THE TALE OF THE CLOTH-WORKER.



Driscoll.

THE TALE OF THE CLOTH-WORKER.



FIVE centuries or more before the time I write, in that far-off day when the energetic and wise King Edward III. sat upon the throne of England and when the "Brewer of Ghent" was the real master over the good people of Flanders, the harbor at Sluys was filled with the merchant vessels of the world, coming there laden with treasure to trade with the people of Bruges, whose fame in the making of beautiful cloth had gone abroad from sea to sea. English traders were there in great numbers; their vessels laden with wool, upon which the Flemings depended to keep their looms in motion.

This tale begins early in the year A. D. 1345, when the crudely built docks were piled high with bales of wool. The good ship Hendrika had just discharged a rich cargo and had also brought with her a mercantile ambassador on an important mission from the king of England. His name was Richard Hedworth; a man of goodly figure, rosy cheeked, bright eyed, and merry voiced. He made his way quickly by canal to Bruges and spent much time watching the young Flemings about their work, weaving, sorting, cleaning, dyeing, laboring with might and main, either as master or servant. These men had made their country famous for its cloths, so famous in fact, that the English king in his envy determined, if possible, to appropriate the fame to his own realm. "Why," said he, "should we send our wool to

Flanders to be made into cloth? Let us keep our wool and bring the weavers to England, and then send English cloths abroad." And so in due time Richard Hedworth was chosen to execute the wishes of his majesty. He noted that the cloth-workers appeared to be worn with much labor and illy fed, as well as struggling under severe masters, and so he chuckled merrily to himself as he concluded upon the words he would address to them at the earliest opportunity.

Philip Landon was working one day in a great warehouse with many others, his intense earnestness and activity attracting the attention of Hedworth. Philip had learned the trade of a dyer and weaver. He was ambitious; determined to succeed; and readily made the sacrifice of health which the conditions of his craft demanded in Bruges. He was watched in his labors this day by still more interested eyes than the English ambassador's. His sister and two young friends sat upon some bales near by, chatting and laughing merrily. Kate Bastogne, a friend of Philip's sister, was one of the group, and it should in all frankness be said, was a friend of Philip's. Her eyes followed his every movement. He in turn, frequently caught her looking, and then she would coquettishly turn and look at the other men. Philip in his heart of hearts had built many castles in the air, and oft-times had fitted Kate into fancy's picture with them. He had not allowed himself to think of love. His miserable wages appeared to him too

small for any desire beyond his daily necessities. He hoped; but that was all, except to work.

It was somewhat late in the afternoon; business began to lull; here and there were groups of weavers and other workmen standing idling away their time, when the athletic and jolly form of Richard Hedworth mounted one of the great bales of wool and called good-naturedly to those within hearing of his voice. His call was not in vain, and more than fifty men stood around him, wondering what he would have to say to them. Idle curiosity was the sum total of their interest. Little did any of them think that his first word would mark the beginning of new lives and new hopes for many of them. Fate perhaps drew them near, and even Philip, who had now joined his sister and her friends, took his place on the outskirts of the group.

There was inspiration in the eager faces of his audience, so that when Hedworth began to speak his words took on a fervor he little expected. He spoke their own language as freely as his native tongue, and in it he soon launched into complimentary remarks on the beauties of their land, the sterling qualities of its craftsmen, whose fame had gone abroad over all the world and was in the mouth of all England, who wore the beautiful cloths woven on their looms. "Ah, a pity it is," said he, "that there is not here rest for the weary; that from so much toil and industry there does not flow a rich reward; that early and late you young men must bend to the beam and shuttle and give scant attention to your sweethearts, your wives

and your children. We send you the wool from the pastures of England's garden. Our sheep-tenders labor, but their labor is a joy. Look you now," said he, "Englishmen work and Englishmen play, and thus the English are able to pay. All day and late at night, before the dawn and after the moon lies down to sleep, you work, work, work, and for what? I say, men, for what? Nothing better than herrings and moldy cheese to eat with your bread. Look at me; am I not strong? I say, you men of Bruges, would you measure strength with me? Am I not healthy and well fed? Are my cheeks hollow? Is my eye dull? Yet I tell you, I have worked as Englishmen work; but I play as Englishmen play. Come men,"—and he fixed his eyes first upon one man and then upon another, whom he singled out from among the crowd, enlarging the circle of his vision till he rested his gaze upon Philip, who stood in rapt attention, wondering what the next word would be, and then continued,—“come, I say, you men listen to me. Tomorrow week at this time, the good ship Hendrika will slip away from her moorings, laden with the products of your labor; go with her to England and teach my countrymen your trade. There you will find a garden to live in; there you will find yourselves welcome wherever you go; there you will be fed upon beef and mutton till your stomachs are full; there you will find rest and time to play; there you will find good beds and your bedfellows better, for the richest yeomen of England will not disdain to marry their daugh-

ters to you; and I tell you of a truth, they are such beauties that every foreigner commends them. What say you; how many of you will join the ship for homes of happiness and plenty?"

This tale has to do particularly with Philip, who for a time stood dazed, not lowering his eyes from the speaker, then his head dropped and he stared blankly at the pavement beneath his feet. He forgot his sister and he forgot Kate. He saw rising before him the realization of his dream. Alarmed at his action, the young women literally dragged him away to his home, begging and pleading with the silent Philip not to listen to the oily Englishman. But he gave no answer. Kate Bastogne, who had been the center of his thoughts but a short hour ago, now received no more attention than his sister, who coaxed, scolded, and then laughed with her friends and teased him about his English wife so fat and fair. But he said not one word, for his resolution was already made, and he hoped that the pain of parting with old friends, who could not understand him, would quickly be over.

That night at home, he told his old mother calmly of his resolve; and she sat silent for a time and then simply said: "Well, Philip, my boy, go if you will, and may the good Lord always protect you."

Then preparations for the journey were begun. His few belongings were packed. His kit of weavers' tools and utensils were gathered together: and on the day set for the sailing, after a later breakfast than usual, he sent word to his master

that his next loom would be worked in England, where men were paid for their labor and where they worked to live and did not simply live to work.

He said good-bye to his friends, not forgetting to urge them to follow him, if he found the king's ambassador did not lie, and with sixteen other fellow-workmen,—eight of them with their wives and families,—he went on board the *Hendrika* at four o'clock in the afternoon, and the tide being full, the ship, within an hour, set sail. His mother, who had gone to see him off, stood watching him. And hidden among the crowd was Kate Bastogne, with eyes filled with tears she could not keep back, for she knew not why, but something told her that an English girl would win her Philip's heart.

The lofty cliffs of Dover were well in sight next morning, when the pale and drowsy passengers came on deck. One night on the channel had disturbed their rest as well as their stomachs. Children were crying, and the party was not as eager for the landing as they were the day before. Not a few longed already for their cottage homes in Bruges, with their great wide hearths; but a cheery word from Richard Hedworth, aided by the warm morning sun and fresh breezes, soon put all in good humor except Philip, who stood in the bow of the ship, his eye fixed on the cliffs or clouds, he knew not which; his thoughts first in England then in Flanders, reviewing his life and its ups and downs, and making and unmaking plans for the future.

It was noon; the sun beat down upon them

when the Hendrika dropped anchor and they one and all began to embark in the boats which the sailors quickly lowered. Philip helped the women and children over the gunwale and passed many a box and bundle into the overloaded tubs. He would go himself, but was in no hurry, clinging to the one link between his old home and the new one, till he joined the captain and Mr. Hedworth in the last trip, waving his hand to the ship and to the unseen land across the deep.

The ambassador and Philip were friends already, and while going ashore, a lesson in English took the place of other conversation, something being added to Philip's very small store of English words. The shoremen pulled them high and dry beyond the surf on the meagre beach. The familiar bales of wool were piled high upon the shore; pack-horses and drivers had brought them there, and stood ready for their loads of cloth which would soon be taken from the heavily laden vessel.

All that day was spent, unloading the cargo and in preparing for the journey into the very midst of the garden of England. The manufactured cloth would be carried to London. As far as Canterbury the emigrants would accompany the pack-train, and by four o'clock next morning they were on the move. The highway of five hundred years ago is the same the coach and the bicycle travel today. It was then rough and full of deep ruts, and when it rained, which was often, the roads were soft and dangerous.

At Ewell they fell in with a band of pilgrims on

their way to Becket's shrine at Canterbury. People of all ranks — masters, servants, lawyers, priests, and many others—some afoot, some mounted double on big-footed, broad-backed, easy-going horses, and as they traveled on, still others joined in the pilgrimage. A party of monks, robed and hooded, tramped along barefooted, keeping time to their steps with a sing-song chant.

It was a strange company which Philip looked upon, and he marveled at the many unusual things he saw in the country in which he had cast his lot, and was not sorry when his friend, the ambassador, told him that the bells then ringing beyond the hills and tree tops marked the parting of the ways; the pilgrims would go to Canterbury, the pack-train on to London, while they would turn westward, sometime the following day reaching at Ashford the highway leading to the village of Cranbrook, by the way of Sissinghurst. They would rest this night at the inn nigh the top of yonder hill, the thatched roof of which was just visible among the pines, the smoke from the chimney curling skyward giving promise of warmth and comfort within, for the chill of an English evening was telling on the illy-clad travelers. Their packs were ransacked for wraps for the women and children, while the men just bore it till they warmed themselves before the cheery fire at the inn, and comforted the inner man with a plentiful supply of English mutton and good wheaten bread. And then these half-starved Flemings began to

rejoice, by wishing their sisters and brothers and friends could join them in their hearty meal.

Philip, as was his custom when thoughtful, sat silent, but ate as if he meant to have then made good every pledge of the jolly English ambassador who had bribed him with many promises to leave his home. A full stomach gave him a cheerful heart, and he soon livened the company with songs, the fatigues of the journey being forgotten in a pot of ale passed around to men, women and children alike. When Philip's turn had come, mounting the rough-hewn bench and lifting high the earthen mug, he broke out with this versicle toast :

Here's to England's mutton meat ;
Here's to England's woolly sheep ;
Here's to her hills so green and fair ;
Here's to the land without a care.

After this the numerous company were shortly stowed away in the limited quarters of the inn, extra beds being readily made with fresh straw upon the floor. The children giggled when they were tucked away in these improvised beds, and that night in England was one of rest to weary souls and bodies.

Wild flowers dotted the dewy hillsides next morning. Violets and buttercups were the tempting morsels served up to the sheep and lambs which were early in their pastures, and as this company of cloth workers continued their journey the glory of the meadows charmed them. Hidden in the hedges the children found the dog rose ; in the lowlands and marshy places they plucked the bog-bean and forget-me-nots. Here was indeed the

garden of England. Everywhere the hills were dotted with wool-laden sheep and bleating lambs. Cozy thatched and tile-roofed cottages were frequently passed along the highway; rosy-cheeked boys and girls stood at the roadside and laughed at the strange dress of the new-comers, and were in turn objects of wonder and mirth to the emigrants.

Towards noon they were resting by the wayside, when along came a gay company. The travelers they had heretofore encountered attracted attention through some crude novelty in their simple dress or actions, but in this case it was the reverse. Knights and ladies dressed in brilliant costumes rode upon gorgeously-caparisoned horses; silver, gold and jewels dazzled the eyes of the beholders; upon the hands of some rested strange birds—the brilliant-plumaged hawks, with peculiar hats upon their curious little heads. Servants and guards brought up the rear. Musicians walked beside and entertained them, and fools made sport for their lordly masters. The beauty of the women was as entrancing as all the rest, and Philip did not fail to compare what he saw with the claims of Mr. Hedworth.

When they themselves were on the road again, Philip took his customary place beside Mr. Hedworth and asked him many a question about the people they had passed. He wondered that such a company should be met on a country road, so far away from suitable habitation. But his companion told him that just to the north, hidden by the hills and forests of great oaks, was Barworth

castle, built by a worthy knight long before those days, a direct successor to a great knight of King Arthur's day. It had been bought by a merchant prince of England who also bought the family crest. The knights and ladies of the castle and all their friends also, willingly placed their homage in the bargain. Their great estates, wasted by extravagance, had suffered also many depredations by robbers and troops, and being without the wealth necessary to keep up the grandeur of the establishment, they willingly took this honorable man and his family into their estate and rank, and sold him the birthright of nobility for a sack of gold.

The traveler today will see but a fragment of the foundation walls of Barworth castle, which for more than a century after the incident here referred to was the seat of the merchant knights of Barworth. But the country which furnished the wealth and the pleasures of these latter days is still there, and grows more beautiful as the centuries pass along the road of time.

Sissinghurst in 1345 was only a tax-collector's headquarters, and though eager to see their future home, a halt had to be made here for the emigrants to be registered by an officer, and the worldly goods of the party, consisting of the usual household furniture, a complete loom and many spinning wheels, carried upon the backs of the horses and loaded upon one lumbering cart drawn by oxen, to be duly inspected and put down in the great book; for even in the land of England the king required money, but when he took it, a good-natured,

loyal subject did the collecting, which made the "taking" pleasanter by not a little.

Hedworth, always planning, thought it desirable now to tell the company that the end of their journey would be a little village called Cranbrook, located in a beautiful land where sweet clear water flowed in plenty and where marl was to be found for the cleansing of the wool. Though the village was hardly as good as others they had passed through, a parish church stood upon a hill, and the people boasted of every new thatched roof or fire-place that was made. They wanted their village to grow like the great pine trees in Angley wood, and so Cranbrook was sure to be a town, and some day perhaps a city; in any case it would be the birth-place of a great industry and some of England's greatest men.

They were met next morning by the landlord of the White Horse Inn, whose curiosity and thrift had brought him to meet the travelers. He talked incessantly and he talked loudly; he waved his hands to right and left, and to make a good point stick he pounded it into his horse's head with a thump; and he talked, and thumped, and blustered and winked in English, which his hearers could not understand, and because the Flemings laughed he swelled up like the proud old Briton that he was.

No other universal language is quite so universal as eating, and no greater wonders can be accomplished by the aid of any other than those marvelous doings of a good meal. A stranger in a strange land, after the inner man has been comforted with

native cheer, sees beauties to which he would otherwise be blind. So, like all of his class, this talkative landlord of the White Horse knew the trick, and the thirty-two foreign souls which constituted his guests this day were weaned away from their native land by a great spread of beef and mutton in plenty and, though somewhat out of season, a great plum pudding with plenty of ale and cheese. Thus was marked the beginning of life in Cranbrook.

That afternoon Mr Hedworth invited Philip to accompany him on a walk. He had been studying this young man in all his moods, and while younger and no doubt without the experience of some of the others who had come with him, he picked him out for a leader, and he wished to talk over his plans before the first work should begin. They walked up the high road beyond the inn, on either side of which were a few modest little houses. Gardens full of flowers and green stuff were the feature along the roadside; over the house tops could be seen tree or grass-covered fields.

As they walked along they fell in with a short, gray-bearded gentleman, talking to himself and critically examining samples of wool and broadcloth which he carried in his hands. He nodded coldly at Hedworth's greeting, and his eyes took in Philip's tall figure from head to foot, but William Archer could not regard either man as his friend. He had accumulated a comfortable fortune in raising sheep and in carrying the wool to Do-

ver. He had more than a hundred broad-backed horses in his pack trains, and what was to become of all his business when the looms of the weavers were set up in Cranbrook.

The resourceful ambassador put his hand upon William Archer's shoulder and said: "My friend, you are the man I want; you, above all others, can help me to make good the king's wishes. Here is one of those young weavers I have brought from Flanders, and I want you to shake him by the hand, for you two can make England famous and yourselves rich." And that happy speech of Hedworth won the day, and from an enemy he turned William Archer into a lifelong friend.

Walking along together, they turned into a path which after a short walk led into Anglely wood, where for a time they talked, Hedworth sitting between the other two and acting as interpreter. From Archer he learned the exact condition of the wool supply, and the customs of the present trade; from Philip the requirements of the cloth workers. First came the water supply, and Archer spoke of a spring in the valley of the wood where they sat, which they immediately went to see and soon from the thickly-wooded hillside they emerged into a pretty meadow where the bubbling spring found its restful habitation and where was to be located the first mill. Here where the mill pond rests today without labor, was formed the first company with William Archer to manage its affairs and Philip Landon to take in charge the work.

The labors of these days need not be gone over in detail. The emigrants were at first taken into the homes of the Englishmen until houses could be built for them on the borders of the spring in Angley wood. A dam having been constructed, then came a large building for the storing and sorting of the wool, then the cleaning vats and dye-house which, under the experienced hand of William Archer were rapidly built, the plans being made by Philip; and ere long the first loom was set up in the house of a weaver and the construction of others, after its model, was begun. This one great, broad loom took two men to operate, and with quill-winders, scribblers, sorters, scourers and dyers required the services of the entire company from Bruges, excepting Philip and one companion, who were engaged in completing the new looms which would not be wanted until some Cranbrookers were trained to take up the work. The apprentice ranks were soon filled with eager applicants, and in three months' time a third loom was in full operation, with the necessary help in all departments. They now consumed one hundred and eighty pounds of raw wool each week, and from this beginning the broadcloth looms of Cranbrook grew to be numbered by hundreds. The eight shillings a week which went into the pockets of these weavers of the Fourteenth century was as a princely income compared with the pittance paid to the workers of Flanders, many of whom followed their relatives and friends into the valley of the Crane. William Archer grew

richer and Philip Landon prospered; he had formed the habit of hard work, but by the influence of the country air and plenty to eat, he improved in health as well as fortune.

Three years passed quickly by—years too full of activity for any thoughts but those of work. There was no time for lonesomeness when there was work to do and too few hours in which to do it. But at the end of the third year Philip had more leisure and set himself to the task of inventing improvements in the looms, creating several simple devices which increased their product. But even these self-appointed tasks did not prevent his getting lonesome at times, so he took long walks into the country, in which he was often joined by Mr. Archer, until the autumn leaves began to fall in the year 1348.

Richard Hedworth returned from London where he had been for more than two years. He now came to Cranbrook as a commissioner to inspect the work in the new community. Having completed his mission he invited Mr. Archer and Philip to accompany him back to London—a visit which consumed a month, during which time these three men were much in each other's company. Philip, now speaking English quite well, and having many things in common with William Archer, their acquaintance had grown into a strong friendship.

After the return journey from London to Cranbrook, which was made by the coach in a single day, Philip, the master weaver, was a frequent visitor at Mr. Archer's picturesque home near the

top of the High road. He became a favorite with the entire family. After supper all would gather around the great fire-place—Elizabeth Archer with her knitting, and the only daughter, Ellen, a beautiful girl of nineteen, sitting on the hearth with her head against her mother's knee, listening to the conversation between her father and Philip Landon. When conversation lagged, a song from the weaver would while away the hours, and as time went by, Ellen would join her sweet voice to his, dropping into some sweet, soft lullaby which would oft-times move the father and mother into slumberland. Then Philip, with a whispered good night to Ellen, would take his departure for the White Horse Inn, where he made his home.

The blustering landlord, one evening after the usual late visit to the Archer home, met him at the doorway of the inn with a sly remark about the wonderful attraction that petticoats had for young men, and wanted to know when the bans would be published. To this greeting Philip only stared a blank reply; then as the meaning of those words dawned upon him, he blushed to the roots of his auburn hair, and stammered a question as to what he meant. "I mean that if the bans are not to be published for a marriage between you and Ellen Archer, it is high time you made your visits briefer and your calls less frequent." Philip was more dazed than ever. He had never seen the landlord so serious and he had not presumed to think of marriage with William Archer's beautiful daughter, and so told the interfering boniface,

whose reply astonished him still more. He was asked 'what he thought he was invited to Archer's home for, if his attentions to Ellen were not approved of, and if it were not an invitation for the spider to come in and capture the fly, if she were willing.'

Not a wink of sleep did Philip have on this memorable night. He planned bold assaults on the heart of the merchant's daughter, and then trembled to think of such an act. He had always admired this sweet and sympathetic young woman, and now he blamed himself for a hundred imaginary faults. He felt that he must already have given his friend grievous cause for complaint, and he sought long for the way to make amends. He thought of Ellen as his wife, and then there came back to him the air-castles of long ago, and of Kate Bastogne. But Kate—oh, well, she had forgotten him, and no doubt was happy as the wife of some other man. The more he thought of these things the more lonesome his life seemed, till with the dawn of day he determined to speak to Ellen's father, and if he should approve, then to lose no time in winning the love of the daughter; if not, he would be more careful in the future, and would not be such a frequent visitor at the timbered house on the High road.

All went well with his plans, and he then began to suspect a reason for the tendency of the old folks to fall asleep at the fireside, and the frequency now with which Mr. Archer's rheumatism attacked him and required the attention of his wife, so that

these young people (contrary to good form even in those early days) were frequently left alone to watch the dying embers and to point out to each other the pictures in the glowing coals upon the hearth. There was a strong and sympathetic bond between these lovers, without actions or words to express it, for they were contented with each other's silent company. Each in turn would steal sly glances at the other, till one evening when Philip had been silent a longer time than usual, he fixed his eyes on the sweet face of Ellen and simply said: "I love you, Ellen; I would that you should be my wife. I, a foreigner, have taken your country as a home; will you take a foreigner to be your lover and protector? For the heart of a Fleming beats as true and as warm as an Englishman's, and mine is true and yearns in truth for you." Ellen did not need time to think. She had been waiting for that moment a long, long time, and she merely placed her hand in his, her head dropping upon his shoulder and from her lips came forth a sigh of ecstasy and joy.

The bans were duly published; the wedding-day soon came, and on that occasion the parish church was filled, and Ellen, beautiful in the picturesque costume of the brides of long ago, was made the wife of the Flemish weaver, and as was then the custom, and is even to this day, their pathway from the church was strewn with wool, the symbol of his trade—wool for the weaver, leather for the shoemaker, shavings for the carpenter. And so it came to pass that the last bribe of the

English ambassador was paid, for an English merchant had given his daughter to be a Flemish weaver's wife.

The darkest hour, which is just before the dawn, is no greater contrast to what follows than the depths of despair which may follow the rise to the highest pinnacle of happiness, and in this case little did Philip know that soon dark days were to come for all England, when the great plague would sweep the fair land, and not even beautiful Cranbrook would be spared.

Philip and his wife lived in the Archer home where a year of unusual happiness was spent. Then came the plague in all its force, blighting all their hopes. William Archer was one of the first to die, in the awful agony of those days, and then his good wife. People gave no thought to self. Philip and Ellen were everywhere on errands of mercy, till that fatal hour arrived, when the plague came upon Ellen at a workman's house where all but the mother had passed away. Philip took her in his arms and bore her swiftly to their home. Frantically did he try to save her precious life; in agony did he pray for her deliverance, but the sweet, young life went out on the anniversary of the day he first told her of his love.

She was laid beside her father and mother in the church-yard, and over her was placed a stone, carved by a husband's loving hands. The broken slab, with the almost obliterated inscription, can now be seen, where for more than five centuries it has marked the sacred spot.

Little time could then be given up to grief, and not till a merciful God stayed the hand of the destroyer did Philip give way to his own sorrows. One evening when the moon shed her silvery light over those fair hills, he sat upon the grave where he had buried the dearest treasure of his heart. The bleating of a stray lamb came floating over the hills; the crying of an infant in a near-by cottage could be heard; a gentle breeze fanned his heated brow, for a storm had begun to gather, and was soon raging in his troubled soul. No longer could the tears be kept in the bursting fountains, and he wept. His whole nature shook in the intensity of his sorrow. It was late—near the midnight hour, when Old Father Time was said to come down from his place upon the crumbling stone tower of the parish church to mow the grass between the graves—when a temporary calm came over him. As he rose from the ground the midnight hour was struck upon the bells, and as he turned, there stood in his pathway an old man with long, white beard, a sheet wrapped around his bony frame, and in his hand a scythe. In terror Philip Landon sank exhausted upon the earth, and then he heard a voice in deep tones saying to him :

“ This is no time for grief,
For your days on earth are brief;
The length of life is but a span:
’Tis time new work you now began.”

And the voice continued :

“ See these crumbling, holy walls;
See these cramped and crowded stalls;
Build you here a worthy place,
Where the Lord may show his face.”

The dew was heavy when he awoke. A fever raged within his brain. The old sexton, passing that way, lifted him from his grassy bed and took him to his home, where, for many weeks, he lay nigh to the point of death.

The good priest often sat by his side when the fever left him, and to him he told the vision in the church-yard, and of him he sought counsel as to what the strange words meant. But to this good man the interpretation was entirely plain. The old church was too small and the walls were weak. Philip Landon's work was to begin its reconstruction, to which he cheerfully pledged himself and the cloth workers of the town. Soon afterwards began the rebuilding of the main portion of the beautiful parish church of St. Dunstan, which stands today in the midst of Cranbrook town.

Two years after this time Philip went on a visit to his old home in Bruges. Scant news had come to him, and he longed to return. Besides, since Mr. Archer's death he had fallen heir to his business and lands, which required him often to make visits to London and Calais. The trade with Bruges was not as flourishing as formerly and so he concluded to combine some work with his anticipated pleasure.

Without notice of his coming, the cloth-weaver of Flanders and merchant of England stepped upon the shores of his native land, and when he reached the town of his youth, only a pale streak of light in the eastern sky told that the day had

also arrived. Only the noise of his footfalls upon the pavement broke the stillness of the air as he walked through the streets and over many bridges, till the tile-roofed cottage of his boyhood home was reached. Early as it was, he knew if his mother were well she would be stirring around, and so he crept softly up the path and walked into the low-ceilinged living-room, where he saw his good mother brushing up the cinders on the hearth and humming to herself an old familiar tune. She turned at the first noise, while still upon her knees, and fixed her eyes upon the intruder an instant, and then Philip lifted her to her feet, and in silence they embraced.

There was excitement in that little home at once, and neighbors were called in to rejoice, "for her Philip had returned"—and what a fine boy he was. Every new-comer had to be told the story of his days in Cranbrook; and, with no little patience, he went over it again and again. When his aunt came to join in the welcome, her first words were, "Oh! won't Kate be glad to see him." Then the memory of old days came back again, and after a time he quietly asked his mother who Kate Bastogne had married, and to his astonishment was told that Kate had never married. She was happy and loved by everyone, but Kate cared not for marriage, or at least did not seem to, since Philip left six years before.

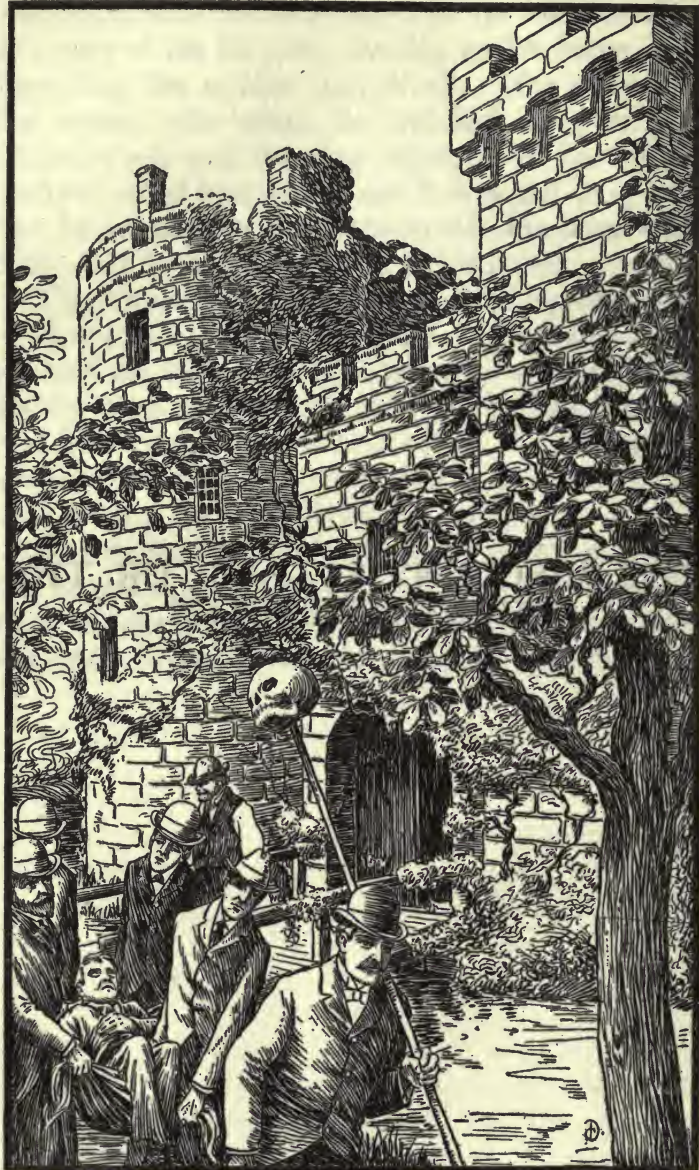
The reader will guess what happened before his return to England, so it will suffice to say, when he met Kate—the friend of other days—their

friendship was kindled anew, as he told her the full story of his life since the day he left home, not forgetting the saddest part of all. She wept for the young wife whom he had laid away in the church-yard, and the deep sincerity of her sympathy touched him again, and it was not long before he asked Kate Bastogne to take the place that Ellen Archer had left vacant in his home.

They went together, a month later, to England—back to the Cranbrook home. Together they planned an addition to that beautiful old dwelling on the High road, which they made their home; and here were born to them seven children, who grew up to do honor to the name of Landon; here was spent a life full of love, joy and peace.

The visitor to Cranbrook town today can see the beautiful old timbered house, well worn with age, which, since the days of this tale, has been the home of many an artist and poet of renown.

**THE VISCOUNT'S TALE; OR THE
GHOST OF BODIAM.**



THE VISCOUNT'S TALE; OR THE GHOST OF BODIAM.

AFTER some days of delightful ramblings and delvings into ancient places, I had left Cranbrook and was seated in a compartment of a third-class carriage of the express for London, isolated from the rest of the travelers excepting Viscount — and his thoroughly English wife, and an American lady and her young daughter, now residents of Paris, who were away for a quick journey to London and then back to the more cleanly but less hospitable city now their adopted home.

I was enthusiastic over my visit to the birth-place of my paternal ancestors, and after the first exchange of travelers' courtesies was disposed to share with my fellow-passengers some of my enthusiasm, and for the entertainment of the little American girl, who evinced a great interest in English ghost stories, I told of the ghost of St. Dunstan's, which, though a simple tale, I will relate here.

The Cranbrooker, like nearly all Englishmen, is fascinated by the mysterious, and no Kentish or other English home is quite complete without its ghost or smaller mystery.

The village church-yards all have their white-robed midnight wanderers, which mayhap were invented long ago to keep children at the fireside in the evening instead of wandering through the streets in search of mischief, and a belief in such

things is strongly rooted. One evening many years ago a group of men sat over their mugs of ale at The Bull, exchanging, between sips and pulls at their pipes, the latest gossip, till the conversation finally turned upon the mystery of the crypt of St. Dunstan's. The story was told by a credulous farmer, and was quickly laughed at by a skeptical butcher, who boasted that he would as soon go alone at midnight into the crypt and smoke his pipe upon the last coffin resting there as to cut a rib from the fresh carcass of a sheep. And so a wager was made, the boaster to go down into the dark cavern beneath the church and drive a nail into the head of a coffin known to be resting there ready for interment, his friends to wait for him without till the "dare devil" task had been performed.

And so he went, and in due time from the chilly depths came the sound of the hammer as it fell steadily upon the nail head—then a moment of silence prevailed, followed by a shriek which echoed through the arches of the church and out through the doorway upon the chilly night air till it froze the waiting friends to the pavement, paled their faces and all but stopped their hearts from beating.

The terrifying cries continued, and it was many minutes before the waiting men recovered their courage and decided to sacrifice themselves if necessary in an effort to rescue their friend from the clutches of the spectral denizen of the stone-walled chamber beneath the church.

With lanterns and candles held in one hand and

stout sticks in the other, four trembling but courageous men filed down the narrow stone steps. In a far distant corner of the crypt they could see the flicker of a candle light, and thither they wended their way. There they saw the big form of the butcher, struggling in an agonizing effort to escape from an invisible fiend, which held him. He was trembling with exhaustion and chattering incoherently like a madman, but still the invisible terror held him.

With quaking knees the four brave men continued their approach, the peril of their friend, as they drew near, strengthening their failing nerves. With lifted lights and staves they rushed to his rescue, the one farthest in advance falling over some object on the floor and plunging forward; the others, in their haste and excitement, followed him to the pavement, their lights being extinguished in their fall. Now the gloom and the dancing shadows from the one candle upon the coffin lid renewed their fear, and they lay as dead men upon the floor, for some moments not daring to rise, while upon their ears fell the sound of the struggles of the butcher and his rambling chatter. His legs no longer strong enough to support his weakened frame, he was now feebly struggling upon his knees; his eyes, lit up with the terror which filled his being, were like fiery lamps in the darkness, and his tongue was protruding from his parched lips.

The friends crept still closer upon their knees in the darkness. Then in the faint light they could

see more clearly—could see the coffin, the candle, the hammer. Something mysteriously held firmly the flowing coat tails of the butcher, who was now a raving maniac. And as they came closer, in the most abject fear—devotion to a friend in peril still drawing them on—the one farthest in advance, in almost demoniacal glee, rent the air with a strange, half-laughing cry: “The nail! see! the nail holds him!”

In his haste the butcher had driven the nail through his own coat while sitting on the coffin lid, and turning to leave the place and claim the wager, felt a tug at his coat tails. A ghost, surely, was holding him, and terror took possession of his soul and his terrifying cries rent the air.

They carried him out of the church, a madman—a harmless creature, but to his dying day trembling in renewed terror if touched from behind by even a sympathetic friend.

“Ah!” said the viscount, “that is a gloomy ghost, indeed. English ghosts are not all such steely myths; but are creatures we cherish and protect. Once a year we have a visitor at our home. Who she is, or where she comes from we know not, neither do we know when to expect her.

“Each succeeding generation of the family determined to solve the mystery of the lady dressed in black, but each in turn has ceased to follow her mysterious wanderings, and have been content to get a glimpse of her when she comes.

“It was one night during Christmas season last

year, after I had retired, but lay awake chatting with my wife over the events of the day, that we heard the rustle of a silk gown and the sound of light footsteps passing through the room; then we saw the stately figure of the mysterious 'visitor' pass through the door out into the long corridor.

"Hastily we determined to follow and, if we could, find her hiding place. As we emerged from our room she was some fifty feet in advance down the dimly-lit hall, and we hastened our footsteps after her, but whether we walked fast or slow, the richly-gowned figure of the 'lady in black' maintained the same distance between us. We could hear the rustle of her skirts; we could see the movements of her arms, and as she turned the corner of the corridor we could see the outlines of a beautiful face.

"On we went through the hall and down the stairway into the dining room, where the coals still burned upon the hearth, casting a red glare upon the walls. But she never stopped. Turning to the left, the mysterious figure entered the carved doorway leading to a small room from which there was no other door and in which was only one small grated window. We hastened forward and stood outside the doorway, plainly visible in the light of the fire, feeling sure we should now meet our proud and gentle lady face to face.

"In the darkness of the room where she had entered we then saw a small blue flame rise toward the candles, which we knew stood upon the mantel-piece, the uncertain light being enough to mark

the dark outlines of a woman's form. The little blue flame touched one candle after another, the 'lady in black' fading away before our eyes as the light grew brighter.

"She had gone. The candles burned brightly—we were foiled again in our efforts to meet this beautiful and mysterious visitor to our home.

"But," continued the viscount: "You have just come from Cranbrook. Near by that old town is the ancient Castle of Bodiam—some eighteen miles distant, but not far when you pass through such beautiful country and over such splendid roads.

"It is now some twenty years since I walked over the moat which surrounds the mighty structure, for years the dwelling place of nobles and later of unsolvable mysteries, not to speak of some mysteries which have been solved after the loss of the lives of men more courageous than prudent.

"It was a short time previous to my visit that one exposure of a ghost mystery took place. In fact it was the story of it that drew me there. Being a visitor at a friend's home near Cranbrook, one evening when taking a ride we came upon an inn within sight of Bodiam Castle, where a pleasant chat with the landlord brought from him this story and led to my visit to the castle next day.

"For many years, owing to its smallness, this inn was unable to meet the demands of travelers, and for the accommodation of unexpected guests the landlord obtained permission to use several rooms in the old castle, and to this place were sent

such as cared to avail themselves of its privileges.

“All went well enough for a long time, till owing to some unusual slackness of travel the rooms in the castle remained unoccupied. Perhaps three years elapsed before they were again called into use, the first of the guests being a man of middle age, who congratulated himself upon the good fortune of having an opportunity to lodge for a night within the walls of so grand and ancient a palace. The story of that night's experience in Bodiam was never told, for as the man did not put in an appearance at the inn next morning the porter was sent to look for him, and as he approached the entrance to the castle he saw the dead body of the missing guest lying face downward in the dry bed of the moat.

“It was some time before anyone else would consent to sleep at Bodiam, although lovers of adventure are common enough in England.

“The landlord, an honest fellow, would offer the hospitality of the castle rooms, but never failed to tell the story of the unfortunate man. In time, however, a young officer of the army hailed with delight the very possibility of adventure. Next morning he, too, was found dead beneath the walls.

“Then began to be heard roundabout stories of mysterious lights to be seen at night time in the windows of the place; phantom figures were reported to appear above the battlemented walls, and Bodiam was said to be haunted, and the two men who had so mysteriously lost their lives were now

supposed to have been dropped from the tower walls by phantom giants.

“It was many a day before anyone would go near the old place after nightfall, for while Englishmen like to talk of ghosts, few care to court the chance of meeting the murderous kind.

“The landlord of the inn was now at his wits’ end to care for the guests, and yet hardly had courage to offer the castle rooms to any traveler, and when he did was usually laughed at for his trouble.

“An American from the western plains came that way one day, demanding the best the little inn afforded, and charming everyone with his good nature, keeping them long beyond the hours of moonrise with the stories of life in the great land beyond the sea. The other guests at last rather reluctantly going to their beds, he, too, thought it time to seek a place of rest, and calling to the landlord asked to be shown to his room, being not a little astonished with the reply that not a bed was to be had in the house—he could do no better than to let him rest where he was as best he could; ‘unless,’ said he, ‘you want a chance for a little English adventure, and care to take a room at Bodiam.’

“‘Capital!’ said he, and the landlord almost dropped the candle from his hand in astonishment. ‘Show me the way and I will solve the mystery of Bodiam, or you will pick my bones also from the castle moat.’

“His guide only went far enough to point the

way up the stairway to the ancient room, and to wish the foolhardy fellow pleasant dreams; then he fled.

“Our American friend thought less now of sleep than he had an hour previous. In a castle at night-time was a new experience—and a haunted castle—surely, now he would be a new kind of hero to friends at home.

“Before retiring he climbed the turret stairway and viewed the outlines of the castle from that lofty place, and took a view of the star-lit landscape, sitting upon the wall some time smoking a cigar and musing over the perishing works of men, it being after midnight when he descended and sought his room, which he found to be a large chamber with two windows. A great canopied bed stood at one side. The ceiling was of oak, and at intervals there were holes through the panels, apparently for ventilation. A high wainscoting ran around the room; a heavy door was located exactly in the middle of each of the three sides, the bed standing on the remaining one, just between the two tall, narrow windows. A few time-mellowed portraits hung upon the walls; a copper ewer and basin stood upon a small table in one corner, and the other furnishings were two roughly carved chairs of ancient pattern.

“After this rather minute survey of the room, Richard Varlow took from his satchel two large pistols and examined them carefully, that he might be certain of their readiness should there be any occasion for their use; then he placed

one beneath his pillow and the other in his boot at the bedside ready to his hand, and removing his outer garments only, he placed a new candle behind the ewer on the stand so that there would be a little light in the gloomy room, but not enough to disturb his slumbers. Then he went to bed and tried to give himself up to sleep.

“Visions of all kinds danced through an imaginative brain. The ticking of his watch in the dense silence of the place sounded louder and louder as the moments passed. Then he counted the seconds to quiet his restless brain, until an hour had passed, when to the watch-ticks was added a rumbling and strange roaring sound like the rush of wind through some small opening. Upon his ear fell the mumbling sound of unnatural voices; after this, for a space, all was quiet.

“Varlow, now wide awake, lay upon his back motionless, all his senses alert, and as he lay there the door at one end of the room opened noiselessly and closed again but no one entered, as far as he could see. A moment later the other doors opened and closed in the same way. A breath of frosty air swept across the room, followed by a burning hot one; and drops of icy moisture fell upon his face; then in the dim candle light some dark object cast a shadow on the wall for an instant and the light went out, the densest darkness filling his chamber.

“Our now excited guest cast his eyes about the room in search of some object. A slight sound in the direction of the door to the right indicated that

it was again being swung open upon its noiseless hinges. This time there appeared a tall figure, which by its stature and movements seemed to be a man. A strange light radiated from the sheet which apparently covered it. The door was closed quietly and the spectre advanced steadily till it stood at the foot of the bed. Like two great wings the huge arms were extended, and the phosphorescent light gave the giant figure a ghostly look, in keeping with the nature of those beings so often told of.

“Varlow lay upon his bed motionless and filled with fear, forgetting his weapons, being entranced with the spectral visitor.

“Then the vision spoke in a hoarse whispered voice and said: ‘I am here, Richard Varlow to show you the way to your eternal resting place. You have one more hour only upon this earth, and I have come so that you may be ready when I call again.’ Then the American found his tongue, and asked: ‘Who are you that dare come and disturb my rest?’ ‘I am the spirit of Frederick Arkell, whom your brother killed in California. It was I who called him to his grave last year! I have come now across the ocean for you—prepare to follow me.’ ‘But how do I know you are Arkell? Surely you will give me some proof? How do I know that I am not dreaming?’ ‘Then you shall know, for by the light of the fire which shall pour from my mouth you shall see my face beneath this deathly veil.’ Then from the spectre’s lips poured forth a shower of fiery sparks, and he saw before him the

face of Arkell, who, report had said, was killed by Varlow's brother in a quarrel, but whose body was never found.

"Then the spectre stood beside his bed, and reaching out a great luminous hand took hold of the wrist of Varlow in a vice-like grasp till the terrified man cried aloud with pain.

"In the center of the room there was a great flash of light, a loud report, and the ghost of Frederick Arkell had vanished. Sixty minutes of calm and deathly silence prevailed, then Varlow remembered his weapons and took one in each hand. The touch of these old friends gave him new courage, and bolstering himself up he lay half reclining and hoping he might have another chance to reckon with the same restless spirit from the world beyond the grave, as he was ready to resist being led to his own grave by Arkell's spirit should it return, as it had said it would.

"In a moment the room was again lit up with a mystic light. This time a red glare from above was cast about the room and looking upward there appeared a grinning skull of fire moving first downwards and then towards him. As it came nearer he felt the heat growing hotter. It came on steadily, and as the burning object approached, Varlow moved away, till the terrible thing drove him into a corner and the heat almost burned him—he felt hot fingers at his throat, and the same hoarse whisper he had heard before said: 'Your hour has come.'

"Being driven to the last extremity, Varlow's

courage returned, and remembering his pistols he fired at the seething skull, the echoes of the shots ringing through the old castle walls.

“The ghastly burning thing retreated, each ball from the well-directed shots leaving a black mark upon its red-hued features. On this sign of defeat the American’s courage rose higher, and the man who fought red devils on the American plains now pressed forward to the fight with this red devil from the realms of hell. Out through the door went the retreating spectral skull. It halted for a moment right at the brink of the stairway, when the castle halls now echoed with a groan, and the fiery skull went rolling down the ancient stairs, lighting up as it went, some dark object bounding and tumbling with it.

“In the darkness Varlow could see the skull now lying still on the floor below, only a dull red color, and he heard groans as of one in mortal pain. He stood motionless for a time, riveted to the spot, wondering what fearful thing his bullets had lodged in.

“Back to his room he groped his way, and lighting the candles, hastily dressed, and again loading his pistols sat down upon the bed to wait for the dawn of day, which was near at hand.

“About four o’clock he ventured to go to the stair-top and look down, and there he saw below a black skull with a long iron bar protruding from the back of it, and the body of a man covered with a black cloth, his legs only being visible.

“Cautiously Varlow went down the step, hold-

ing a pistol in each hand, and when he came near enough gently touched the prostrate form with his foot.

“A groan came from beneath the sombre shroud. Then he took hold of one corner and pulled the cloth away, when before the astonished American’s eyes lay Frederick Arkell, his face covered with blood, groaning in great pain. Richard Varlow quickly dropped his pistols, and after wiping the blood from the wounded man’s face he took a flask of brandy from his pocket, placing it to Arkell’s lips, and under the influence of the ‘invigorator’ he revived somewhat and opened his eyes. He tried to talk, but Varlow bade him be silent and rest, while he went for help. Returning soon, with the landlord of the inn and several guests who had made a hasty toilet, they found the wounded man and carried him to the inn, one of the men lifting the iron skull with the leaden bullets clinging to its surface upon his shoulders and taking it to the inn also.

“For three days the wounded ‘man’ or ‘spectre’ lay unconscious, under the constant care of Varlow, who was still so mystified with his strange experience that he hoped his patient might live to clear up some of the ‘unexplainable.’

“On the fourth day he rallied somewhat, and towards evening turned upon his pillow and Frederick Arkell looked full into the face of Richard Varlow and smiled a painful smile. After a time he began to speak, first saying he knew he could not live long.

“‘Richard,’ he at length said, ‘I am Frederick Arkell, whom you supposed your brother killed, but I was carried away and nursed by an Indian woman, and so my ‘dead body’ was never found. When I got better, I sought your brother, and no one knowing of my presence, I was able to cause his mysterious death. After that I came to England, and failing of other employment, I took up with some counterfeiters, and in time we located in Bodiam Castle, keeping people away from our haunt by playing upon their fear of ghosts, and killing any so bold as to come there when we plied our trade at night.

“‘I saw you at the inn. I heard you say you were ready to dare the ghosts of Bodiam, and I planned to give you a warm reception. The white luminous sheet I wore on my first visit was saturated with phosphorus. The fire I blew from my mouth was the same that mystic artists use upon the stage. The hot air and the cold air you alternately felt as you lay in bed were made by lowering a hot iron through the hole in the ceiling above your bed, and then a cake of ice in the same way.

“‘But what,’ asked Varlow, ‘was the black creature I saw which put out the candle?’ ‘Only a bat which was disturbed from the ceiling! The skull I heated in our furnace to a red heat, and robing myself in black I carried it with the rod in front of me, it first being lowered by a wire from above by an accomplice; and while you were looking at it above you, I came in at the door.

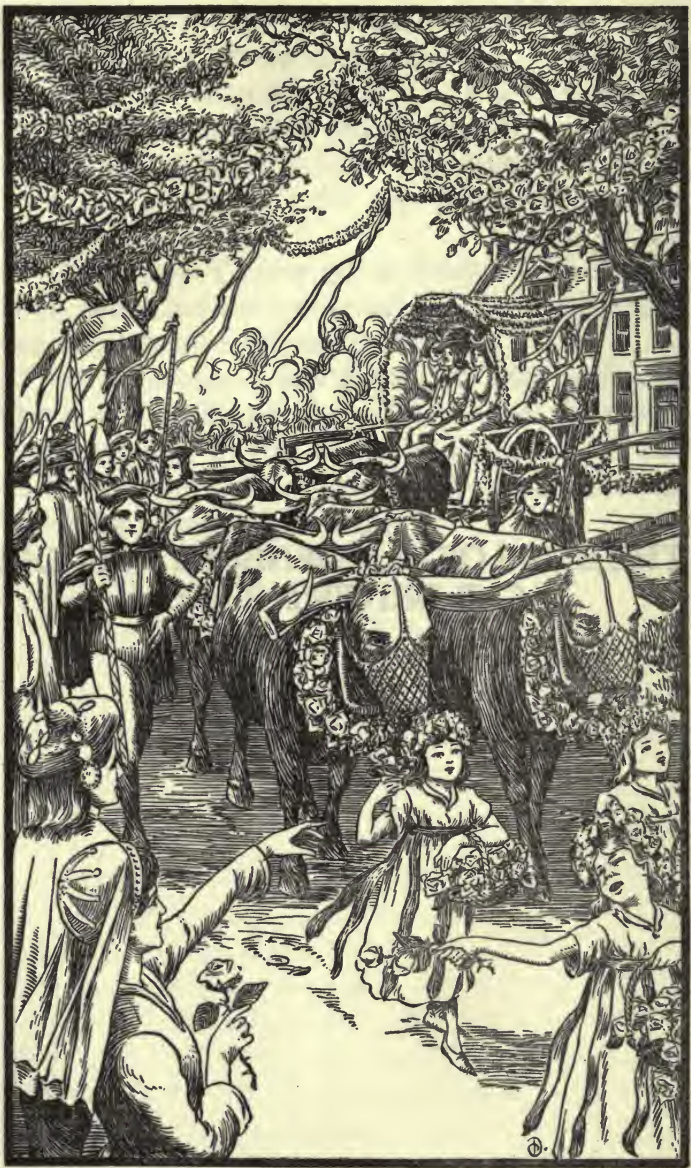
‘But what was that flash of light and noise when you first disappeared after almost breaking my wrist in your awful grip?’ ‘I simply fired a pistol, well loaded with powder, and at the same instant sprang quickly from the room, and when I returned I forgot to take my pistol with me, so was at your mercy.’

“This story Varlow got in fragments from the sorely wounded man, who when he had proceeded thus far, fainted from exhaustion.

“He lived only a few days after this, and was buried in a field near by. They found the counterfeiters’ shop in the castle, as he had said, but his companions had vanished, and so perished the last of the Ghosts of Bodiam.”



**THE BRIDE OF GLASSENBURY ; OR THE
CAB DRIVER'S TALE.**



THE CAB-DRIVER'S TALE; OR THE BRIDE OF GLASSENBURY.



ATURDAY evening in Cranbrook town has its special charm. It is then that the lads and lassies turn out in greatest numbers, in their best village garb. This last evening of the week has settled many a momentous question of Kentish hearts. The shop windows are gaily lit; the village butcher plies his trade vigorously; the hand-organ man has just arrived in town, and the air is full of enchanting, but oft-times questionable, harmony. The town moves up and down the principal streets, and shortly after curfew hour the busy scene has ceased, and Cranbrook town begins to go to sleep.

A huckster, with his two-wheeled cart, stood by the roadside; a smoky, flickering gasoline lamp cast weird lights into the faces of the idlers, who hung around his fast-disappearing stock of periwinkles. A little heap of shells and crawling creatures lay in the corner. A bottle of vinegar, some hot sauce, horse-radish and a few earthen dishes stood there for the use of the passer-by who should have a special craving for the strange morsel which made me shudder as they disappeared within the ivory palisades of the mouth of some hardy subject of the hills and fields.

Near by, a cab driver sat on the box of his time-worn vehicle. His head hung low, as did his horse's, showing a close relationship between the two. I was planning how the morrow was to be

spent, so hailed this representative of the human encyclopedias of England, without which the traveler would be sorely at sea, and as one creature the heads of horse and man were lifted; and a few words of conversation satisfied me that there would be no lack of interest in the drive which I would take next day.

It was Sunday afternoon when cabby drew rein at the inn and I embarked in his rolling vessel for a country ramble. "Take me," I said, "over the hills, through all the by-roads, and if you come nigh Glassenbury, let me have a look at the house with the moat around it." "That I will," said he; "a rare place is Glassenbury, and a place long to be remembered."

About four o'clock we halted at the lodge. Through the white barred gateway I looked down an avenue of emerald, temptingly cool. To a whistled summons the lodge-keeper's wife came and threw open the gate. Once within the walls of Glassenbury park the visitor forgets the outside world.

I was inclined to sit quietly back in my seat and rest and gaze and drink in the beauties around me. But with cabby it was different. If he had been the owner of the great estate, he could not have been prouder of it. A few turns of the carriage-wheels, and the horse would stop, seemingly without a sign or word or the slightest tug on the reins, and Roberts—for such was my pilot's name—turning in his seat, with the air of an artist, called my attention to the beautiful colors of the

lights and shadows among the trees. At this hour the sun filtered through the foliage, being reflected downward from leaf to leaf, till in broken patches it fell gently and uncertainly upon the ground. The deep shadows in the firs and pines and oaks I saw were in reality beautiful shades of blue, gray and purple, changing with every flutter of a leaf or the swaying of the branches, moved backward and forward by a gentle zephyr from the south.

Roberts took great care to tell me that his name, while the same as the present owner of Glassenbury, did not give him any claim to the beautiful home of the ancient family of Roberts, the descendants of which still dwelt there and kept alive the honorable name and traditions which clung to the grand old manor resting so peacefully in the meadows in the midst of the garden of nature.

A stone bridge spans the moat, the waters of which encircle and thus cut off all access to the mansion. There is something strange in the feeling which comes over me when I stand outside these old homes which sit in the midst of a basin of water. They seem to tell in silence romantic stories, and legends of ghosts and mystic deeds. I have an intense longing to pass beyond the waters and to go within the walls hallowed by generations of childish voices, of valiant men and lovely women. I want to see the antlered halls—their oaken ceilings, dark with the hearthsmoke of ages. I want to see the unspeaking inhabitants who dwell so patiently upon their canvas or oaken beds, within the limits of cracked and tarnished frames,

and read in their faces the story of their lives, both noble and otherwise.

Roberts evidently thought I had forgotten his presence in my abstraction; and fearful, perhaps, of offending the dwellers of the place, he hoarsely whispered that he would drive on a bit where, in a more secluded spot, I could have a good view of the house, and he could show me the grave of Jaffa, the great Napoleon's favorite charger, which carried him through the battle of Waterloo, and who, like his master, had died an unwilling exile upon foreign soil, though tenderly cared for till the limit of his days. We halted not far distant, flanking a giant spruce, where I sat looking intently upon the beautiful scene spread out before me. The somber gray walls of the house had a new interest from this point, and even when the red sky of approaching evening cast a warm light over it there was still a lack of homeliness, as there was a lack of any signs of life.

"Roberts," I said, "don't you know anything about the history of this place or the people who have lived here? In the parish church I saw the marble record of a long line of descendants of the family whose illustrious name you carry." "Indeed I do, sir; and some things I know make my eyes dim with tears when I tell about them, and so now, unless I am asked, I don't say anything. Many times I have sat here, with my eyes half closed, and I have seen pictures of people and scenes of days of long ago, and when before me comes the joyous or the sad face of the bride of Glassenbury,

then the picture is shut out from my view by the salt tears that fill my eyes, even as the water yonder fills the moat."

"Ah, but you must tell me all you know, Roberts—tell me of this bride; surely there was more than one bride of Glassenbury?" "Oh, yes," said he, "but only one whose life we know much about. A sad memory clings to that one, which will never be forgotten.

"The father of the gentleman who now lives here often used to tell the story, and many times I have listened to him tell it, just as you would read it in a story book. I shall be glad, sir, to tell you all I remember; and some say I don't forget much that the old gentleman used to tell.

"When Charles II., the merry monarch of England, was conducting his disgraceful court in London, and reveling in the company of lewd women, whom he loaded down with titles and other kingly favors, this great estate passed to the younger of two daughters, who had been the joy and pride of the family since the day her mother first held her to her breast—a tiny, blue-eyed cherub, from the blissful habitation of infants. The whole country round knew this lovely girl as she grew older. They called her the princess, and would gladly have paid homage to her as a sovereign. She was skillful at the butts; her well-aimed arrow seldom missed the target. She rode her splendid chestnut horse without tiring and without fear. Over the hills, she was wont to go, with her golden hair streaming behind her. She had a smile and a kind word

for everyone ; she had comforts for the sick ; she had bread or a purse for the hungry. She loved and was beloved, and she trusted and believed, as she was trusted and believed by all who knew her.

“Over Bedlam stile there came one day a handsome fellow ; his horse, trembling after a reckless ride, was tied to an oak near by. He came swaggering up the well-worn foot-path, a broad-brimmed hat upon his head, in which waved a stunning plume ; a brilliant waistcoat, great loose-topped boots, a riding coat of buckskin loosely covering a rich garment of velvet, completed his costume. His sword clanked against his boots and spurs ; on the finger of one bare hand gleamed a ruby ring. The birds, the trees, the flowers and everything seemed to absorb his attention. Often he was on bended knee plucking dog-roses and other flowery denizens of some protected spot ; and soon he held a great bunch of fragrant blossoms in his hand. He continued his ramble for an hour or more, through field, garden and wood, until he came to a spot where a rift in the woods gave him a view of Glassenbury house, and he sat down upon a stone near an unfrequented roadway, marked only with a few half-faded hoof prints of some rider’s mount.

“In this deserted spot sat a duke who had fled from the intoxications of the licentious palaces of his father, satiated with their nastiness and corruption, and had chosen the country for a resting place. Here sat the profligate Duke of St. Albans (whose mother was an orange girl, who loved not

wisely but whom the king loved madly) communing with nature ; talking to the flowers he held in his hands ; cursing the folly of the life to which his inborn passions had made him such a slave.

“In the distance could be heard some rider, coming rapidly towards where he sat. A moment later, at a bend in the roadway, there flashed into view a young woman, riding a chestnut mare over brush, stones and roots, as if life depended upon her mission.

“The duke drew back a pace or two ; but the gleam of the sun upon his silver sword sheath was enough to startle the flying steed, and the sure-footed beast tripped upon a root and went upon her knees, her radiant and happy rider being thrown upon the tender brush and leaves, falling almost at the feet of the duke, who partly caught her as she fell.

“Tenderly, he laid her for an instant upon the soft leaves ; but she was not hurt, and quickly leaped to her feet, her face suffused with blushes ; she whistled for her horse, now some distance down the road. She begged the forgiveness of the stranger, upon whose reflections she had intruded, and he stammered some impossible explanation and ran to bring the wandering steed. He knelt upon his knees to aid her to mount. As she placed a dainty foot within a stirrup, he ventured to look upward, when his black eyes met full the blue which lit up the blushing loveliness of her face. Then his tongue loosened enough to say : ‘Oh, that heaven should be so good as to drop another

angel from the sky at my feet, who would stay with me forever.' 'And, good sir, whoever you may be, why are you in this desolate place alone? Surely angels do not dwell here, and only this accident has brought you my unceremonious company. So fine a gentleman should not be in such a lonely place.'

" 'I was enjoying the paradise of nature, away from the strife of the world and the gaiety of court. I have been plucking these flowers and reading a story in their petals—pray you, fair lady, take them as a token from a stranger, who here has seen the vision of an angel, pure and beautiful.' In her gloved hand she took the token, and bade him refresh himself at her father's house before he continued his journey. 'If you have a horse, mount and ride after me, and my mother shall thank you for your courtesy and set some Glassenbury wine for your refreshment.' And with a word to her restless mare, away she rode, leaving the duke to run for his horse, which he mounted quickly and, leaping the stile, took the shortest route after the flying vision of the wood. He pursued her with all the speed of which his good horse was capable; but she was comfortably resting in the great house ere he leaped to the ground and was greeted at the door.

"And so began an acquaintance, which was followed by many meetings at the roadside in the wood, and occasional visits at Glassenbury House, till the 'princess' was frequently seen riding through town and country with this 'fine gentle-

man,' who soon won the hearts of the good people, as had also his lady. On one of these rides, they were met by a companion of the duke's reckless days in London, who greeted him with congratulations—to the discredit of his lovely companion. The offender was soundly punished for his boldness, but when out of reach, this ungallant, named Baston, hied himself to the 'White Horse' at Cranbrook, and spread tales of the duke's profligate life. A loyal tenant drubbed him again ere his lips had barely spoken the slanders on the lover of his mistress. Others there were, however, whose ears were eager for gossip or scandal, and these spread the duke's disgrace far and wide, till friends of the golden-haired lady of Glassenbury House besought her to dismiss him. But she trusted as she was trusted—she believed as she was believed. He had told her something of the life at court; he had told her of his father and his mother, and she pitied him for their shortcomings and, with great charity, forgave them all. Her lover, she knew, had often done wrong; but he had bad parents. But he was striving now to break away from evil companions, and wanted to live in the country, where the air was pure, and in the elevating presence of the woman he had so unexpectedly met, and who had given him a new view of life.

“They were standing on the stone bridge over the moat one moonlight evening, looking into the dark waters below. The duke was dropping pebbles into the water, and together they were watching the ripples as they ran away and were

lost in the darkness. A marvelous silence rested over everything, which can be understood only by experiencing its intensity, standing on the self-same spot today.

“These lovers talked only in whispers, though there was no one to hear whatever they might say. ‘I think,’ said the duke, ‘that I ought to go away. I feel my unworthiness when I stand in your sacred presence. It is true I love the very stones upon which you stand; and I wish I were worthy to ask you to join your life to mine, fair and beautiful angel. Oh, that you might see some good in this wicked heart, and could purify the whole. But I ought to go away; I ought to leave you to some more worthy lover—I shall go into the cloister and spend my days in an effort to be worthy to even think of one so pure and good. Ah, pity me, dear friend, and say farewell. I shall go this night; yes, and why should I stay another moment when I love you as I do? Farewell, beautiful ‘princess of the weald.’”

“Already was Ann Roberts deeply touched, and as her lover moved away she reached out her hands, and with tears running down her cheeks, she cried, ‘Oh, come back, come back to me; the world would be dark without you. Go not away, good duke, I pray you. You will be good with me I know. God has already forgiven you for what you have done amiss, and I care not what people say. I love you even as you have loved me. Come back, come back.’ The duke was now on his knees praying forgiveness for his faults,

begging her to believe that it would cause him unending pain to leave her—which he could only do because he loved her.

“He took her hand in his, and drawing the ruby ring from his slender finger, pressed it upon hers and said: ‘Keep this, as a token that a stranger once loved you.’

“‘No! no!’ she cried; ‘I shall keep it as a token of our love for all time.’ ‘Beautiful angel,’ he said, ‘can you indeed love me so? Can you forget my past and have hope for the future? Would you indeed take me for a husband—will you take me as your lover and your lord?’ ‘Only,’ came the answer, ‘when this ruby loses its color, shall my love fail. I shall be proud of you as my lord; I shall strive to be your faithful wife, as I know you will be my true and noble husband.’

“When this tempest of love was over, each of the actors in the little drama were contented and happy with the outcome, and with arms encircling each other, slowly they walked beneath the great trees, the foliage so dense that even the moon could not look down upon their happiness. Here, in the solitude of the ‘living cloisters,’ a hundred times they again plighted their troth anew and sealed each vow in the way that lovers always do.

“It was soon arranged that the wedding should take place in the beautiful month of June, and the tongues of gossips and friends were set wagging merrily.

“The duke, good natured, fascinating as he always had been, and devoted to pleasure, made

merry with friends and enemies alike at the village inns where, with all his faults, he was voted a royal good fellow; the evening libations always ending with a toast to his highness and to the beautiful bride of Glassenbury.

“Royal splendor was to grace the festivities at the wedding, and the confiding Ann consulted the every wish of her affianced. Her own generous heart longed to pour out blessings on those less favored, and the duke wished to borrow the revelings of court life for so great an event. And thus it came to pass that Glassenbury would be given over to a series of fetes to last several days.

“Midst so much excitement time quickly passed and the month of roses came. Then only days were counted, till the time when joy and gladness would burst forth upon the air as never before. Villagers and gentle-folk were on the tiptoe of expectation, and now only a few old men and women, who loved Ann Roberts dearer than they loved their own lives, shook their heads and said the bridal path would be but the royal road to wretchedness.

“There was great commotion in Cranbrook town on the eve of the fourteenth of June. Guests began arriving early from London and all the country round. The first day’s festivities were to consist of a grand frolic in the park, with games, and refreshments to everyone who cared to come. And the gay friends of the duke, glad to forget even the pretense of dignity, were on hand looking forward to a royal romp with the jolly buxom

lasses of the weald. A company of these convivial and pleasure-loving gallants, full of cheer to the point of overflowing, sat late with the lucky bridegroom, to see go out the life of the libertine, and to welcome the virtuous days of wedded bliss. 'Ha, ha, ha,' they laughed. 'The duke—royal fellow—the duke will wed the gold and we will spend it. Ha, ha, ha—the duke will wed his bride and then forget her. Ha, ha!—I say, good duke, how much for your bride and her golden tresses, when you are tired of her? Jolly fellow—royal fellow. Long live the merry duke, and when his bride grows poor may he marry such another.'

"This same night Ann Roberts moved about the grand old house upon tiptoe; so great was the joy filling her heart that she seemed fearful of breaking the entrancing spell. Early she bade good night to her chosen, well-loved friends, and sought the seclusion of her chamber. Through the open window the mellow moonlight was streaming. The warm summer evening air was sweet with the perfume of roses, which hung in great clusters clinging to the casements. She looked out upon the perfect world within the circle of her vision, and she felt that nature smiled and blessed her. Upon her knees she dropped, her face turned upward to the sky; her hands reached upward to lay hold of the throne of grace, where, from an overflowing heart, praise and thankfulness were poured in a pure and fervent stream.

"Dancing, joyous, sparkling sunbeams burst into

her chamber early the next morning, and to the bright and happy greeting Ann Roberts arose, and calling to her maid, was soon in the garden gathering roses to send as a token to her lord. Each bud carried the sweetest of kisses, hidden in the dew-laden petals.

“At ten o’clock the lodge gate was thrown wide open to the eager crowd, many of whom, since sun-up, had waited impatiently for this moment. With them came minstrels and fools and merry-makers of every kind, till the meadows and the hills were thronged. The air was full of music and laughter, and when limbs and tongues were tired, the merry multitude sat down upon the green to a feast of plenty. Ann Roberts went about in a simple peasant’s dress, and joined in childish games. The duke, following her example, forsook his gay attire and with his friends mixed with the revelers. When evening settled down upon them all, nature’s nightly glories were enhanced with mystic devices of fiery rockets, and wheels and fountains of gold, green and red. The first day was ended, and tired and happy, Cranbrook and all the country round went this night to a peaceful rest, to dream of their own wedding days gone by or yet to come.

“For three days more the gates of Glassenbury and the doors of the mansion were wide open to hundreds who came with greetings and gifts. In the garden within the moat, refreshments were served in bowers of blossoms by prettily attired girls whose personal graces were a feast for hungry eyes,

while the bountifully-laden tables took ample care of the cravings of the inner man. On the fourth day, all the royal guests having arrived, the villagers were again invited; but this time only to witness the games and the grand parade in which the ladies and gentlemen were to take part.

“The duke and his prospective bride, mounted upon gaily-decked horses, led the long line of beautifully-gowned ladies and princely escorts through the great avenue and over the hills and meadows of the park, winding their way about till the leaders spurred their horses into a gallop, and the whole troop came over the tortuous road on a wild chase for the flying pair, who left them all far in the rear—to the amusement of the village folk, who greeted them with cheers.

“There were tilts, and wrestling and racing, and trials of skill with the long and the cross bow, and the distribution of costly favors to the winners. And the last day of the marriage feast closed with a great ball under the spreading trees of the avenue, which had been transformed into a fairy bower, with myriads of colored lights. As the duke, holding the hand of the beloved Ann, led the dancers in the march, a sweet song burst upon their ears from hundreds of voices hidden among the trees, followed by a burst of melody from many instruments; and thus the famous ball was opened, to close with the hour of midnight, amid a glare of fiery light which lit up the forests and hills till many thought the swaying oaks of Glassenbury had suddenly burst into flame.

“And then came the wedding day, as bright and fair as all the rest. The bells of the parish church, pealing merrily, summoned all to the happy and solemn service. And after the good priest had blessed the wedded pair, the bells again rang still more joyously, the multitude following the duke and his bride to her home, where a hearty and loyal welcome awaited them from the tenants and servants, who bade them partake of the wedding feast.

“While these events were transpiring, preparations were being made for the grand procession which was to escort the bridal party beyond the precincts of beautiful Glassenbury, on their way to London. Who the master of this ceremony was is not known, but it bespeaks a mixture of regal splendor and simplicity that we may well guess was the result of the joining of two minds—the one pure, and sweet and childlike, and the other proud and used to show and princely extravagance.

“From the house to the lodge gates the road was lined with gaily-dressed men, women and children. Festoons of flowers and ribbands hung from tree to tree. Banners in all colors streamed merrily, their bending staffs held in the hands of peasants costumed in blue and gold. A score of little girls in white, with wreaths of flowers upon their heads, carried baskets laden with freshly-picked blossoms. They stood just beyond the stone bridge which spans the moat, and upon the bridge itself was a chariot made from the great ox cart, decked with purple velvet and trimmed lavishly with

flowers of every hue. Seats were arranged along the sides for the brides-maids and in the center, a seat for the duke and his bride; and this strange but beautiful chariot was drawn by eight shiny black oxen with great spreading horns, newly yoked and groomed. About their necks hung wreaths, and at the side of each stood a herdsman in the costume of a royal page, bearing in one hand, his long goading staff gaily wound for the occasion with colored bands. A litter stood ready at the door to receive the bride, and when she appeared her husband assisted her into it, and strong attendants bore her to the side of the waiting ox chariot, where she was lifted up so that she could gain her seat with comfort. The duke took his place at her side, and next the maids. When all was ready, two heralds, preceding the flower girls, announced that the wedding feast was over and the journey to London had begun.

“The roadway was strewn with flowers, and slowly the beautiful oxen—whose kindred can still be seen in Cranbrook streets, yoked to homelier carts used for homelier purposes—moved on the journey, through a scene of surpassing beauty, midst joyous shouts and god-speeds, beyond the gates within which Ann Roberts had spent her life. The great estate was now her own, to bestow its fruitage upon whom she would. Now she had chosen; and in a waiting carriage away went the profligate Duke of St. Albans, with this pure, sweet bride of Glassenbury, who trusted and loved others, even as she was loved and trusted.

“ Their honey-moon was for the most part spent near the historic city of Warwick, and after some weeks of bliss in this romantic spot they returned to London, when there began the real life of a court attendant of that time, and then with the rising tide of revelings there swept over Ann Roberts an avalanche of misery and woe.

“ She was sitting in a secluded corner of a window in the palace drawing room one evening, with her eyes cast down to shut out from view a scene which was again, for the hundredth time, bringing sorrow to her heart, when a tall young man approached her hiding place, and throwing aside the curtains which only partly hid her from view, went boldly forward and sat himself down upon the seat beside her. She looked up and at a glance recognized the bold fellow Baston whom they had met on the highway near Cranbrook, and whom the duke had soundly thrashed for some insolence. She shrank from the stare which met her glance, but Baston, nothing daunted, moved still closer, and after vain attempts with idle pleasantries to excite an interest in himself, he brazenly addressed the sad-faced bride, and said in his happiest voice :

“ Come, my pretty lady, come with me. Let me listen to the charm of your sweet voice ; let me hold the pleasures of your beauty in my embrace ; let me drink from the intoxicating cup that has filled your lord to satisfaction and increased his desire for a stronger and less delicate draught of female flesh and blood. What ! you would not flee from me ? Am I a monster less worthy than

your ducal spouse? Come, pretty lady—you are now in the city. You are now where kings and queens have lived. Let us be merry; let us drink of the pleasures of life—forget your lord—let him sleep on the breast of his new-found mistress, and come flee with me to the realm of bliss till your wanderer returns.’

“‘Away with you—fiend and monster. Go bring back my wandering one and save him from these mad people. Oh, my good duke! let us away from this wretched place—let us back to the pure air of the woodland.’

“‘Ha, ha, ha! Poor deluded creature, and you think he cared for you! His love was the love for your gold, and now see how he enjoys it. See now, how he lays it at the feet of yon painted courtesan. Come to my arms, you golden-haired beauty, and I will love you to distraction.’

“‘You *lie*, vile monster; the duke does love me, and my love for him fills my heart to overflowing, even as my eyes are brimming with these tears. I shall go to him now—he will come at my bidding; we will fly from this wretched place. Come, my lord, come with me. Oh, how they have deceived you, my poor blind lover! Come—oh, come to me and let us fly to our home in the weald.

“But he spurned her—cast away the cup of sweet, pure water to drink of the flagon of gall and bitterness. For days and weeks, like a faithful dog, she followed his every footstep. The kicks and cuffs and abusive words she forgave, and in

the remembrance of her own heart washed his sins away with her tears. He had been swallowed up in the maelstrom of the licentious and worldly life of a debased court.

“From the hills of peace and purity, up which he had climbed to the topmost point of joy, he had plunged into the abyss from which the allurements of a beautiful life had almost saved him.

“As if in sympathy with the grief and misery of one poor soul, the heavens now poured down over England a deluge of rain. To Ann Roberts, it seemed that the world was weeping with her. A soul, most precious to her, had been lost—she could not save him. She had waded in the mire of sin herself, to try to pull him back; but he had gone on and on, plunging madly to his eternal doom.

“Such a storm in summer had never before been known in all England. The roads of Kent were like flowing rivers of mud. Cottages in the meadows were like vessels without sail or compass, for they seemed lost in the boundless sea of water. The highway alone stood above the flood—an uncertain passage for horse or man—but, like one fleeing from the city of destruction, the deserted bride, with a faithful maid, stopped not in her flight. She fled on to the garden where so short a time before the sun had shone so brightly. The sinewy coach horses, plunging and floundering over the frightful roads, stopped not for rut or stone or mire, water running in torrents from their smoking flanks, mud dripping from wheel and spring as on they

went, urged by the voice of the heart-broken returning bride.

“The night was upon them when in the gloom the flickering light of the lodge-keeper’s house of Glassenbury was visible. The gate stood open. From the lofty trees, bending their majestic trunks to the furious wind, dripped torrents of drenching rain, where only a few short weeks before fairy lamps and flowers had hung—where merry voices had sung glad songs; where only the silver light of happiness had shone—now were to be seen broken branches and torn shrubs and trees. From the depths of the forest came only the moaning and howling of the wind, the ceaseless patter of the rain upon the earth and leaves, and the solemn hoot of the owls from their houses in the hollow trees.

“Back to the home of her youth—to the home she loved, to the people who loved her; back where hearts were warm and true, came Ann Roberts, sad and broken hearted.

“With the ceasing of the storm and the return of sunshine, came rest to a torn and stricken soul. No word of bitterness escaped her lips. A beautiful calm took possession of a joyous, buoyant life; a pale face the realm of rosy cheeks. And so the days of the bride of Glassenbury passed in the confines of her childhood home, carrying to all about the message of peace, forgiveness and love—to the needy, help; to the suffering and heart-broken, comfort and sweet words of sympathy.

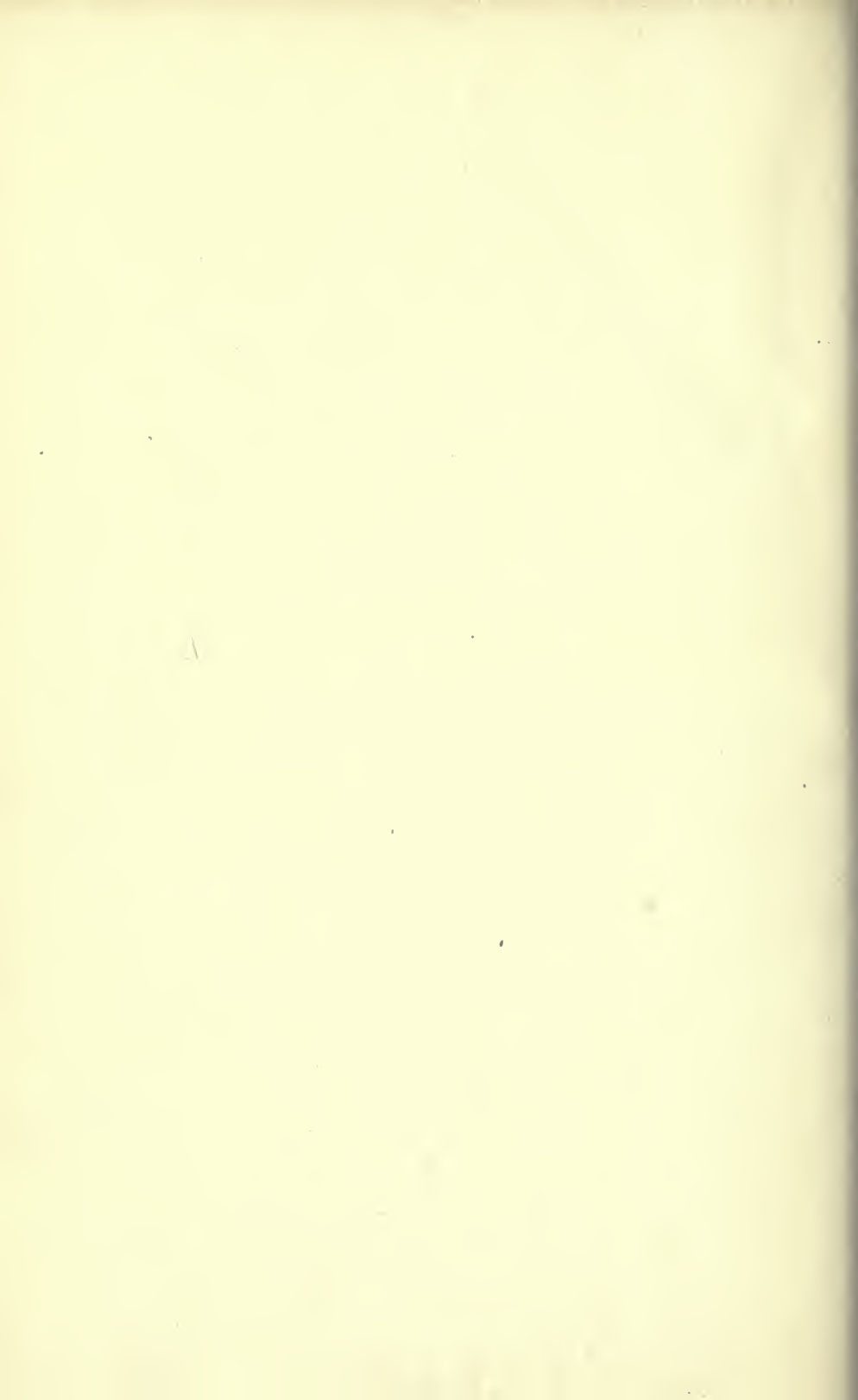
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“In the parish church of St. Dunstan today there

hangs upon the ancient walls a great marble slab. The thousand letters upon its time-worn face, cut by the hand of this proud but tender-hearted woman in the days of her grief—in the days of her virtual widowhood—who sought thus to show the world, who should hear the story of her woes, that while her life had been united to a profligate, she had sprung from a family as ancient as it was honorable. Day after day, the tiny chips of stone fell before her chisel; the trembling fingers of declining days still clinging to the work of propagating the good name of a good family; and not till the remnants of her broken life were laid away forever was this slab raised on the old church wall, that 'whoever runs may read'."

CRANBROOK TALES.

This is the end of the tales of Cranbrook as told by George G. Booth and printed by him at The Cranbrook Press, Detroit, Mich., U. S. A., and which were finished on the 25th day of June, in the year 1902, there being in all two hundred and eight copies, of which this is number 185



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