



2239.
C47
1903

The Bancroft Library

University of California • Berkeley

WILLIAM
MORRIS
THE
HOLLOW
LAND



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

a

**THE HOLLOW LAND AND OTHER
CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE OXFORD
AND CAMBRIDGE MAGAZINE BY
WILLIAM MORRIS**

THE HOLLOW LAND AND OTHER
CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE OXFORD
AND CAMBRIDGE MAGAZINE BY
WILLIAM MORRIS

CONTENTS

PROSE

The Story of the Unknown Church	1
A Dream	16
Gertha's Lovers	40
Svend and his Brethren	113
Lindenberg Pool	141
The Hollow Land	154
Golden Wings	209
Frank's Sealed Letter	235
'Men and Women.' By Robert Browning	259
The Churches of North France. Shadows of Amiens	289
'Death the Avenger' and 'Death the Friend'	317

VERSE

Winter Weather	321
Riding Together	325
Hands	327
The Chapel in Lyonesse	328
Pray but one Prayer for us	332

CONTENTS

PROSE

The Story of the Unknown Church

A Drama

Green's Law

Seed and the Brother

Lindbergh's Pool

The Blotter Band

Golden Wings

Frank's Seal of Love

Men and Women, By Robert Browning

The Church of North River, St. Johns

of America

Deaf and Dumb, and "Deaf and Dumb"

VERSE

Winter Weather

Edith Taylor

Child

The Church in Process

Let our our's eye for an

THE STORY OF THE UNKNOWN CHURCH.

I WAS the master-mason of a church that was built more than six hundred years ago; it is now two hundred years since that church vanished from the face of the earth; it was destroyed utterly ...no fragment of it was left; not even the great pillars that bore up the tower at the cross, where the choir used to join the nave. No one knows now even where it stood, only in this very autumn-tide, if you knew the place, you would see the heaps made by the earth-covered ruins heaving the yellow corn into glorious waves, so that the place where my church used to be is as beautiful now as when it stood in all its splendour. I do not remember very much about the land where my church was; I have quite forgotten the name of it, but I know it was very beautiful, and even now, while I am thinking of it, comes a flood of old memories, and I almost seem to see it again... that old beautiful land! Only dimly do I see it in spring and summer and winter, but I see it in autumn-tide clearly now; yes, clearer, clearer, oh! so bright and glorious! yet it was beautiful too in spring, when the brown earth began to grow green: beautiful in summer, when the blue sky looked so much bluer, if you could hem a piece of it in between the new white carving; beautiful in the solemn starry nights, so solemn that it almost reached agony...the awe and joy one had

**The Story
of the
Unknown
Church**

in their great beauty. But of all these beautiful times, I remember the whole only of autumn-tide; the others come in bits to me; I can think only of parts of them, but of all autumn; and of all days and nights in autumn, I remember one more particularly. That autumn day the church was nearly finished, and the monks, for whom we were building the church, and the people, who lived in the town hard by, crowded round us oftentimes to watch us carving.

Now the great Church, and the buildings of the Abbey where the monks lived, were about three miles from the town, and the town stood on a hill overlooking the rich autumn country: it was girt about with great walls that had overhanging battlements, and towers at certain places all along the walls, and often we could see from the churchyard or the Abbey garden the flash of helmets and spears, and the dim shadowy waving of banners, as the knights and lords and men-at-arms passed to and fro along the battlements; and we could see too in the town the three spires of the three churches; and the spire of the Cathedral, which was the tallest of the three, was gilt all over with gold, and always at night-time a great lamp shone from it that hung in the spire midway between the roof of the church and the cross at the top of the spire.

The Abbey where we built the Church was not girt by stone walls, but by a circle of poplar trees,

and whenever a wind passed over them, were it ever so little a breath, it set them all a-ripple; and when the wind was high, they bowed and swayed very low, and the wind, as it lifted the leaves, and showed their silvery white sides, or as again in the lulls of it, it let them drop, kept on changing the trees from green to white, and white to green; moreover, through the boughs & trunks of the poplars we caught glimpses of the great golden corn sea, waving, waving, waving for leagues and leagues; and among the corn grew burning scarlet poppies, and blue corn-flowers; & the corn-flowers were so blue, that they gleamed, and seemed to burn with a steady light, as they grew beside the poppies among the gold of the wheat. Through the corn sea ran a blue river, and always green meadows and lines of tall poplars followed its windings.

The old Church had been burned, and that was the reason why the monks caused me to build the new one; the buildings of the Abbey were built at the same time as the burned-down Church, more than a hundred years before I was born, and they were on the north side of the Church, and joined to it by a cloister of round arches, and in the midst of the cloister was a lawn, and in the midst of that lawn, a fountain of marble, carved round about with flowers and strange beasts; and at the edge of the lawn, near the round arches, were a great many sun-flowers that were all in blossom

**The Story
of the
Unknown
Church**

on that autumn day; and up many of the pillars of the cloister crept passion-flowers and roses. Then farther from the Church, and past the cloister and its buildings, were many detached buildings, and a great garden round them, all within the circle of the poplar trees; in the garden were trellises covered over with roses, and convolvulus, and the great-leaved fiery nasturtium; and specially all along by the poplar trees were there trellises, but on these grew nothing but deep crimson roses; the hollyhocks too were all out in blossom at that time, great spires of pink, and orange, and red, and white, with their soft, downy leaves. I said that nothing grew on the trellises by the poplars but crimson roses, but I was not quite right, for in many places the wild flowers had crept into the garden from without; lush green briony, with green-white blossoms, that grows so fast, one could almost think that we see it grow, and deadly nightshade, *La bella donna*, oh! so beautiful; red berry, and purple, yellow-spiked flower, and deadly, cruel-looking, dark green leaf, all growing together in the glorious days of early autumn. And in the midst of the great garden was a conduit, with its sides carved with histories from the Bible, and there was on it too, as on the fountain in the cloister, much carving of flowers and strange beasts. Now the Church itself was surrounded on every side but the north by the cemetery, and there were many graves there, both of monks and of laymen,

and often the friends of those whose bodies lay there, had planted flowers about the graves of those they loved. I remember one such particularly, for at the head of it was a cross of carved wood, and at the foot of it, facing the cross, three tall sun-flowers; then in the midst of the cemetery was a cross of stone, carved on one side with the Crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and on the other with Our Lady holding the Divine Child.

So that day, that I specially remember, in autumn-tide, when the church was nearly finished, I was carving in the central porch of the west front (for I carved all those bas-reliefs in the west front with my own hand); beneath me my sister Margaret was carving at the flower-work, & the little quatrefoils that carry the signs of the zodiac and emblems of the months: now my sister Margaret was rather more than twenty years old at that time, and she was very beautiful, with dark brown hair and deep calm violet eyes. I had lived with her all my life, lived with her almost alone latterly, for our father and mother died when she was quite young, and I loved her very much, though I was not thinking of her just then, as she stood beneath me carving. Now the central porch was carved with a bas-relief of the Last Judgment, and it was divided into three parts by horizontal bands of deep flower-work. In the lowest division, just over the doors, was carved the Rising of the

The Story
of the
Unknown
Church

Dead; above were angels blowing long trumpets, and Michael the Archangel weighing the souls, and the blessed led into heaven by angels, and the lost into hell by the devil; and in the topmost division was the Judge of the world.

All the figures in the porch were finished except one, and I remember when I woke that morning my exultation at the thought of my Church being so nearly finished; I remember, too, how a kind of misgiving mingled with the exultation, which, try all I could, I was unable to shake off; I thought then it was a rebuke for my pride, well, perhaps it was. The figure I had to carve was Abraham, sitting with a blossoming tree on each side of him, holding in his two hands the corners of his great robe, so that it made a mighty fold, wherein, with their hands crossed over their breasts, were the souls of the faithful, of whom he was called Father: I stood on the scaffolding for some time, while Margaret's chisel worked on bravely down below. I took mine in my hand, and stood so, listening to the noise of the masons inside, and two monks of the Abbey came and stood below me, and a knight, holding his little daughter by the hand, who every now and then looked up at him, and asked him strange questions. I did not think of these long, but began to think of Abraham, yet I could not think of him sitting there, quiet and solemn, while the Judgment-Trumpet was being blown; I rather thought

of him as he looked when he chased those kings so far; riding far ahead of any of his company, with his mail-hood off his head, and lying in grim folds down his back, with the strong west wind blowing his wild black hair far out behind him, with the wind rippling the long scarlet pennon of his lance; riding there amid the rocks and the sands alone; with the last gleam of the armour of the beaten kings disappearing behind the winding of the pass; with his company a long, long way behind, quite out of sight, though their trumpets sounded faintly among the clefts of the rocks; and so I thought I saw him, till in his fierce chase he leapt, horse and man, into a deep river, quiet, swift, and smooth; and there was something in the moving of the water-lilies as the breast of the horse swept them aside, that suddenly took away the thought of Abraham and brought a strange dream of lands I had never seen; and the first was of a place where I was quite alone, standing by the side of a river, and there was the sound of singing a very long way off, but no living thing of any kind could be seen, and the land was quite flat, quite without hills, and quite without trees too, and the river wound very much, making all kinds of quaint curves, and on the side where I stood there grew nothing but long grass, but on the other side grew, quite on to the horizon, a great sea of red corn-poppies, only paths of white lilies wound all among them, with here and there a great golden sun-

The Story
of the
Unknown
Church

flower. So I looked down at the river by my feet, and saw how blue it was, and how, as the stream went swiftly by, it swayed to and fro the long green weeds, and I stood and looked at the river for long, till at last I felt some one touch me on the shoulder, and, looking round, I saw standing by me my friend Amyot, whom I love better than any one else in the world, but I thought in my dream that I was frightened when I saw him, for his face had changed so, it was so bright and almost transparent, and his eyes gleamed and shone as I had never seen them do before. Oh! he was so wondrously beautiful, so fearfully beautiful! and as I looked at him the distant music swelled, and seemed to come close up to me, and then swept by us, and fainted away, at last died off entirely; and then I felt sick at heart, and faint, and parched, and I stooped to drink of the water of the river, and as soon as the water touched my lips, lo! the river vanished, and the flat country with its poppies and lilies, and I dreamed that I was in a boat by myself again, floating in an almost land-locked bay of the northern sea, under a cliff of dark basalt. I was lying on my back in the boat, looking up at the intensely blue sky, and a long low swell from the outer sea lifted the boat up and let it fall again and carried it gradually nearer and nearer towards the dark cliff; and as I moved on, I saw at last, on the top of the cliff, a castle with many towers, and on the highest

32 tower of the castle there was a great white banner floating, with a red chevron on it, and three golden stars on the chevron; presently I saw too on one of the towers, growing in a cranny of the worn stones, a great bunch of golden and blood-red wall-flowers, and I watched the wall-flowers and banner for long; when suddenly I heard a trumpet blow from the castle, and saw a rush of armed men on to the battlements, and there was a fierce fight, till at last it was ended, and one went to the banner and pulled it down, and cast it over the cliff into the sea, and it came down in long sweeps, with the wind making little ripples in it; slowly, slowly it came, till at last it fell over me & covered me from my feet till over my breast, and I let it stay there and looked again at the castle, and then I saw that there was an amber-coloured banner floating over the castle in place of the red chevron, and it was much larger than the other: also now, a man stood on the battlements, looking towards me; he had a tilting helmet on, with the visor down, and an amber-coloured surcoat over his armour; his right hand was ungauntleted, and he held it high above his head, and in his hand was the bunch of wall-flowers that I had seen growing on the wall; and his hand was white and small, like a woman's, for in my dream I could see even very far-off things much clearer than we see real material things on the earth: presently he threw the wall-flowers over

**The Story
of the
Unknown
Church**

the cliff, and they fell in the boat just behind my head, and then I saw, looking down from the battlements of the castle, Amyot. He looked down towards me very sorrowfully, I thought, but, even as in the other dream, said nothing; so I thought in my dream that I wept for very pity, and for love of him, for he looked as a man just risen from a long illness, and who will carry till he dies a dull pain about with him. He was very thin, and his long black hair drooped all about his face, as he leaned over the battlements looking at me: he was quite pale, and his cheeks were hollow, but his eyes large, and soft, and sad. So I reached out my arms to him, and suddenly I was walking with him in a lovely garden, and we said nothing, for the music which I had heard at first was sounding close to us now, and there were many birds in the boughs of the trees: oh, such birds! gold and ruby, and emerald, but they sang not at all, but were quite silent, as though they too were listening to the music. Now all this time Amyot and I had been looking at each other, but just then I turned my head away from him, and as soon as I did so, the music ended with a long wail, and when I turned again Amyot was gone; then I felt even more sad and sick at heart than I had before when I was by the river, and I leaned against a tree, and put my hands before my eyes. When I looked again the garden was gone, and I knew not where I was, and presently all my dreams

were gone. The chips were flying bravely from the stone under my chisel at last, and all my thoughts now were in my carving, when I heard my name, Walter, called, and when I looked down I saw one standing below me, whom I had seen in my dreams just before, Amyot. I had no hopes of seeing him for a long time, perhaps I might never see him again, I thought, for he was away (as I thought) fighting in the holy wars, and it made me almost beside myself to see him standing close by me in the flesh. I got down from my scaffold as soon as I could, and all thoughts else were soon drowned in the joy of having him by me. Margaret, too, how glad she must have been, for she had been betrothed to him for some time before he went to the wars, & he had been five years away, five years! and how we had thought of him through those many weary days! how often his face had come before me; his brave, honest face, the most beautiful among all the faces of men and women I have ever seen. Yes, I remember how five years ago I held his hand as we came together out of the cathedral of that great, far-off city, whose name I forget now; and then I remember the stamping of the horses' feet; I remember how his hand left mine at last, & then, some one looking back at me earnestly as they all rode on together ... looking back, with his hand on the saddle behind him, while the trumpets sang in long solemn peals as they all rode on together, with

The Story
of the
Unknown
Church

the glimmer of arms and the fluttering of banners, and the clinking of the rings of the mail, that sounded like the falling of many drops of water into the deep, still waters of some pool that the rocks nearly meet over; and the gleam and flash of the swords, and the glimmer of the lance-heads & the flutter of the rippled banners, that streamed out from them, swept past me, and were gone, and they seemed like a pageant in a dream, whose meaning we know not; and those sounds too, the trumpets, and the clink of the mail, & the thunder of the horse-hoofs, they seemed dream-like too ... and it was all like a dream that he should leave me, for we had said that we should always be together; but he went away, and now he is come back again.

We were by his bed-side, Margaret and I; I stood and leaned over him, and my hair fell sideways over my face and touched his face; Margaret kneeled beside me, quivering in every limb, not with pain, I think, but rather shaken by a passion of earnest prayer. After some time (I know not how long), I looked up from his face to the window underneath which he lay; I do not know what time of the day it was, but I know that it was a glorious autumn day, a day soft with melting, golden haze: a vine and a rose grew together, and trailed half across the window, so that I could not see much of the beautiful blue sky, & nothing

of town or country beyond; the vine leaves were touched with red here and there, and three over-blown roses, light pink roses, hung amongst them. I remember dwelling on the strange lines the autumn had made in red on one of the gold-green vine leaves, and watching one leaf of one of the over-blown roses, expecting it to fall every minute; but as I gazed, & felt disappointed that the rose leaf had not fallen yet, I felt my pain suddenly shoot through me, and I remembered what I had lost; and then came bitter, bitter dreams...dreams which had once made me happy...dreams of the things I had hoped would be, of the things that would never be now; they came between the fair vine leaves and rose blossoms, and that which lay before the window; they came as before, perfect in colour and form, sweet sounds and shapes. But now in every one was something unutterably miserable; they would not go away, they put out the steady glow of the golden haze, the sweet light of the sun through the vine leaves, the soft leaning of the full blown roses. I wandered in them for a long time; at last I felt a hand put me aside gently, for I was standing at the head of...of the bed; then some one kissed my forehead, and words were spoken...I know not what words. The bitter dreams left me for the bitterer reality at last; for I had found him that morning lying dead, only the morning after I had seen him when he had come back from his long

**The Story
of the
Unknown
Church**

absence... I had found him lying dead, with his hands crossed downwards, with his eyes closed, as though the angels had done that for him; and now when I looked at him he still lay there, and Margaret knelt by him with her face touching his: she was not quivering now, her lips moved not at all as they had done just before; and so, suddenly those words came to my mind which she had spoken when she kissed me, and which at the time I had only heard with my outward hearing, for she had said, 'Walter, farewell, and Christ keep you; but for me, I must be with him, for so I promised him last night that I would never leave him any more, and God will let me go.' And verily Margaret and Amyot did go, and left me very lonely and sad.

It was just beneath the westernmost arch of the nave, there I carved their tomb: I was a long time carving it; I did not think I should be so long at first, and I said, 'I shall die when I have finished carving it,' thinking that would be a very short time. But so it happened after I had carved those two whom I loved, lying with clasped hands like husband and wife above their tomb, that I could not yet leave carving it; and so that I might be near them I became a monk, and used to sit in the choir and sing, thinking of the time when we should all be together again. And as I had time I used to go to the westernmost arch of the nave and work at the tomb that was there under the

great, sweeping arch; and in process of time I raised a marble canopy that reached quite up to the top of the arch, and I painted it too as fair as I could, and carved it all about with many flowers and histories, and in them I carved the faces of those I had known on earth (for I was not as one on earth now, but seemed quite away out of the world). And as I carved, sometimes the monks and other people too would come and gaze, and watch how the flowers grew; and sometimes too as they gazed, they would weep for pity, knowing how all had been.

So my life passed, and I lived in that Abbey for twenty years after he died, till one morning, quite early, when they came into the church for matins, they found me lying dead, with my chisel in my hand, underneath the last lily of the tomb.

A DREAM.

I DREAMED once, that four men sat by the winter fire talking and telling tales, in a house that the wind howled round. And one of them, the eldest, said: 'When I was a boy, before you came to this land, that bar of red sand rock, which makes a fall in our river, had only just been formed; for it used to stand above the river in a great cliff, tunnelled by a cave about midway between the green-growing grass and the green-flowing river; and it fell one night, when you had not yet come to this land, no, nor your fathers.

Now, concerning this cliff, or pike rather (for it was a tall slip of rock and not part of a range), many strange tales were told; and my father used to say, that in his time many would have explored that cave, either from covetousness (expecting to find gold therein), or from that love of wonders which most young men have, but fear kept them back. Within the memory of man, however, some had entered, and, so men said, were never seen on earth again; but my father said that the tales told concerning such, very far from deterring him (then quite a youth) from the quest of this cavern, made him all the more earnestly long to go; so that one day in his fear, my grandfather, to prevent him, stabbed him in the shoulder, so that he was obliged to keep his bed for long; and somehow he never went, and died at last without ever having seen the inside of the cavern. My father told me many

wondrous tales about the place, whereof for a long time I have been able to remember nothing; yet, by some means or another, a certain story has grown up in my heart, which I will tell you something of: a story which no living creature ever told me, though I do not remember the time when I knew it not. Yes, I will tell you some of it, not all perhaps, but as much as I am allowed to tell.'

The man stopped and pondered awhile, leaning over the fire where the flames slept under the caked coal: he was an old man, and his hair was quite white. He spoke again presently. 'And I have fancied sometimes, that in some way, how I know not, I am mixed up with the strange story I am going to tell you.' Again he ceased, & gazed at the fire, bending his head down till his beard touched his knees; then, rousing himself, said in a changed voice (for he had been speaking dreamily hitherto): 'That strange-looking old house that you all know, with the limes and yew-trees before it, and the double line of very old yew-trees leading up from the gateway-tower to the porch ... you know how no one will live there now because it is so eerie, and how even that bold bad lord that would come there, with his turbulent followers, was driven out in shame and disgrace by invisible agency. Well, in times past there dwelt in that house an old grey man, who was lord of that estate, his only daughter, and a young man, a kind of distant cousin of the house, whom the lord had

A Dream brought up from a boy, as he was the orphan of a kinsman who had fallen in combat in his quarrel. Now, as the young knight & the young lady were both beautiful and brave, and loved beauty and good things ardently, it was natural enough that they should discover as they grew up that they were in love with one another; and afterwards, as they went on loving one another, it was, alas! not unnatural that they should sometimes have half-quarrels, very few and far between indeed, and slight to lookers-on, even while they lasted, but nevertheless intensely bitter and unhappy to the principal parties thereto. I suppose their love then, whatever it has grown to since, was not so all-absorbing as to merge all differences of opinion and feeling, for again there were such differences then. So, upon a time it happened, just when a great war had arisen, and Lawrence (for that was the knight's name) was sitting, and thinking of war, and his departure from home; sitting there in a very grave, almost a stern mood, that Ella, his betrothed, came in, gay and sprightly, in a humour that Lawrence often enough could little understand, and this time liked less than ever, yet the bare sight of her made him yearn for her full heart, which he was not to have yet; so he caught her by the hand, and tried to draw her down to him, but she let her hand lie loose in his, and did not answer the pressure in which his heart flowed to hers; then he arose and stood before her, face to

face, but she drew back a little, yet he kissed her on the mouth & said, though a rising in his throat almost choked his voice, 'Ella, are you sorry I am going?' 'Yea,' she said, 'and nay, for you will shout my name among the sword-flashes, and you will fight for me.' 'Yes,' he said, 'for love and duty, dearest.' 'For duty? ah! I think, Lawrence, if it were not for me, you would stay at home and watch the clouds, or sit under the linden trees singing dismal love ditties of your own making, dear knight: truly, if you turn out a great warrior, I too shall live in fame, for I am certainly the making of your desire to fight.' He let drop his hands from her shoulders, where he had laid them, and said, with a faint flush over his face, 'You wrong me, Ella, for, though I have never wished to fight for the mere love of fighting, and though,' (and here again he flushed a little) 'and though I am not, I well know, so free of the fear of death as a good man would be, yet for this duty's sake, which is really a higher love, Ella, love of God, I trust I would risk life, nay honour, even if not willingly, yet cheerfully at least.' 'Still duty, duty,' she said; 'you lay, Lawrence, as many people do, most stress on the point where you are weakest; moreover, those knights who in time past have done wild, mad things merely at their ladies' word, scarcely did so for duty; for they owed their lives to their country surely, to the cause of good, and should not have risked them for a whim, and yet you praised them

A Dream the other day.' 'Did I?' said Lawrence; 'well, and in a way they were much to be praised, for even blind love and obedience is well; but reasonable love, reasonable obedience is so far better as to be almost a different thing; yet, I think, if the knights did well partly, the ladies did altogether ill: for if they had faith in their lovers, and did this merely from a mad longing to see them do noble deeds, then they had but little faith in God, Who can, and at His good pleasure does give time and opportunity to every man, if he will but watch for it, to serve Him with reasonable service, and gain love and all noble things in greater measure thereby: but if these ladies did as they did, that they might prove their knights, then surely did they lack faith both in God and man. I do not think that two friends even could live together on such terms, but for lovers... ah! Ella, Ella, why do you look so at me? on this day, almost the last, we shall be together for long; Ella, your face is changed, your eyes... O Christ! help her and me, help her, good Lord.' 'Lawrence,' she said, speaking quickly & in jerks; 'dare you, for my sake, sleep this night in the cavern of the red pike? for I say to you that, faithful or not, I doubt your courage.' But she was startled when she saw him, and how the fiery blood rushed up to his forehead, then sank to his heart again, and his face became as pale as the face of a dead man: he looked at her and said, 'Yes, Ella, I will go now; for what matter where I go?' He turned

and moved toward the door; he was almost gone, when that evil spirit left her, and she cried out a loud, passionately, eagerly: 'Lawrence, Lawrence, come back once more, if only to strike me dead with your knightly sword.' He hesitated, wavered, turned, and in another moment she was lying in his arms weeping into his hair.

'And yet, Ella, the spoken word, the thought of our hearts cannot be recalled. I must go, and go this night too, only promise one thing.' 'Dearest, what? you are always right!' 'Love, you must promise that if I come not again by to-morrow at moonrise, you will go to the red pike, and, having entered the cavern, go where God leads you, and seek me, and never leave that quest, even if it end not but with death.' 'Lawrence, how your heart beats! poor heart! are you afraid that I shall hesitate to promise to perform that which is the only thing I could do? I know I am not worthy to be with you, yet I must be with you in body or soul, or body and soul will die.' They sat silent, and the birds sang in the garden of lilies beyond; then said Ella again: 'Moreover, let us pray God to give us longer life, so that if our natural lives are short for the accomplishment of this quest, we may have more, yea, even many more lives.' 'He will, my Ella,' said Lawrence, 'and I think, nay, am sure that our wish will be granted; and I, too, will add a prayer, but will ask it very humbly, namely, that He will give me another chance or more to fight in

A Dream His cause, another life to live instead of this failure.' 'Let us pray too that we may meet, however long the time be before our meeting,' she said; so they knelt down and prayed, hand fast locked in hand meantime; and afterwards they sat in that chamber facing the east, hard by the garden of lilies; and the sun fell from his noontide light gradually, lengthening the shadows, and when he sank below the sky-line all the sky was faint, tender, crimson on a ground of blue; the crimson faded too, and the moon began to rise, but when her golden rim first showed over the wooded hills, Lawrence arose; they kissed one long trembling kiss, and then he went and armed himself; and their lips did not meet again after that, for such a long, long time, so many weary years; for he had said: 'Ella, watch me from the porch, but touch me not again at this time; only, when the moon shows level with the lily-heads, go into the porch and watch me from thence.'

And he was gone; ... you might have heard her heart beating while the moon very slowly rose, till it shone through the rose-covered trellises, level with the lily-heads; then she went to the porch and stood there.

And she saw him walking down toward the gateway-tower, clad in his mail-coat, with a bright, crestless helmet on his head, and his trenchant sword newly grinded, girt to his side; & she watched him going between the yew-trees, which began

to throw shadows from the shining of the harvest moon. She stood there in the porch, and round by the corners of the eaves of it looked down towards her & the inside of the porch two serpent-dragons, carved in stone; and on their scales, and about their leering eyes, grew the yellow lichen; she shuddered as she saw them stare at her, and drew closer toward the half-open door; she, standing there, clothed in white from her throat till over her feet, altogether ungirdled; and her long yellow hair, without plait or band, fell down behind and lay along her shoulders, quietly, because the night was without wind, and she too was now standing scarcely moving a muscle.

She gazed down the line of the yew-trees, and watched how, as he went for the most part with a firm step, he yet shrank somewhat from the shadows of the yews; his long brown hair flowing downward, swayed with him as he walked; and the golden threads interwoven with it, as the fashion was with the warriors in those days, sparkled out from among it now and then; and the faint, far-off moonlight lit up the waves of his mail-coat; he walked fast, and was disappearing in the shadows of the trees near the moat, but turned before he was quite lost in them, and waved his ungauntleted hand; then she heard the challenge of the warder, the falling of the drawbridge, the swing of the heavy wicket-gate on its hinges; and, into the brightening lights, and deepening shadows of

A Dream the moonlight he went from her sight; & she left the porch and went to the chapel, all that night praying earnestly there.

But he came not back again all the next day, and Ella wandered about that house pale, and fretting her heart away; so when night came and the moon, she arrayed herself in that same raiment that she had worn on the night before, and went toward the river and the red pike. The broad moon shone right over it by the time she came to the river; the pike rose up from the other side, and she thought at first that she would have to go back again, cross over the bridge, and so get to it; but, glancing down on the river just as she turned, she saw a little boat fairly gilt and painted, and with a long slender paddle in it, lying on the water, stretching out its silken painter as the stream drew it downwards, she entered it, and taking the paddle made for the other side; the moon meanwhile turning the eddies to silver over the dark green water: she landed beneath the shadow of that great pile of sandstone, where the grass grew green, and the flowers sprang fair right up to the foot of the bare barren rock; it was cut in many steps till it reached the cave, which was overhung by creepers and matted grass; the stream swept the boat downwards, and Ella, her heart beating so as almost to stop her breath, mounted the steps slowly, slowly. She reached at last the platform below the cave, and turning, gave a long gaze at the moonlit

country; 'her last,' she said; then she moved, and the cave hid her as the water of the warm seas closes over the pearl-diver.

Just so the night before had it hidden Lawrence. And they never came back, they two: never, the people say. I wonder what their love has grown to now; ah! they love, I know, but cannot find each other yet; I wonder also if they ever will.'

So spoke Hugh the white-haired. But he who sat over against him, a soldier as it seemed, black-bearded, with wild grey eyes that his great brows hung over far; he, while the others sat still, awed by some vague sense of spirits being very near them; this man, Giles, cried out: 'Never? old Hugh, it is not so... Speak! I cannot tell you how it happened, but I know it was not so, not so... speak quick, Hugh! tell us all, all!'

'Wait a little, my son, wait,' said Hugh; 'the people indeed said they never came back again at all, but I, but I... Ah! the time is long past over.' So he was silent, and sank his head on his breast, though his old thin lips moved, as if he talked softly to himself, and the light of past days flickered in his eyes.

Meanwhile Giles sat with his hands clasped finger over finger, tightly, 'till the knuckles whitened;' his lips were pressed firmly together; his breast heaved as though it would burst, as though it must be rid of its secret. Suddenly he sprang up, and in a voice that was a solemn chant, be-

A Dream gan: 'In full daylight, long ago, on a slumberously-wrathful, thunderous afternoon of summer' ... then across his chant ran the old man's shrill voice: 'On an October day, packed close with heavy-lying mist, which was more than mere autumn-mist' ... the solemn stately chanting dropped, the shrill voice went on; Giles sank down again, and Hugh standing there, swaying to and fro to the measured ringing of his own shrill voice, his long beard moving with him, said: 'On such a day, warm, and stifling so that one could scarcely breathe even down by the sea-shore, I went from bed to bed in the hospital of the pest-laden city with my soothing draughts and medicines. And there went with me a holy woman, her face pale with much watching; yet I think even without those same desolate lonely watchings her face would still have been pale. She was not beautiful, her face being somewhat peevish-looking; apt she seemed to be made angry by trifles, and, even on her errand of mercy, she spoke roughly to those she tended: no, she was not beautiful, yet I could not help gazing at her, for her eyes were very beautiful, and looked out from her ugly face as a fair maiden might look from a grim prison, between the window-bars of it.

So, going through that hospital, I came to a bed at last whereon lay one who had not been struck down by fever or plague, but had been smitten through the body with a sword by certain robbers,

so that he had narrowly escaped death. Huge of frame, with stern suffering face he lay there; and I came to him, and asked him of his hurt, and how he fared, while the day grew slowly toward even, in that pest-chamber looking toward the west; the sister came to him soon and knelt down by his bed-side to tend him.

O Christ! As the sun went down on that dim misty day, the clouds and the thickly-packed mist cleared off, to let him shine on us, on that chamber of woes and bitter unpurifying tears; and the sunlight wrapped those two, the sick man and the ministering woman, shone on them...changed, changed utterly. Good Lord! How was I struck dumb, nay, almost blinded by that change; for there...yes there, while no man but I wondered; there, instead of the unloving nurse, knelt a wonderfully beautiful maiden, clothed all in white, and with long golden hair down her back. Tenderly she gazed at the wounded man, as her hands were put about his head, lifting it up from the pillow but a very little; and he no longer the grim, strong wounded man, but fair, and in the first bloom of youth; a bright polished helmet crowned his head, a mail-coat flowed over his breast, and his hair streamed down long from his head, while from among it here and there shone out threads of gold.

So they spake thus in a quiet tone: 'Body and soul together again, Ella, love; how long will it

A Dream be now before the last time of all?' 'Long,' she said, 'but the years pass; talk no more, dearest, but let us think only, for the time is short, and our bodies call up memories, change love to better even than it was in the old time.'

Silence so, while you might count a hundred, then with a great sigh: 'Farewell, Ella, for long.' 'Farewell, Lawrence,' and the sun sank, all was as before.

But I stood at the foot of the bed pondering, till the sister coming to me, said: 'Master Physician, this is no time for dreaming; act! The patients are waiting, the fell sickness grows worse in this hot close air; feel' (and she swung open the casement)... 'the outer air is no fresher than the air inside; the wind blows dead toward the west, coming from the stagnant marshes; the sea is like a stagnant pool too, you can scarce hear the sound of the long, low surge breaking.' I turned from her and went up to the sick man, and said: 'Sir Knight, in spite of all the sickness about you, you yourself better strangely, and another month will see you with your sword girt to your side again.' 'Thanks, kind master Hugh,' he said, but impatiently, as if his mind were on other things, and he turned in his bed away from me restlessly.

And till late that night I ministered to the sick in that hospital; but when I went away, I walked down to the sea, and paced there to and fro over

the hard sand: and the moon showed bloody with the hot mist, which the sea would not take on its bosom, though the dull east wind blew it onward continually. I walked there pondering till a noise from over the sea made me turn and look that way; what was that coming over the sea? Laus Deo! the WEST WIND: Hurrah! I feel the joy I felt then over again now, in all its intensity. How came it over the sea? first, far out to sea, so that it was only just visible under the red-gleaming moonlight, far out to sea, while the mists above grew troubled, and wavered, a long level bar of white; it grew nearer quickly, it rushed on toward me fearfully fast, it gathered form, strange, misty, intricate form... the ravelled foam of the green sea; then oh! hurrah! I was wrapped in it... the cold salt spray... drenched with it, blinded by it, and when I could see again, I saw the great green waves rising, nodding and breaking, all coming on together; and over them from wave to wave leaped the joyous WEST WIND; and the mist and the plague clouds were sweeping back eastward in wild swirls; and right away were they swept at last, till they brooded over the face of the dismal stagnant meres, many miles away from our fair city, and there they pondered wrathfully on their defeat.

But somehow my life changed from the time when I beheld the two lovers, and I grew old quickly.' He ceased; then after a short silence said

A Dream again; 'And that was long ago, very long ago; I know not when it happened.'

So he sank back again, and for a while no one spoke; till Giles said at last: 'Once in full daylight I saw a vision, while I was waking, while the eyes of men were upon me; long ago on the afternoon of a thunderous summer day, I sat alone in my fair garden near the city; for on that day a mighty reward was to be given to the brave man who had saved us all, leading us so mightily in that battle a few days back; now the very queen, the lady of the land, whom all men revered almost as the Virgin Mother, so kind and good and beautiful she was, was to crown him with flowers and gird a sword about him; after the 'Te Deum' had been sung for the victory, and almost all the city were at that time either in the Church, or hard by it, or else were by the hill that was near the river where the crowning was to be: but I sat alone in the garden of my house, as I said; sat grieving for the loss of my brave brother, who was slain by my side in that same fight.

I sat beneath an elm tree; and as I sat and pondered on that still, windless day, I heard suddenly a breath of air rustle through the boughs of the elm. I looked up, and my heart almost stopped beating, I knew not why, as I watched the path of that breeze over the bowing lilies and the rushes by the fountain; but when I looked to the place whence the breeze had come, I became all at once

aware of an appearance that told me why my heart stopped beating. Ah! there they were, those two whom before I had but seen in dreams by night, now before my waking eyes in broad daylight. One, a knight (for so he seemed), with long hair mingled with golden threads, flowing over his mail-coat, and a bright crestless helmet on his head, his face sad-looking, but calm; and by his side, but not touching him, walked a wondrously fair maiden, clad in white, her eyelids just shadowing her blue eyes: her arms and hands seeming to float along with her as she moved on quickly, yet very softly; great rest on them both, though sorrow gleamed through it.

When they came opposite to where I stood, these two stopped for a while, being in nowise shadowy, as I have heard men say ghosts are, but clear and distinct. They stopped close by me, as I stood motionless, unable to pray; they turned to each other, face to face, and the maiden said, 'Love, for this our last true meeting before the end of all, we need a witness; let this man, softened by sorrow, even as we are, go with us.'

I never heard such music as her words were; though I used to wonder when I was young whether the angels in heaven sung better than the choristers sang in our church, & though, even then the sound of the triumphant hymn came up to me in a breath of wind, and floated round me, making dreams, in that moment of awe and great dread,

A Dream of the old long-past days in that old church, of her who lay under the pavement of it; whose sweet voice once, once long ago, once only to me... yet I shall see her again.' He became silent as he said this, & no man cared to break in upon his thoughts, seeing the choking movement in his throat, the fierce clenching of hand and foot, the stiffening of the muscles all over him; but soon, with an upward jerk of his head, he threw back the long elf locks that had fallen over his eyes while his head was bent down, and went on as before:

'The knight passed his hand across his brow, as if to clear away some mist that had gathered there, and said, in a deep murmurous voice, 'Why the last time, dearest, why the last time? Know you not how long a time remains yet?' the old man came last night to the ivory house and told me it would be a hundred years, ay, more, before the happy end.' 'So long?' she said; 'so long? ah! love, what things words are; yet this is the last time; alas! alas! for the weary years! my words, my sin!' 'O love, it is very terrible,' he said; 'I could almost weep, old though I am, and grown cold with dwelling in the ivory house: O, Ella, if you only knew how cold it is there, in the starry nights when the north wind is stirring; and there is no fair colour there, nought but the white ivory, with one narrow line of gleaming gold over every window, and a fathom's breadth of burnished gold behind the throne. Ella, it was scarce well done of you to send me to the ivory house.' 'Is it so cold, love?'

she said, 'I knew it not; forgive me! but as to the matter of a witness, some one we must have, and why not this man?' 'Rather old Hugh,' he said, 'or Cuthbert, his father; they have both been witnesses before.' 'Cuthbert,' said the maiden, solemnly, 'has been dead twenty years; Hugh died last night.' (Now, as Giles said these words, carelessly, as though not heeding them particularly, a cold sickening shudder ran through the other two men, but he noted it not and went on.) 'This man then be it,' said the knight, & therewith they turned again, and moved on side by side as before; nor said they any word to me, and yet I could not help following them, and we three moved on together, and soon I saw that my nature was changed, and that I was invisible for the time; for, though the sun was high, I cast no shadow, neither did any man that we past notice us, as we made toward the hill by the riverside.

And by the time we came there the queen was sitting at the top of it, under a throne of purple and gold, with a great band of knights gloriously armed on either side of her; and their many banners floated over them. Then I felt that those two had left me, and that my own right visible nature was returned; yet still did I feel strange, and as if I belonged not wholly to this earth. And I heard one say, in a low voice to his fellow, 'See, sir Giles is here after all; yet how came he here, and why is he not in armour among the noble knights yonder, he who fought so well? how wild he looks too!'

A Dream 'Poor knight,' said the other, 'he is distraught with the loss of his brother; let him be; and see, here comes the noble stranger knight, our deliverer.' As he spoke, we heard a great sound of trumpets, and therewithal a long line of knights on foot wound up the hill towards the throne, and the queen rose up, and the people shouted; and at the end of all the procession went slowly and majestically the stranger knight; a man of noble presence he was, calm, & graceful to look on; grandly he went amid the gleaming of their golden armour; himself clad in the rent mail and tattered surcoat he had worn on the battle-day; bare-headed, too; for, in that fierce fight, in the thickest of it, just where he rallied our men, one smote off his helmet, & another, coming from behind, would have slain him, but that my lance bit into his breast. So, when they had come within some twenty paces of the throne, the rest halted, and he went up by himself toward the queen; and she, taking the golden-hilted sword in her left hand, with her right caught him by the wrist, when he would have knelt to her, and held him so, tremblingly, and cried out, 'No, no, thou noblest of all knights, kneel not to me; have we not heard of thee even before thou camest hither? how many widows bless thee, how many orphans pray for thee, how many happy ones that would be widows and orphans but for thee sing to their children, sing to their sisters, of thy flashing sword, and the heart that guides it! And now, O noble one! thou hast

done the very noblest deed of all, for thou hast kept grown men from weeping shameful tears! Oh truly! the greatest I can do for thee is very little; yet, see this sword, golden-hilted, and the stones flash out from it,' (then she hung it round him) 'and see this wreath of lilies and roses for thy head; lilies no whiter than thy pure heart, roses no tenderer than thy true love; and here, before all these my subjects, I fold thee, noblest, in my arms, so, so.' Ay, truly it was strange enough! those two were together again; not the queen & the stranger knight, but the young-seeming knight and the maiden I had seen in the garden. To my eyes they clung together there; though they say, that to the eyes of all else, it was but for a moment that the queen held both his hands in hers; to me also, amid the shouting of the multitude, came an under-current of happy song: 'Oh! truly, very truly, my noblest, a hundred years will not be long after this.' 'Hush! Ella, dearest, for talking makes the time speed; think only.'

Pressed close to each other, as I saw it, their bosoms heaved... but I looked away. Alas! when I looked again, I saw nought but the stately stranger knight, descending hand in hand with the queen, flushed with joy and triumph, and the people scattering flowers before them.

And that was long ago, very long ago.' So he ceased; then Osric, one of the two younger men, who had been sitting in awe-struck silence all this time, said, with eyes that dared not meet Giles's,

A Dream in a terrified half whisper, as though he meant not to speak, 'How long?' Giles turned round and looked him full in the face, till he dragged his eyes up to his own, then said, 'More than a hundred years ago.'

So they all sat silent, listening to the roar of the south-west wind; and it blew the windows so, that they rocked in their frames.

Then suddenly, as they sat thus, came a knock at the door of the house; so Hugh bowed his head to Osric, to signify that he should go and open the door; so he arose, trembling, and went. And as he opened the door the wind blew hard against him, and blew something white against his face, then blew it away again, and his face was blanched, even to his lips; but he, plucking up heart of grace, looked out, & there he saw, standing with her face upturned in speech to him, a wonderfully beautiful woman, clothed from her throat till over her feet in long white raiment, ungirt, unbroidered, and with a long veil, that was thrown off from her face, and hung from her head, streaming out in the blast of the wind; which veil was what had struck against his face: beneath her veil her golden hair streamed out too, and with the veil, so that it touched his face now and then. She was very fair, but she did not look young either, because of her statue-like features. She spoke to him slowly and queenly: 'I pray you give me shelter in your house for an hour, that I may rest, and so go on my journey again.' He was too much terrified to an-

swer in words, & so only bowed his head; and she swept past him in stately wise to the room where the others sat, and he followed her, trembling.

A cold shiver ran through the other men when she entered and bowed low to them, and they turned deadly pale, but dared not move; and there she sat while they gazed at her, sitting there and wondering at her beauty, which seemed to grow every minute; though she was plainly not young, oh no, but rather very, very old, who could say how old? there she sat, and her long, long hair swept down in one curve from her head, and just touched the floor. Her face had the tokens of a deep sorrow on it, ah! a mighty sorrow, yet not so mighty as that it might mar her ineffable loveliness; that sorrow-mark seemed to gather too, and at last the gloriously-slow music of her words flowed from her lips: 'Friends, has one with the appearance of a youth come here lately? one with long brown hair, interwoven with threads of gold, flowing down from out of his polished steel helmet; with dark blue eyes and high white forehead, and mail-coat over his breast, where the light and shadow lie in waves as he moves; have you seen such an one, very beautiful?'

Then withal as they shook their heads fearfully in answer, a great sigh rose up from her heart, and she said: 'Then must I go away again presently, and yet I thought it was the last night of all.' And so she sat awhile with her head resting on her hand; after, she arose as if about to go, and

A Dream turned her glorious head round to thank the master of the house; and they, strangely enough, though they were terrified at her presence, were yet grieved when they saw that she was going. Just then the wind rose higher than ever before, yet through the roar of it they could all hear plainly a knocking at the door again; so the lady stopped when she heard it, and, turning, looked full in the face of Herman the youngest, who thereupon, being constrained by that look, rose and went to the door; and as before with Osric, so now the wind blew strong against him; and it blew into his face, so as to blind him, tresses of soft brown hair mingled with glittering threads of gold; and blinded so, he heard some one ask him musically, solemnly, if a lady with golden hair and white raiment was in that house; so Herman, not answering in words, because of his awe and fear, merely bowed his head; then he was ware of some one in bright armour passing him, for the gleam of it was all about him, for as yet he could not see clearly, being blinded by the hair that had floated about him. But presently he followed him into the room, and there stood such an one as the lady had described; the wavering flame of the light gleamed from his polished helmet, touched the golden threads that mingled with his hair, ran along the rings of his mail.

They stood opposite to each other for a little, he and the lady, as if they were somewhat shy of

each other after their parting of a hundred years, in spite of the love which they had for each other: at last he made one step, and took off his gleaming helmet, laid it down softly, then spread abroad his arms, and she came to him, and they were clasped together, her head lying over his shoulder; and the four men gazed, quite awe-struck.

And as they gazed, the bells of the church began to ring, for it was New-Year's-Eve; and still they clung together, and the bells rang on, and the old year died. And there beneath the eyes of those four men the lovers slowly faded away into a heap of snow-white ashes. Then the four men kneeled down and prayed, and the next day they went to the priest, and told him all that had happened. So the people took those ashes and buried them in their church in a marble tomb, and above it they caused to be carved their figures lying with clasped hands; and on the sides of it the history of the cave in the Red Pike. And in my dream I saw the moon shining on the tomb, throwing fair colours on it from the painted glass; till a sound of music rose, deepened, & faded; then I woke.

'No memory labours longer from the deep
Gold mines of thought to lift the hidden ore
That glimpses, moving up, than I from sleep
To gather and tell o'er
Each little sound and sight.'

GERTHA'S LOVERS.

'All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of love,
And feed his sacred flame.'

CHAPTER I. BY THE RIVER.

LONG ago there was a land, never mind where or when, a fair country and good to live in, rich with wealth of golden corn, beautiful with many woods, watered by great rivers and pleasant trickling streams; moreover, one extremity of it was bounded by the washing of the purple waves, and the other by the solemn watchfulness of the purple mountains.

In a fair lowland valley of this good land sat a maiden, one summer morning early, working with her needle, while she thought of other matters as women use. She was the daughter of a mere peasant, tiller of the kind soil, fisher in the silver waters of the river that flowed down past his cottage to the far-off city; he lived from day to day seeing few people, the one or two neighbours who lived in the cottages hard by, the priest of the little hamlet, now and then an artizan travelling in search of work; except, indeed, when he went to the wars; for he was a fighting man, as were all the people of that country, when need was. His wife was dead these five years, and his daughter alone lived with him; yet she, though of such lowly parentage, was

very beautiful; nor merely so, but grand and queen-like also; such a woman as might inspire a whole people to any deed of wise daring for her love.

What thoughts were hers, as she sat working on that summer morning, the song of birds all about her, and the lapping of the low, green river waves on the white sand sounding fresh and pleasantly as the west wind blew them toward her? What thoughts? Good thoughts, surely. For the land wherein she dwelt, so fair a land, so small a land, had never ceased to be desired by the tyrant kings who bore rule round about. Always had they made war against it; never had they conquered, though sometimes they were seemingly victorious in a scattered fight here and there through sheer force of numbers; for the dwellers in that good land were of a different race from the lazy, slavish people who dwelt about them. Many a song Gertha could sing you of how, long and long ago, they came from a land far over the sea, where the snow-laden pine-forests, weird halls of strange things, hang over the frozen waters for leagues, and leagues, and leagues along the coasts that were the cradles of mighty nations. Sailing over the sea then, long ago, with their ships all a-blaze with the steel that the heroes carried, they came to this land with their wives and children, and here made desperate war with the wild beasts, with savage swamps, dragon-inhabited, daring famine, and death in all ugly shapes.

Gertha's
Lovers

And they grew and grew, for God favoured them; and those who dwelt nearest to the 'Savage Land,' as it used to be called, grew more and more like the strangers, and their good rule spread; and they had a mighty faith withal that they should one day ring the world, going westward ever till they reached their old home in the east, left now so far behind. Judge, therefore, whether the tyrant kings feared these free, brave men! Judge whether, growing more and more cruel as they grew more and more fearful, they strained the chain over the miserable millions of their subjects so that with many it grew intolerable, and was broken asunder; so that, both in well-doing and in wrong-doing, God's kingdom spread.

Think what armies went up against the good land; what plains and valleys were sown with swords and spears and helmets, and the bones of valiant men; and how from being nameless once, only thought of as the place where such and such a tree grew very plenteous, where such a river ran, it became now to be remembered to all time, nor to be forgotten in eternity. Think of the desperate fights, in treacherous slippery fords, where the round stones rolled and shifted beneath the hurried trampling of men fighting for life, and more than life, amid the splash of the reddened waters in the raw, gusty twilight of the February mornings; or in close woods, little lighted up by the low sun just going to sink when the clouds

looked thunderous in the summer evenings; or with shouts from crag to crag of the great slate-cliffs, with wrathful thundering of rocks down into the thronged pass below, with unavailing arrow-flights, because arrows cannot pierce the mountains, or leap about among the clefts of the rocks where the mountaineers stand, fiercely joyous. Think too of the many heads, old and young, beautiful and mean, wept over, not joyously indeed; nay, who knows with what agony, yet at least with love unflecked by any wandering mote of the memory of shame or shrinking; think of the many who, though they fought not at all with spear or sword, yet did, indeed, bear the brunt of many a battle, in patiently waiting through heart-sickening watchings, yet never losing hope, in patiently bearing unutterable misery of separation, yet never losing faith. Had not Gertha then enough to think of, as she sat working hard by where the water lapped the white sand? For this people were so drawn together, that through the love they bore to one another sprung terrible deeds of heroism, any one of which would be enough for a life-time's thought; almost every man of that nation was a hero and a fit companion for the angels; and the glory of their fathers, and how themselves might do deeds that would not shame them, were the things that the men thought of always; and the women, for their part, looked to become wives to brave men, mothers to brave sons.

Gertha's
Lovers

So now Gertha was singing rough spirit-stirring songs of the deeds of old, and thinking of them too with all her heart as she sung. Why she, weak woman as she was, had not she seen the enemies' ships hauled up on the island bank yonder, and burned there? Were not the charred logs, which once, painted red and black, used to carry terror to the peaceful, slothful people of the islands, mouldering there yet, grown over by the long clinging briony? Did not her eyes flash, her brow and cheeks flush with triumph, her heart swell and heave beneath her breast, when the war-music grew nearer & louder every moment; and when she saw at last the little band of her dear countrymen hemming in the dejected prisoners, the white red-crossed banner floating over all, blessing all alike, knight, & sailor, and husbandman; and when she saw, too, her own dear, dear father, brave among the bravest, marching there with bright eyes, and lips curled with joyous triumphant indignation, though the blood that he was marked withal did not come from his enemies' veins only? Did she not then sing, joyously and loud-ringing, remembering these things and many others, while the west wind was joyous about her too, whispering to her softly many things concerning the land of promise?

She sung about a king who lived long ago, a man wise and brave beyond all others, slain treacherously in a hunting party by emissaries of the ene-

my, and slain at the height of his wisdom and good rule; and this was one of the songs that his people had embalmed his memory withal. So, as she sung, behold, the blowing of horns, and trampling as of horse, just as her voice rang clear with,

Gertha's
Lovers

'The King rode out in the morning early,
Went riding to hunting over the grass;
Ere the dew fell again that was then bright and
pearly,
O me! what a sorrow had come to pass!'

And a great company rode past going to hunt indeed, riding slowly, between her and the river, so that she saw them all clearly enough, the two noble knights especially, who rode at the head of them; one very grand and noble, young withal, yet looking as if he were made to burst asunder the thickest circles of the battle, to gather together from the most hopeless routs men enough to face the foe, and go back fighting, to roll back the line of fight when it wavered, to give strength to all warriors' hearts: fancy such an one, so wise, yet so beautiful that he moved like the moving of music; such tenderness looked from his eyes, so lovingly the morning sun and the sweet morning haze touched the waves of his golden hair, as they rode on happily. He that rode beside him was smaller and slenderer, smaller both in body and face, and it seemed in mind and heart also; there

Gertha's
Lovers

was a troubled restless look about his eyes; his thin lips were drawn inward tightly, as if he were striving to keep down words which he ought not to speak; or else sometimes very strangely this look would change, the eyes would glance about no more, yet look more eager & strangely anxious than ever; the thin lips would part somewhat, as if he were striving to say something which would not leave his heart; but the great man's eyes were large and serene, his lips full, his forehead clear, broad, and white; his companion was sallow, his forehead lower and rather narrow, his whole face drawn into wrinkles that came not by age, for he was no older than the other.

They passed as they had come, and when the last note of their horns had died away, Gertha went about her household duties; yet all that day, whatever she might do, however much she tried to beat the phantom down, that stately man with the golden hair floated always before her eyes.

EVENING now, the sun was down, the hunt had swept away past the cottage again, though not within sight of it, and the two knights having lost their companions were riding on slowly, their tired horses hanging down their heads.

'Sire, where are we going to?' said the small dark man; 'I mean to say where past that beech-tree, the low swinging boughs of which will hit you about the end of the nose, I should think? Ah! his

head goes down, somewhat in good time; he has escaped the beech-bough.' But the other answered no word, for he did not hear his friend speak, he was singing softly to himself:

'The King rode out in the morning early,
Went riding to hunting over the grass;
Ere the dew fell again which was then round and
pearly,
O me! what a sorrow had come to pass.'

He sung this twice or thrice with his head sunk down toward the saddle-bow, while the other knight gazed at him with a sad half smile, half sneer on his lips and eyes; then with a sigh he turned him about and said, 'Pardon, Leuchnar, you said something I did not hear; my mind was not in this wood, but somewhere else, I know not where. Leuchnar, we shall not find the hunt again to-night; let us, let us seek rest at that cottage that we passed this morning; it seems to be the only house near.'

'Yea, my Lord Olaf,' said Leuchnar, smiling again in that bitter way, when he saw in spite of the twilight, both of the sunken sun and of the thick beech-wood, a great blush come over Olaf's face.

'Yea, for why should we not?' and as he said this, he fairly burst out into strange explosive laughter, that did not sound merry, yet was not repulsive, but sad only; for Leuchnar was thinking of

**Gertha's
Lovers**

the ways of man, and found much to amuse him therein; yet his laughter sounded sad in spite of himself, for he was not one who was made to laugh, somehow; but what specially made him laugh now was this, that neither of them had forgotten that hour in the morning, and the maiden sitting alone near the river: each of them, as they burst through the greenest glades of the forest, with cry of hound and sound of horn, had, according to his faith, visions of a dark-haired maiden, sitting and singing, her eyes raised & fixed on one of them; also both wished to go there again, and accordingly had been sad laggards in the hunt, and had lost themselves, not very unwillingly, perhaps; yet now neither liked to confess his longing to the other; Leuchnar would not even do so to himself, and for these reasons he laughed, and his laugh sounded strange and sad.

But Olaf knew that he was in love, and all day long he had been nursing that love delightedly; he blushed yet more at Leuchnar's laugh, for these two seldom needed to tell each other their thoughts in so many words, and certainly not this time. He bowed his head downwards in his confusion so low, that his gold curls, falling forward, mingled with the full black of his horse's mane, and growled out therefrom: 'You are a strange fellow, Leuchnar, though a good one; but we will go.'

'Yea, to the peasant's cottage, my lord,' said Leuch-

nar, with his head raised, his eyes set straight forward, and his lips curled into something much more like a sneer than a smile; thereat Olaf with a spring sat upright in his saddle, and glanced quickly on either side of him, as though something had stung him unawares; afterwards they both turned their horses' heads aside, and rode slowly in the direction of the cottage, Leuchnar singing in a harsh voice, 'The King rode out in the morning early... though the dew has fallen again,' he muttered; whereat Olaf gave an uneasy side glance at him.

And soon they heard again the lapping of the river waves on the sand of the silver bay, only lower than before, because the wind had fallen. Then presently they drew rein before the cottage door, when the moon was already growing golden. Sigurd, Gertha's father, came to the door, and courteously held the stirrups of the knights while they dismounted, & they entered, and sat down to such fare as the peasant had, and Gertha served them. But they prayed her so to sit down, that at last it seemed discourteous to refuse them, and she sat down timidly. Then said Sigurd, when they had eaten enough, 'I pray you tell me, fair knights, what news there is from the city, if you come from thence; for there is a rumour of war hereabout, only uncertain as yet.'

'Nay, at the city,' Leuchnar said, 'there is certain news concerning one war, and even beside this,

**Gertha's
Lovers** rumours of a great conspiracy between the surrounding rulers of slaves. The Emperor says that this valley always belonged to him; though, indeed, he was not very anxious for it when poisonous swamps spread out on both sides of the river here; or rather his ancestors laid no claim to it; but now, at all events, he is coming to take his own, if he can get it; coming by way (it is his only way, poor fellow!) of the mountain passes. Only, my lord Adolf is off to meet him with ten thousand men, and they are going to try the matter by arbitrament in this fashion; marry, that if the valley belongs to the Emperor, he must know the way to it, & accordingly shall have it if he gets through the mountains in any other way than as a prisoner or dead corpse.'

Sigurd and Olaf laughed grimly at Leuchnar's conceit, and Gertha's eyes flashed; while both the knights watched her without seeing how matters went with each other. 'Then,' said Sigurd again, 'Concerning the young king, fair knights, what is he?' Olaf's eye twinkled at the question, & Leuchnar seeing that he wanted to answer, let him do so, watching him the while with a quaint amused look on his face. 'Why,' said Olaf, 'he is counted brave and wise, and being young, will, I hope, live long; but he is very ugly.' Here he turned, and looked at his friend with a smile. Sigurd started and seemed disappointed, but Gertha turned very pale, and rose from her seat suddenly, nor would

she sit down again all that evening. Then Olaf saw that she knew he was the king, and somehow did not feel inclined to laugh any more, but grew stately and solemn, and rather silent too; but Leuchnar talked much with Gertha, & he seemed to her to be very wise; yet she remembered not what he said, scarcely heard it indeed, for was not the KING by her; the king of all that dear people; yet, above all, whether the other were so or not, her king?

Poor maid! she felt it was so hopeless; nay, she said to herself, 'Even if he were to say he loved me, I should be obliged to deny my love; for what would all the people say, that the king of so great a nation should marry a peasant girl, without learning or wealth, or wisdom, with nothing but a pretty face? Ah! we must be apart always in this world.'

And Olaf, the king, said, 'So Leuchnar loves her ...and I love her. Well, it will change his life, I think; let him have her; poor fellow! he has not got many to love him. Besides, she is a peasant's daughter; I am a great king. Yet is she nobler than I am, for all my kingship. Alas, I fear the people, not for myself, but for her; they will not understand her nobility; they will only see that which comes uppermost, her seeming wisdom, her seeming goodness, which, perchance, will not show to be so much greater than other women's as the queen's ought to do. Then withal to her, if per-

Gertha's
Lovers

chance, at any time I am not quite sufficient to fill her heart, will come a weariness of our palace life, a longing for old places, old habits; then sorrow, then death, through years & years of tired pining, fought against, bravely indeed, but always a terrible weight to such an one as she is. Yet, if I knew she loved me, all this ought to be put aside; and yet, why should she love me? And, if she does not love me now, what hope is there; for how can we see each other any more, living such different far apart lives? But for Leuchnar this is otherwise; he may come and go often. Then he is wiser; ah! how much wiser than I am; can think and talk quite wonderfully, while I am but a mere fighting man; how it would change his life too, when he found any one to love him infinitely, to think his thoughts, be one with him, as people say. Yes, let Leuchnar have her.'

Those three so seeming-calm! what stormy passions, wild longings, passed through their hearts that evening! Leuchnar seeming-genial with his good friendly talk, his stories of brave deeds, told as if his heart were quite in them; speaking so much more like other men than his wont was; yet saying to himself, 'She must see that I love her; when since I can remember have I talked so?' Poor fellow, how should she know that? his voice was to her as the voices of a dream, or perhaps rather like grand music when it wakes a man; for, verily the glory of his tales got quite separated

from him, and in some dim way floated in a glory round about Olaf, as far as Gertha was concerned. She heard his name, the hero of every deed, which that far-distant knight, Leuchnar, less present than his own tales, was telling of; whenever danger clung about the brave in those tales, her heart beat for fear of her golden-haired, broad-foreheaded hero; she wondered often, as her heart wandered even from those tales, why she did not fall down before him & win his love or die. How then could she think of Leuchnar? Yet Olaf did think of him, saw well through all his talking what he was thinking of; and, for his own part, though he did not talk aloud, and though even what he said to himself had to do with that subject dearest to him, yet none the less even to himself choked down fiery longings, hardly, very hardly to be restrained. He tried hard to throw himself into Leuchnar's heart, to think of the loneliness of the man, and his wonderful power of concentrating every thought, every least spark of passion, on some one thing; he remembered how in the years past he had clutched so eagerly at knowledge; how that knowledge had overmastered him, made him more and more lonely year by year; made him despise others because they did not KNOW; he remembered, with a certain pang, how Leuchnar even despised him for one time; yes, he could bear just then to recall all the bitter memories of that time; how he saw it creeping over his friend; how he saw it struggled

**Gertha's
Lovers**

against, yet still gaining, gaining so surely; he called to mind that day, when Leuchnar spoke his scorn out openly, bitterly despising his own pride and himself the while; he remembered how Leuchnar came back to him afterwards, when knowledge failed him; and yet how it was never the same between them as it had been; he remembered then many a fight wherein they rode side by side together, Leuchnar as brave as he, yet ever with that weight of self-scorn upon him, that made him despise even his bravery, while Olaf rejoiced in his own, reverenced that of others; then he remembered how he was made king, how the love of his countrymen became from that time much more of a passion, true love, than it had been; & through all these things he tried to be Leuchnar, as it were; not such a hard thing for him; for through his unselfishness he had gained that mighty power of sympathy for others, which no fiercest passion can altogether put aside, even for the time. So he too had his thoughts, not easily to be read by others, not to be expressed by himself.

So the night passed; & they went to rest, or what seemed so, till they were wakened very early in the morning by the sound of a trumpet ringing all about the wooded river-shore; the knights and Sigurd rose & went forth from the cottage, knowing the trumpet to be a friendly one; and presently there met them a band of knights fully armed, who drew rein when they saw them.

'King Olaf,' said their leader, an old, white-haired knight, 'thank God we have found you! When we reached the palace last night, after having lost you, there were waiting for us ambassadors, bringing with them declarations of war from the three Dukes and King Borrace; so now, I pray you, quick back again! I have sent all about for men, but the time presses, and there is a credible report that King Borrace has already begun his march toward the plain; as for the three Dukes, (whom may the Lord confound!) Lord Hugh's army will account for them, at any rate to hold them in check till we have beaten King Borrace; but for him we must march presently, if we mean to catch him; only come, King Olaf, and all will be well.'

Then knelt Sigurd before the King, as he stood with eyes flashing, and cheek flushing, thinking how God's foes were hastening on to their destruction; yet for all his joy he longed to see Gertha, perhaps for the last time; for she was not there, neither did she come at Sigurd's call. So the King smiled sorrowfully when Sigurd made excuse for her, saying that she feared so great a man as the King; he could not help wishing she loved him, even though he meant to give her up (so he said); he could not acknowledge to the full what a difference her love would make to him. Then would he have given Sigurd presents of money & jewels, but Sigurd would not take them;

Gertha's
Lovers

only at the last, being constrained, he took the King's dagger, hilted with curiously wrought steel. Then they all rode away together; Barulf, the old man, by the King's side, & talking eagerly with him concerning the coming wars; but Leuchnar fell into the rear, and said no word to any.

CHAPTER II. LEUCHNAR'S RIDE.

Then for some days each man wrought his best, that they might meet the invaders as they ought; yet through all the work Leuchnar seemed very restless and uneasy, falling into staring fits, and starting from them suddenly; but the king was calm and cheerful outwardly, whatever passion strove to fever him. But one day when he was resting, leaning out of a window of the palace that was almost hidden by the heaped jasmine and clematis, he heard horse-hoofs, and presently saw Leuchnar, his sallow face drawn into one frown of eagerness, well mounted, lightly armed, just going to ride away, Olaf well knew whither.

A fierce pang shot through to Olaf's heart; he felt dizzied and confused; through the clematis stems and curled tendrils, through the mist rising from his own heart, he dimly saw Leuchnar gather himself together, raise his bridle-hand, and bend forward as his horse sprung up to the gallop; he felt sick, his strong hands trembled; and through the whirling of his brain, and the

buzzing in his ears, he heard himself shout out: 'Good speed, Sir Leuchnar, with your wooing!' That was enough; his heart sank, & his passion grew cool for the second, when he saw how fearfully Leuchnar's face changed at the well-understood words: troubled before as it had been, what was it now, when suddenly all the conscience of the man showed in that small spot of clay, his face? He turned his horse, and rode back swiftly; Olaf waited for him there, scarce knowing what he did at first; yet within a little, something, thoughts of approaching death perhaps, had steadied his brain, and kept his passion back: he heard soon the quick footsteps of some one striding far, and walked quietly toward the door, where he met Leuchnar, his teeth set, his lips a little open, that his hard-drawn breathings might not choke him, his black eyes fixed forward and shining grimly from under his heavy brows like pent-house roofs. Olaf took him by the arm and gripped him hard; but he tore it away fiercely; he flung himself down before Olaf's feet.

'King Olaf,' he said passionately, 'I will not go, I will stay here then, if you look at me like that, with your broad white forehead & golden locks ... you! ... I will die here if I cannot live till I meet the enemy.'

Olaf stooped to raise him up, but he drew farther back from him; then said, still kneeling: 'No word ... no word yet, king, from you. Was it not

Gertha's
Lovers

enough, Olaf, that you should take care of me, and love me in the days before you were king... me, a lonely discontented man, a black spot in the clear whiteness of the most loving people of the earth? was it not enough that, on the day when all the people shouted for Olaf, calling him the wisest & the best, you, with the crown yet on your head, the holy oil not dry there, should take me by the hand, and say to all the knights and all the people, whom you loved so, whom I (God help me!) loved not: 'Behold Leuchnar my friend, who has given me all the wisdom I ever had?' Ah, king! had you looked on me at that moment and seen even then my curling lips saying to my false heart, 'I am so much wiser than these simple ones!' But your clear eyes only looked straight forward, glancing over the heads of the people that was dear to you, despised by me. Was it not enough, King Olaf, that you, as the days passed, still keeping me the nearest to you, still asking me concerning everything, should be beginning to thaw my hard heart and to shake my faith in the faithlessness of Adam's sons? were not these things enough, that you also, first of all finding pretences to mar the nobleness of your sacrifice even to your own heart, should give your love up to me, not as I do now to you, noisily, but quietly, without a word spoken; then afterwards, when you saw with what base eagerness I caught at that love given up by you, and fearing terrible things

for my wretched soul if this went on, stopped me like my guardian angel, just now when I was sneaking off like a thief in the night, and perhaps now... God help me! God help me!... have perhaps even made me do one thing in the whole course of my life which it is good to have done in His eyes?'

Then, as he knelt there, like a man before the presence of God, the king spoke slowly, with humble face indeed, & tearfully, but almost smiling, because all things seemed so clear to him in a moment of prophetic vision.

'Dear Knight, your words seem like a bitter satire to me; for I did not call you back just now for your salvation, but because my selfish passion (think of a selfish king, Leuchnar; what a misery!) my passion carried me away: O, forgive me! for indeed I wish you to have her; think now, how many cares, and joys too, I have in tending this people that God has given me; I am sure that I shall not be quite unhappy for long, whatever happens; sometimes, perhaps, when I am weary, sometimes in the dead night, sometimes in the dying autumn, I shall have thoughts of her; but they will never be unbearable, because no power in earth or heaven can keep me from loving her: it will be no shame to you either, Leuchnar; do you not remember, in past days, how, when we talked of this matter, you have often said (wherein even then I scarce agreed with you), that the

**Gertha's
Lovers** love of man and woman should go before every-
thing, before all friendship, all duty, all honour
even? you thought so then; can you doubt now?'
He ceased, & said no word for a little; then spoke
doubtfully.

'And yet, and yet... are we not as men who reckon,
as they say, without their host? What will Ger-
tha say? ought we not to know before this great
battle is fought, from which, perchance, neither of
us will come alive? and we march to-morrow, and
I may not leave the council and my work here:
wherefore, dear Leuchnar, I pray you on your al-
legiance mount again and ride quickly away to
that cottage, and ask her if she... loves you... and
if... if... Leuchnar, we may be near to death; what-
ever happens we must be brothers... so God speed
you on your wooing.'

Leuchnar had risen while the king was speaking,
and stood before him till he ceased with head sunk
down on his breast; then raised his face, radiant
now with a certain joy, to Olaf's; he spoke no
word, as though that joy, or something else, con-
fused and hurrying, that went with it, was too
great for him; but, bending, kissed the king's hand
and departed.

Then Olaf again leaned from the window and
watched him go by again swiftly, till the sound of
the horse-hoofs had died away: then he turned to-
ward the council chamber, thinking: 'His face was
not like the face of a man who is going to do what

he thinks wrong: I fear lest he go as my ambassador... nay, do I fear? Yet surely that will be the best way to speed his own wooing... O, Gertha! Gertha!... perhaps the sword will cut this knot so close wound up together now; yet I will not pray for that, only that Leuchnar may live.'

Then presently he was in the midst of his lords. Oh what a weary ride that was of Leuchnar's! It was early morning when he started, high noon by the time he drew rein at the cottage door; and that joy which at first he had in his noble deed faded from off his face as the sun rose higher, even as the dew did from off the face of the meadows, & when he dismounted at that house of Sigurd's, his face was woful and ghastly to look on.

He knocked at the door, then entered when no one answered: he said out aloud, though he saw no one there, as if he distrusted his power to repeat that lesson got by heart with such pain: 'I bear a message to the Lady Gertha.'

Only the cool duskiness of the heavy-shadowed oak beams met his eye, only the echo of his own hollow voice, and the chirp of the sparrows, the scream of the swifts, met his ear.

For Gertha was not within; but from the wood she had seen the glimmer of his arms in the hot noontide, and came down, stately and slow, unmoved to look on, but her heart of hearts wavering within her with hope and fear and ecstasy of

**Gertha's
Lovers**

love: perhaps (O poor heart, what wild hope!)
it might be the king.

She met him just at the door from whence he had turned to seek her: he durst not meet her eyes, those grand fire-orbs that had pierced him through and through that other day; if he had looked up at her face he would have seen the disappointment, the sickness of hope deferred, showing somewhat there in spite of her efforts to keep the appearance of it back.

He, with his face turned away, said, in a hard voice as before: 'I bear a message for the Lady Gertha.' No blush coloured her pale cheeks, no start or trembling went through her grand form; she still held that flower in her hand, holding it with queenly sway, for it fitted in her hand like a sceptre: she said gently, 'If you want Lady Gertha, you must go elsewhere, my lord; I am Sigurd the husbandman's daughter.'

'But you are Gertha that we heard sing that day,' he said fiercely, & turning his eager eyes suddenly on her.

'Yea,' she said, trembling a little now, and turning even paler; for she saw how matters went with him, and feared, not any violence from him, for she soon read him through & through, but rather that he should fall down dead before her, his passion rent his heart so.

'Gertha, Olaf the king says, Will you be queen?' he said, still looking hungrily at her.

The crimson blood rushed up over her face, then went to her heart again, leaving her very lips grey. She paused a moment, with her arms stretched straight down, and her hands clenched; she said, without looking up: 'Tell him, No; I am too lowly, not wise enough, I should shame him; I will not be queen ... But ...'

What wild passions rushed through poor Leuchnar's heart! how he fought with that Devil which had looked him steadily in the face so long, ever since he was born till now! She stood there still before him, with arms stretched downward, hands clenched; he seized her by the wrist, and almost shrieked out: 'But what? ... Gertha! Gertha! before God, do you love him?'

Her colour came again as she looked him in the face, put very close to hers now, so close that she felt his breath upon it; she said calmly, almost proudly: 'Yea, I love him; how could it be otherwise?'

'Some token then, for Christ's sake; quick, Gertha! and where will you be in the war time?'

'My father goes with me to-morrow to the city. I shall dwell at St. Agnes' convent of nuns till Borrace is defeated.'

'Then some token! ... here!' (and he tore down from the cottage eaves a bunch of golden stone-crop) 'If you love him (think of God, Gertha), kiss this.'

She bowed her head, and touched the yellow flow-

Gertha's
Lovers

ers with her lips; as she did so, he bent and kissed her forehead; then, with the flowers yet in his hand, he sprung impetuously to his saddle and galloped as if for his life. The Devil was conquered at last.

'Poor knight!' said Gertha, looking after him pityingly, 'then he loves me too; it seems wrong to feel happy when such a noble knight is so miserable.'

Yet she did feel very happy, and soon forgot poor Leuchnar and his sorrows, who was riding meanwhile wildly through the forest; yet, as he drew further from her, the madness of his passion abated a little; he gave his horse rest at last, and, dismounting, lay down on the ferns by the side of the forest-path, & there, utterly worn out in mind and body, fell asleep; a dreamless sleep it was at first, as deep as death almost, yet, as it grew lighter, he fell to dreaming, and at last woke from a dream wherein Gertha had come to him, shrieked out that Olaf was slain, then thrown her arms about his neck; but, as he tried to kiss her, he awoke, and found himself under the beech-boughs, his horse standing over him, and the bridle, hanging loose from the bit, dangling about his face; for the horse doubted if he were dead.

He rose from that dream with a great wrench of his heart, and, mounting, rode on soberly. The moon shone down on him now, for he had slept far into the night. The stone-crop was fading fast,

and as he looked at it, he doubted whether to curse it or bless it, but at last raised it to his mouth and kissed it, knowing whose lips had touched it before, looking half-fearfully over his shoulder as he did so; perhaps he thought a little also how Olaf's face would flush into perfect beauty for joy, when he saw it; for joy mixed with a certain regret for himself.

So, when he reached the palace, quite late at night, when the moon was already setting, he found Olaf standing in the great hall alone, looking pale and wearied.

Leuchnar came quite close to him, and said, taking his hand and smiling a sick smile, 'Olaf, she sent you this, kissing it.'

Olaf caught the faded flowers, kissed them a thousand times, knelt, and held them against his heart, against his forehead. He murmured... what words I know not, or, knowing, shall not say; while Leuchnar stood by with that old bitter smile on his lips. Poor fellow! he had expected sudden clasping of Olaf's arms about him, praise for his nobleness, consolation for his failure. Ah! did he not know himself what a passion love was? Then why did he expect from so true a man as Olaf protestation that he was the first when truly he was but the second? O! you all know what it is to be second in such a race; it is to be nowhere. Why he, too, if he had been successful, would have forgotten Olaf, & the way his sword flashed

**Gertha's
Lovers** in the battle. It was only now in his disappointment that a certain natural instinct made him catch at all the love that came across him of whatsoever kind. That was why he thought so much of Olaf now. Yes, and in a little time he did think of all this, and smiled no more. 'Poor Leuchnar!' he said to himself, 'you must be very far in the background now, know that for certain. Then, did you not know all this when you knelt here some twelve hours back? O! foolish Leuchnar! yet, poor Leuchnar, too!'

And he was now so far from smiling that, but for his manhood, he would have wept for self-pity. Moreover, Olaf came to him and said, laying his hands on his shoulders, and leaning forward towards his face: 'You are the noblest of all men, and will in nowise lose your reward.'

And Leuchnar knew that, or he might have gone mad; yet he prayed that his reward might be death presently, in the joyous battle.

So, on the morrow, they marched to meet King Borrace; and, on the evening of the third day, encamped but a little distance from his pirates. And when, on the next morning, they stood in battle array, and the king rode up and down their line, Leuchnar saw in his helm the bunch of stone-crop, now quite withered.

Then that day, among the aspens, they joined battle.

CHAPTER III. THE LIGHT OF ISRAEL.

Gertha's
Lovers

Then, in the midst of them, the old man rose up and spoke, while all the rest sat silent, some gazing fixedly on the ground, some on the fair dead king that lay there before them.

For he had been slain with one wound that had gone right through his breast to the heart, and his body was not hacked or disfigured. They had taken his rent armour from off him, and washed his corpse, and spread out his long yellow hair to right and left of his face, along the samite cloth, purple, gold-starred, that he lay upon; and, behind him, at his head, they had laid his sword and armour, the helm yet having that stone-crop in it, the ends of the stalks at least; for all the rest had been shredded off in that fierce fight. Great waxen candles burned all about him; two priests sat at the head and two at the foot of the bier, clad in gorgeous robes of deep sorrowful purple, gold-embroidered; for these men revered man's body so, even when the soul was not so near to it as it had been, that in those hours of doubt and danger, they thought the time well spent in making the body of their king, of him the best and most beautiful of all men, look as beautiful as God would ever have dead bodies look.

So, while some gazed on the ground, some on the fair dead king, none weeping, but all stern with thought; for they had to think of him as being

**Gertha's
Lovers** present with them in their council, not dead; while they gazed earnestly, the old man, Barulf, arose and said:

‘Sons of the men that go from east to west, and round again to the east! I advise you this day to do such a deed of valour as you have never done yet. Death in God’s behalf, on the side of your friends, is not hard to bear, brothers, even when it comes slow and lingering; but how glorious to die in a great battle, borne down by over-many foes, to lie, never dead, but a living terror for all time to God’s enemies and ours, a living hope to the sons of God! And to die altogether, beholding, between the sword-strokes, the faces of dear friends all a-light with intensest longing; is not that glorious!’

Their stern faces lighted up with flushing of cheek and flashing of eye as he spake; for in their hearts was fear of something far worse than dying on that field between the aspens with friends’ eyes upon them. But Barulf went on: ‘Yet, brothers, not this I bid you do. I give as my counsel that we depart this night, taking with us nothing but our arms, some small provision, & this dear dead thing here: turn our backs upon the foe, and depart, that we may reach the mother-city, where the women and children are; & I think I have good reasons for this.’ ‘And how then shall we face the women and children?’ said a young man moodily.

‘Brother,’ said Barulf, ‘will you be a coward, in-

deed, from fear of being thought a coward? your heart does not counsel this, I know; and as for the women and children, are they mere beasts, so as not to understand this? will they not say rather: These men are warriors, they cannot fear death; then are they the braver to be so faithful, to be without fear of reproach for fear, so faithful to us above all things; we will love them all the more?' 'But why should we not die here fighting, Sir Barulf?' said another; 'are there not men left when we are all dead?'

'Yea, dear knight, men, but not men enough. Think awhile. Adolf with his ten thousand men, and God's snow & storm that are tens and tens of thousands, guard the passes against the emperor. Good: they are enough as it is; but take away half for the defence of the cities, the mother-city above all, which is the weakest, the most beautiful, the fullest of women and children of all; and then would five thousand be enough to guard those passes? Even as it is, were not this summer a cold one and the snows deep, the emperor might drive his serf-soldiers with whip and sword-point over our dead soldiers' bodies: but suppose they were lessened, our heroes would indeed die in their places, and would doubtless slay many of the enemy; but suppose they killed & wounded twice their own number, yet two days afterwards some 200,000 men would be marching over our land within fifty miles of the beautiful city.

**Gertha's
Lovers**

Again, Edwin and his 300 ships, diligently sailing into every nook and strait of the pirate island, and every day and night solemnly passing to and fro, with the white red-crossed banner at their mastheads, guard the coast well; but let him land half, nay a third only of his men for the defence of the city, and in a week the sea-port towns and villages, safe from all scathe now, would be blazing very high toward the heavens, and King Bor-race's red and black ship-sides would gleam with the reflection of the Greek fire, as the dragons of it leapt toward the harbour-mouth.

Moreover, the Lord Hugh, in his fortified camp, holds his own well enough now against the three Dukes; who prowl always like accursed cowardly wolves as they are, gnashing their teeth when they think that their provisions cannot last much longer, not more than another month; and, stamping on the ground, invoke the Devil, their cousin german, when they remember that not a blade of grass or ear of corn is left in the country behind them, laid waste as it was with fire, by the cruel fools as they marched: they, howling too for very rage when they see the wains in long lines entering Hugh's camp, and when they hear the merry sound of the trumpets, mingled often with the chaunting of the priests and the singing of men, singing about death that is no death. Ah! they howl, the wolves, disappointed enough now; but suppose Hugh were to weaken his camp so as no

longer to be able to send out his swarm of light-armed, who prevent the enemy from spoiling the yet unwasted country; then also, no longer fearing an attack, the Dukes march nearer to him, get themselves corn and wine, cut off his supplies, march past him at last with their 50,000 men, not easy to destroy then. For cowards as the Dukes are, and imbecile drivellers, knowing nothing of war, yet have they along with them crafty captains, who, when their highnesses' passions master them not, give good advice which is listened to, and the commoner sort, though robbers by nature and nurture, have yet a certain kind of courage, and much strength in body and skill of arms.' In all the warriors' faces you might have seen a gloomy conviction that his counsel was good; but they sat silent, it seemed such a shame to turn and flee before this enemy they had just beaten! Yet never for a moment did they doubt but that their people would in the end prevail over the enemies that hemmed them in, whatever became of those 20,000 left alive there on the plain; and Barulf spoke to the better part of all their hearts when he said: 'Does it then seem so hard a thing to you, sons of the men that go westward, that we, having fought for three days such a battle as this, should have at last to turn and flee, carrying our dead king with us? Oh! it is hard, very bitter and cruel, brothers; yet is it God's will, and in his sight, doubtless, is as glorious as if we all died

Gertha's
Lovers

here in our places. And I am well assured that this and all things else only hasten us westward; it cannot be in any of your hearts that this people should fail. Nay, rather our sons' sons in the after-time will speak of these as glorious days in which the nations hedged us about, but in which we prevailed mightily against them.

But for another matter' ... and as he spoke, the memory came across him bitterly that the king they had chosen but two years since lay dead before them now: then his face changed, and so it was with all of them, now that they were free to think of that loss; for but a little time back he had been with them; even just now, as they talked in their old way of fresh battles, & thought of the swinging of the swords, he had almost seemed to be there alive; but now ...

One of the priests who sat by him had fallen asleep, wearied out with tending the wounded and dying, and his head had fallen on his breast; another sat quite upright with his hands laid on his knees, thinking dreadful things of what was coming on the land; the third, a spare young man, black-haired and sallow-faced, in his nervous anxiety twitched at the border of his cope as he glanced about the tent, looking uneasily on the face, first of one, then of another, of those that sat there; the fourth, as he sat, sad-faced and great-eyed, thinking of his mother and sisters whom he had left in a castle of the lowland country, had

taken one long yellow tress of the dead man's hair, & was absently twining it about his fingers. Then arose Leuchnar with about as miserable a look on his face as a good man can ever have, and said: 'Sir Barulf, I know what you were about to say, concerning the king' (a shudder ran through them all); 'I have a message from the king to all of you. I was by him when the spear pierced his true heart; I drew him a little out of the fight; he said: 'I am wounded to death; but, alive or dead, I must not leave this field. Bury me just about where the enemy makes his last stand before he turns.' For you see, knights, our dead lord was sure of this, that the fair city would be saved. Then the blood rising from his heart choked him somewhat, yet he said gaspingly: 'Quick, Leuchnar, bend to my mouth.' So I bent, and he said, faintly and hurriedly: 'Undo my mail, and take the paper there, and give it to the lords and knights in council.' So I took a paper from his breast over his heart; the spear had pierced it through, and had carried some of it into the wound, and the trickling blood had stained it; I took it from off the broken truncheon of the lance which was yet in the wound. I showed it to him, he bowed his head in token that all was well, when he had looked at it eagerly; then he said: 'I wish to go, draw out the truncheon, faithful and true! poor Leuchnar!' I drew it out; there was a great rush of blood; he smiled on me, and died.'

Gertha's
Lovers

Thereon Leuchnar stepped from his place, and, going up to Barulf, gave him the paper, very much stained and torn. Barulf read it.

'Good saints, how strange! do you know what is written in it, Sir Leuchnar?'

'Nay, I but guess, Sir Barulf; for I did not open it.'

'Listen, knights!' said Barulf, & he read: 'Knights and lords, if I die in this battle, as I think I shall, then (if so be it seem good to you) let Gertha, the daughter of Sigurd the husbandman, be queen in my stead; she lodges in the mother-city, with the abbess of St. Agnes' Abbey of nuns.'

'Yes, I thought so,' said Leuchnar, scarcely however speaking to them, for he was thinking to himself of himself; his sorrow seemed to have lessened much, even in the reading of that letter, for he thought: 'Now she is queen, and has this sorrow on her, I can serve her much better, and my love will not trouble her now as it would have done, for it will seem only like the love of a good subject to his mistress; and I will lessen every grief of hers as it arises, loving her so, never vexing her in the least; O selfish Leuchnar, to be glad of her sorrow! yet I am glad, not of her sorrow, but of my service that will be.'

These thoughts, and how many more, he thought in a single instant of time; how many pictures came up to be gazed on as it were for a long time, in that instant! pictures of his life before he saw

her, and of the things which in his mind belonged to her; the white sandy shore that the low waves broke on; the feathering beech trees, with their tender green leaves in the early summer; king Borrace's burnt ships, great logs clomb over by the briony and clematis; the high-roofed cottage, whereon the loving golden-glowing stone-crop grew; they came up before his eyes to be gazed at; and the heavy waxen candles burnt lower, the sleeping priest breathed heavily, the others sat in painful silence, nursing their grief; which things Leuchnar saw not because of those sweet pictures, even as they say that the drowning man, when the first fierce pain and struggle is over, sees no more the green, red-stained, swaying water-weeds, that lap his eyes and mouth; sees rather his old home, and all the things that have been, for memory is cruel-kind to men.

Still the candles flared and flickered in the gusts that stirred the tent, for the wind was rising with the moon; and at last the one nearest the tent door was blown out by a long blast, and the priest who had been sleeping awoke, drew up his body with a start, trying to fix his blinded blinking eyes on Sir Barulf's face, as waked men use to do. Thereat suddenly Barulf sprung to his feet, as if he too was waking from sleep, and cried out aloud: 'Rouse ye, lords and knights, that we may march to our queen! for, for my part, our queen she shall be; all he said and did was right and true when he was

**Gertha's
Lovers**

alive; and he was, and is, the wisest of all men, and she too is a right noble woman; was it never told you, knights, how she saved her father when king Borrace's men took him prisoner? What say you, shall she be our queen?'

And they all said 'Yea.'

Then again said Barulf: 'Unless lords Edwin, Hugh, and Adolf gainsay it (as I have no doubt they will not), God save queen Gertha!' Then they all stood up and said: 'God save queen Gertha!'

And Barulf said: 'Send a herald round about the army to proclaim Gertha queen, and to bid all to be ready to march some two hours before the setting of the moon. Cause also the knight who carries the great banner to be present, that we may bury the king.'

So when all was ready, the noblest of the knights, Barulf and Leuchnar among them, lifted up the bier whereon the king lay, and they marched together towards the burial-place; and the standard-bearer bore the great banner to flap above him, and the priests went before and after, chaunting; and a great body of knights and soldiers went with them as they marched over the plain; and the great moon, risen now, struck on their arms, threw the shadows of them weirdly on the dead that lay so thick among the trees, looked down on by the summer moon, rustled over by the full-leaved aspens.

They went a full mile, till they came to a place ringed about with aspen trees, about which the enemy that past day had been finally broken. Here they buried him, standing about in a ring, in as thick ranks as ever in the battle; tearlessly and sternly they watched the incense smoke rising white in the moonlight, they listened to the chaunting, they lifted up their voices, and very musically their sorrow of heart was spoken.

'Listen!' said king Borrace's men, when they heard the singing; 'Hark to the psalm-singing dogs! but by about this time to-morrow they will be beginning to leave off singing for good and all, for clearly the fools will wait to be killed, and we shall kill them all, and then hurrah for plunder!' But the next day about noontide, when they (not hurrying themselves, for they thought they were quite safe), when they reached the camp, behold it was empty, for they all marched the night before, and were now still marching along the dusty road leagues and leagues from that battle-field. Whereon king Borrace, instead of pursuing them, returned to his camp, where he gnashed his teeth for some half-hour or so, and held a great feast, he and his, and stayed on that field for three days; 'To give his army rest,' he said.

CHAPTER IV. GERTHA THE QUEEN.
And meantime how did it fare with Gertha? The time passed slowly between hope and fear, and all

Gertha's
Lovers

the time was weary with a sick longing that would have been no less had he but gone out on a hunting expedition. She had pity too for those who were sick with love and dread, and all those who looked on her loved her.

Then one evening about sunset-time, as the nuns were singing in their chapel and she with them, as the low sun struck through the western window, and smote upon the gold about the altar till it changed it to a wonderful crimson, upon which the pale painted angels that flecked the gold showed purer and paler than ever; there came, on that sunset evening, far off and faint at first, across, over the roofs of the houses up to the hill whereon the Abbey stood, a sound of shouting mingled with the wailing of women, and the still sadder & more awful wailing of the great trumpets, which seemed to be the gathered sorrow from the hearts of the men, who themselves could not wail because of their manhood.

Tremblingly the nuns heard it, and their hymns fainted and died, as that awful sound of the indignant sorrow of a whole people going up to heaven rose and deepened, and swept onward: and Gertha turned pale even to the lips, and trembled too, at first, like an aspen-leaf, her heart beating so the while that she could hear the throbbings of it; but with a mighty effort she put back the trembling fever; she said low to herself: 'He is dead, and I must not die yet.' Then she left her seat & walked,

pale in her face like a marble statue, up to the altar; she turned round and faced the door and the sun, none hindering her, for they said: 'She waits for news about the battle.'

The sun was on her forehead at first as she stood still, but it sunk lower till it touched her lips, and they seemed to quiver (though she held them still) in that flood of light.

So she stood, when lo! the clash of arms in the vestibule, and there entered armed knights without bowing to the altar or crossing themselves, Leuchnar first, then Barulf and some twenty lords following him; the others gazed about confusedly at first, but Leuchnar going before them all walked swiftly up to the place where Gertha stood, and fell before her feet, spreading his arms out towards her as he did so, and his iron armour rattled with strange echo about the vaulted roof; she did not look at him, her eyes beheld rather the far-off battle-field, and Olaf lying there somewhere under the earth.

'Queen Gertha,' he began; but his voice failed him for thronging memories. Sir Barulf and the others drew reverently towards the two, and waited a little way off standing in a half circle. He heaved a great sigh, then bent lower yet, till his mail clinked against the step whereon she stood; then suddenly raised his passionate eyes to hers, and gazed till she was forced to look on him both with heart and eyes.

Gertha's
Lovers

She beheld him pityingly: he said again: 'Queen Gertha!' (thereat she started) 'Queen Gertha, he is dead.'

'O Leuchnar, I heard the trumpets sing it so, therefore I stayed here for his message; what is it?'

'That you must be Queen over us yet awhile, Lady Gertha.'

'Ah! and must I be; may I not go to him at once? for do you know, Leuchnar,' (and she stooped down low towards him, and laid her hand on his head as he knelt) 'do you know, I saw him just now lying pale and cold, waiting for me, his arms stretched out this way towards me, his changed eyes looking longingly.'

'O noblest,' he said, 'know you not with how many perils we are beset? Whose spirit but his can help us through, and with whom does it dwell but with you?'

She wept: 'Leuchnar, though he call for me so, yet perhaps that is because he is sick and weak and scarce knows what he says: and I know that in his heart he desires above all things the safety of this people that goes westward; so I will be Queen till the last foe is vanquished: tell them so.' Then he took her hand; how strangely as he held it did the poor flesh of him quiver, how his heart melted in the midst of his body! He held her hand and said, 'I am Queen Gertha's liegeman.' Then sprung to his feet & called out aloud: 'Sir Barulf and knights all, come and do hom-

age to Gertha our Queen!' Then each man knelt before her, and took her hand, and said, 'I am Queen Gertha's liegeman.'

Afterwards all standing about her together, but lower than she, clashed across her their swords and axes that rang out joyfully, wildly, half madly in that quiet place; while the sun grew lower, so that its light fell on her bosom, and her face above looked out sad and pale and calm from among the flashing steel.

So that day Gertha was made Queen. And then all throughout the city you might have heard the ringing of hammers on iron as the armourers did their work, & the clinking of the masons' trowels as they wrought at the walls, strengthening them; for the walls had grown somewhat weak, as it was very many years since any enemy had threatened the city with a land army. And on the sixth day came King Borrace, having wasted the land far and wide as he marched. Now when he had sent a herald to demand the surrender of that city, who had not even been suffered to enter it, but had been answered scornfully from the walls, he gnashed his teeth, and mounting a great black horse and armed with a mace rode about, ordering his battle. Then also Gertha, leaving her hall of Council, went round about the walls with a band of knights: over her robes of purple and crimson her glorious hair flowed loose, and a gold crown marked her, circling her head; while in her hand she bore a

**Gertha's
Lovers**

slim white rod for a leader's staff. Very faithful and true were all those in the town, both soldiers and women; but when she drew near to any, their faith grew so, that they seemed transported out of themselves; the women wept for very love, and the men shouted 'Gertha! Gertha!' till all the air rang; and King Borrace muttered stupidly from between his teeth, 'They are praying to their gods, the fools.' Then, turning about, he said to one who was master of his artillery: 'Gasgan, son of a dog, bring up the catapults & shoot me down that woman there; there she goes, poking her head over the battlements: quick, O wretch be-gotten by the Devil's ram.'

So Gasgan fixed his catapult & aimed the rugged stone at Gertha as she leaned over the wall, thinking, forgetting the fight and all, for him, just for a single instant. He looked along the engine once, twice, thrice; once, twice, thrice he started back without letting the catch slip. 'Dog,' said Borrace, riding up, 'why shootest not?'

The man looked up with drops of cold sweat hanging to his brow, then stammered out: 'O my lord, it is nothing ... that is, there is nothing there now, nor was there when I fitted the levers; but when my hand went to the bolt, each time I saw standing before me that man, the king who was slain the other day, his sword drawn in his hand, & frowning on me terribly; I cannot shoot, my lord... O Lord, save me!' he shrieked at last,

for Borrace, hitching up his great iron mace by its thong into his hand, began to swing it, putting back his lips from his teeth and setting his head forward. 'Son of a rotten sheep, can a ghost stop a stone from a petraria? go and join King Olaf.' So he struck him on the uplifted face, between the eyes, and Gasgan fell dead without a groan, not to be known any more by his wife or mother even, for the mace had shattered his skull.

'Now then,' said Borrace, 'I will try the ghost of this fellow whom I slew once, & whom I will slay again, God being my help.' He leapt down from his horse, and let his hand fall to the bolt; but just as he did so, before him, calm, but frowning, stood Olaf with bright-gleaming sword & yellow hair blown by the wind. 'Art thou not dead then?' shouted Borrace furiously, and with a great curse he drew the bolt.

The stone flew fiercely enough, but not towards Gertha; it went sideways, and struck down two of Borrace's own lords, dashing the life out of the first and maiming the other for life. Borrace flung on to his horse, howling out like a mad dog, 'Witch! Witch!' and like a man possessed galloped toward the city as though he would leap wall and ditch, screaming such mad blasphemy as cannot be written. After him very swiftly galloped some fifty knights and men-at-arms for his protection, and but just in time; for one of the city gates swung open, the drawbridge fell with

**Gertha's
Lovers**

a heavy thump, & out rode a single knight armed with a northern axe instead of a spear, slim in figure, but seeming to be good at war. He dashed through the first few of Borrace's horsemen, who came up in scattered fashion because they had been riding as in a race, unhorsing a man to right and left of him as he passed through them, then made right at the king; as they met, Borrace struck out blind with rage at the knight, who putting aside the heavy mace smote him on the side of the helm, that he tumbled clean out of the saddle.

'Gertha! Gertha!' shouted the knight, and he caught Borrace's horse by the bridle, and dashed off towards the gate again, where in the flanking towers the archers stood ready to cover his retreat; for some twenty yards as they galloped furiously on, Borrace dragged in the stirrup, then the stirrup-leather broke, and his horsemen seeing him lie still there, gave up the pursuit of the victorious knight, which was the better advised, as the first flight of arrows from the bowmen had already slain three outright, and wounded five, and they were again getting their strings to their ears.

'Gertha! Leuchnar for Gertha!' rang from the knight again, as he turned just before he crossed the drawbridge; but the last of the enemies stood up in his stirrups and poised his lance in act to throw; but before it left his hand an arrow had leapt through his throat, & he fell dead. 'Gertha!'

shouted the archer. And then again the draw-bridge swayed up, letting little stones fall into the moat from it, down rattled the portcullis, and the heavy gate swung to.

Then presently arose mightily the cry of 'Gertha! Gertha, the Queen!'

But withal, when the pirates found that King Borrace was not slain, but only very much bruised, they advanced their engines, and the catapults and balistae and rams shook the wall, and made many sore cracks in the older parts, and the arrows flew like hail, and the 'cats,' great wooden towers covered with skins to protect them from fire, began to rise against the town. Nevertheless, through all that weary day, though the defenders were so few for the great length of wall, they fought cheerfully and with good faith, like the men they were.

So that when they brought news to battered King Borrace, who lay tossing on his bed, concerning how little progress they had made, he gnashed his teeth, and cursed and was right mad.

And all the while through the thunder of the balista-stones against the wall, through the howling of the catapult stones as they came among them into the city, through the gaunt uplifting of the misshapen rams, through the noise of the sledge-hammers clamping the iron bands of the cat-towers, through the whirr of arrows, through wounds and weariness, and death of friends, still

Gertha's rose the shout of 'Gertha! Gertha the Queen!
Lovers Gertha!'

Guess whether many people lay awake that night, or rather whether any slept at all, save those who were utterly wearied out by that day's fighting or by their own restless excitement. Many did not even try to sleep, but sat round about the cold hearth telling stories; brave stories, mostly of the good old times that were fathers to the good times now; or else they would go about the walls in an eager fever to see what was going on; and some there were who stood all that night by the bed of some sorely wounded friend; and some, mother, lover, friend, stood also by bedsides holding the cold hands with bitter thoughts that were hard to bear.

That night was dark, with much gusty wind and a drizzle of rain, therefore, though it was August and the days long, yet it was quite dark by nine o'clock, and a little after twilight the enemies' pet-
rariae left off playing, so that the besieged had rest: but before daybreak the drizzle had changed to steady rain, the wind having fallen. Even before dawn the camp was a-stir, and two hours afterwards the cat-towers were again building, and the battering had begun again.

And so that day passed, through the rainy hours of it; and about two hours after noon the enemy tried to scale the lowest part of the wall near the harbour. Thereupon Gertha came to that part

and looked on the fighters from a tower, with a circle of knights round about. Therefore her people waxed so valiant, that though the pirates, fighting like madmen, fixed the ladders to the wall even through the storm of arrows and stones (for the tide was out and there was no water now round about the wall), they were nevertheless driven back with great slaughter. Also, on the other side of the town, one of the cat-towers was fired, and many perished miserably therein.

That evening Gertha sat and took counsel with her lords & knights; whereon Leuchnar arose and said, 'Noble lady, we must make a sortie, and collect every man, and every boy too, to guard the walls meanwhile, for we are very few to guard so great a city, and the enemy is very many; half our men are utterly worn out with these two days' fighting, coming so close upon their long march; the walls, either old and crumbling, or new and still damp, are cracked in twenty places: they are making a great raft for the crossing of the moat; go to the open window, lady, and you will hear, though it is night, the sound of their hammers busy on it. When King Borrace can put on his armour again, (would that I had slain him outright!) we shall be attacked in twenty places at once, and then I fear it will go hard with the fair city; we must make a night attack, and do all the burning and slaying that we may.'

'Dear knight,' said Barulf, 'you are young and

**Gertha's
Lovers**

wise. This thing must be done: let some one get together two thousand of our best men, and those that are least wearied; let them be divided into two bands, and march out, the one by Gate St. George, the other by the East Gate; you, Sir Leuchnar, shall lead the one out of Gate St. George, and I will lead the other.'

He said this last quite eagerly, and the colour sprang up to his face: Gertha looked at him half shyly, then spoke to him.

'Nay, Sir Barulf, are you not then too old for blushing? Except for the last word your speech was very wise, but that spoilt it rather; for you must stay behind with us, some one else must go.' She smiled serenely as she spoke; indeed she seemed quite happy now, seeing prophetically perhaps that the end drew near.

'And I?' said Leuchnar, 'may I not go?'

'Go, fair knight, and the Lord keep you from all harm.'

But Barulf said, smiling also: 'As for me, Queen Gertha, you know best, so I will stay behind, and hope to get a good drive at the three Dukes; they will keep, doubtless; may the Lord make their hands light! but who shall go in my stead?'

She looked round the noble assembly, and her eyes fixed on a young knight who sat over against her; their eyes met, and he seemed to Gertha to resemble somewhat her king, who was waiting for her near the poplar-trees. So she said: 'Sir

knight, I know not your name; you I mean, with the blue surcoat and the golden chevron on it; but will you take this service upon you?’

He had been gazing at her all the time they had sat there, and when he heard her speaking to him it must have seemed to him as if they two were alone together, for he looked this way and that, just as though he feared that some one might hear what they said one to the other; he rose and fell before her feet, not knowing if he were in Heaven or not, for his yearning was so strong that it almost satisfied itself. He muttered something almost inaudible about his unworthiness. She gazed at him as he lay there with that inexpressible pity and tenderness in her face, which made all men love her so, trust in her.

‘Wait, fair knight, and rise, I pray you; have you Father or Mother alive yet?’

‘No, Lady,’ he said, still kneeling, like a suppliant for dear life.

‘Any sisters or brothers?’

‘None, Lady Gertha, now.’

‘Have you a Lover?’

‘Yea; one whom I love.’

Oh how the look of pity deepened in her eyes! what wonder that every nerve trembled in his body?

‘And would she give it to your charge to lead a desperate sortie, young as you are, with life all before you, as men say?’

Gertha's
Lovers

'Will she bid me go?' he said.

'Poor boy! yet go. In the aftertime we shall meet again, whatever happens, and you and Olaf will be friends, and you will see all his glory. What is your name?'

'Richard.'

'Farewell, Richard,' and she gave him her hand to kiss; then he departed, saying no word, and sat outside for a minute or two, quite bewildered with his happiness.

Then came Leuchnar, and they went together to see concerning the men they wanted, and as they went they told each other that which was nearest their hearts: then said Richard: 'This is about the happiest time of my life, since I was a child; shall we not fight well, Sir Leuchnar?'

'Yes,' he said, 'we ought both to praise God, Sir Richard, that, things being so, He has shown us so clearly what to do; I remember now how often in the past days I used after my fashion to torment myself with thinking how ever I should pass the time if it chanced that my love (when it came, for love of all kinds was long in coming to my dull heart) should fail me; and now God calls us merely to spend a few hours in glorious fight, and then doubtless He will give us forgetfulness till we see her again: and all this I have not at all deserved, for though men's lips formed themselves to speak my name often, praising it for my many good deeds, yet the heart knoweth its

own bitterness, and I know wherefore I did such things; not for God's glory, but for my glory.'

'Does not God then accept a man's deeds, even if he stumble up to do them through mixed motives, part bad and part good? Is it not written, By their fruits ye shall know them? And your fruits...how often when I have heard men talking of you have I longed to be like you, so brave and wise and good!'

'Ah! the fruits, the fruits!' said Leuchnar; 'when I think what the lawful fruits of my thoughts were, I shudder to see how near the Devil's House I have passed. Pray for me in the battle, Richard.'

'You are very good and humble, Leuchnar,' he said, 'and I know not what good the prayers of such an one as I am could do you, but I will pray. Yet I myself have been careless about deeds at all; I have loved beauty so much that I fear if any crime had at any time stood between me and beauty I should have committed that crime to reach it; yet has God been so kind to me, and kindest of all in this, that I who have done nothing all my life long yet, should do this and then die.'

'And it is good to do one thing, and then die,' said Leuchnar; 'farewell.'

So they departed each to his own band; and by this time the rain had ceased, the wind had risen, and was now blowing strong from the sea; the clouds were clearing off somewhat, but it was not

Gertha's
Lovers

quite bright; moreover the moon, though it had risen, was pretty much behind the clouds.

The two thousand horsemen went, each thousand in its own direction, very quietly along the streets; they opened Gate St. George quite quietly also, and Leuchnar passed out at the head of his men. Now on each side of that gate was a cat-tower; so a hundred men were sent to each of these to burn them first; they were then to follow the main body, doing such damage as they could to the petrariae along their way. Now this side of the camp happened to be very carelessly guarded, scarcely guarded at all in fact; there was no one in the cats, & the guards about fifty in number, who ought to have been watching them, were asleep some twenty yards off; so both parties succeeded in firing the cats, taking care to put such store of tow and flax mingled with pitch into them that it should be impossible to drown the flames; moreover the guards, awakened by the trampling of the horses and roar of the flames, were put to the sword as they rose, sleepy, bewildered, unable to use their arms: then the two hundred men, burning as they went along the altogether unguarded petrariae on their path, soon joined the main body, & they all rode on swiftly toward the camp, just beginning to stir because of the noise, and the flare of the burning cats. A few minutes' gallop brought Leuchnar to the foremost tents, which were fired, and then through the smoke & flame

Leuchnar dashed into King Borrace's camp at the head of his thousand horsemen.

At first there was scarce any resistance; the men were cut down and speared as they ran half-armed from out of the burning tents, & the flames spread in the rising wind; but the alarm too spreading, and many bands coming up in good order, Leuchnar was surrounded almost before he knew it; so in a pause in the fight he looked about him to see how he and his could die most to the advantage of the People; he listened and looked toward the East Gate; there were no flames to be seen in that quarter where Richard was to have fired the great balistae and the rams & the raft for the crossing of the moat; for, to leave Leuchnar about to do something desperate, some of King Borrace's men on that side had heard a stir in the town, and the bravest of them had gone to tell him: for at this time he was well nigh mad with his foil, & raged like the Devil himself, to whom indeed he must have been nearly related, and the service of telling him anything like bad news was indeed a desperate one. However, as I said, some brave men plucked up heart of grace to go and tell him that the townsmen seemed to be about to make a sally on that side of the camp.

He answered them first of all by throwing four javelins at them, one after another; for he had a sheaf of those weapons put by his bedside for that very purpose; one of them was wounded by this

**Gertha's
Lovers**

javelin-flight, the others by careful dodging managed to avoid him: then at last he listened to them, and being rather sobered ordered 5000 horsemen to fetch a compass and charge Richard's party in the rear when he was well drawn out towards the balistae, which, as they were larger on this side (for it was on this side that the enemy hoped most to make a breach), were farther from the walls that they might be out of the range of the townsmen's engines.

So when Richard came out of the East Gate very softly, this band of 5000 men was quite close to him, and the balistae were guarded by a great body of archers and slingers; and neither horsemen nor archers could be seen, because, the night being gusty, the moon was at that time behind the clouds: so then Richard coming near to one of the great balistae sent aside fifty men to fire it, who were straightway attacked in front and flank by arrow-flights, so that all those who were not armed in proof were either slain or too badly wounded to retreat; the rest rode back in haste to the main body, which had halted as soon as Richard saw how matters went: then indeed would Sir Richard and all his men have died without helping Gertha or the people that went westward much, as men count help: but the captain of those 5000 thought he would not attack Richard from behind, lest he should ride down his own people in the darkness, who he saw had

already had some contest with the townsmen; but thinking that he would turn at once toward the town meant to fall on him as he retreated without order.

But Richard, seeing well how things had really gone, turned round to his men, and called out: 'Keep well together, and fight well for Gertha;' then 'Sound trumpets, and Richard for Gertha! So they dashed right at the camp at the gallop, and entered it close to Borrace's tent, where it was not deep but straggling.

Now Borrace, thinking that nothing else could happen but that the townsmen should all be slain close to the walls, was standing near his tent, talking to some of his Captains, and armed all save his helm; for he was now well or nearly well of his bruises, & intended to lead an attack the next day. So there he stood, and four Captains with him, he twirling his mace about in his nervous excitement, and sometimes looking uneasily at those that stood by, as if he thought they were getting something out of him. Judge of his astonishment when he heard Richard's shout of 'Gertha,' and then the thunder of the horsehoofs. 'Curse that witch!' he ground out from between his teeth, 'shall I never hear the last of her? only I think, when I have seen her well burnt out of hand, after that'...

'For your life, my lord! for your life! they are coming this way, they will be over us in a minute!'

**Gertha's
Lovers**

And he turned & ran, and ran well too; and Borrace also began to run, and got clear out of the way of the main body, and would have escaped but that a certain knight, espying him, and knowing well the villainous wolf's face of the man, as he looked over his shoulder, under the clearing moon, turned off a little and rode at him while he ran like ten men, crying out with a great laugh as he knocked him over: 'Twice, O King Borrace!'

And indeed King Borrace was not knocked over thrice, for this time the brains were fairly knocked out of his smashed head by the great horsehoofs, the knight having disdained to use his sword on a runaway, and besides, being a genial sort of man, he had a kind of contemptuous pity for so stupid a brute, and thought to give him a chance.

However when the horsemen had ridden past, the Captains came back to see first of all what had become of their Lord and Master, for they had seen him go over, and with very mixed feelings. They found him as I said, with his brains knocked out and quite dead; whereat the first, Lord Robert, lifted his eyebrows and gave a long whistle in utter astonishment that so slight a matter as a horse should have slain him, for his head seemed to be solid and mostly of oak. But Sebald, the second of them, lifted his foot and dug his heel deep in the already fearfully lacerated face of the dead tyrant, saying as he did so: 'Beast and devil, remember my sister! I told you then I would do this one time

or other' (and again he stamped), 'said so openly, yet you took me into your service instead of killing me as I hoped you would, madman that you were.'

For in his madness of half-satisfied vengeance it seemed to him that he had slain him with his own hands; but suddenly it came across him how it was, and he said: 'Yet, O God! to think that I am disappointed in my revenge! yet still it is pleasant to do this, though another man slew him;' and again his heel came down on the dead King's wretched face: then he stooped down and put his hands to the warm blood that flowed from the wounds, and raised them to his lips and drank, and the draught seemed to please him.

Meanwhile Gherard, the third Captain, who had at first stood still without saying a word and apparently in deep thought, suddenly started, and catching hold of Sebald by the shoulder said savagely: 'Fool! can't you stop that play-acting? Keep it till you are by yourself, for it is thrown away upon us, I can tell you; and don't you see all of you that this must not be known? quick! quick! help me to carry him into the tent; here Sebald, man, lift and quick. Ah!' he said, turning round and glancing about uneasily; 'where is Erwelt? But you carry him while I' ... And he darted off after the fourth Captain (Erwelt), who had somehow disappeared, a man of mincing manners, very elaborately dressed.

Gertha's
Lovers

So Sebald and Robert, as they lifted the body, saw Gherard as he ran in great bounds towards Erwelt; they saw his hand slide down to his dagger, but there was no weapon in the sheath; he ground his teeth with vexation, but still went on till he had overtaken his man; then he touched him on the shoulder and said: 'Erwelt, I want to speak to you.' 'Well,' said the other, 'what is it?' But his heart sank and he felt as if Death stood before him, dart and all, as indeed he did; for Gherard was a very strong man, and, as he saw Erwelt's hand go down towards the dagger-hilt, he felled him with a quick blow between the eyes, then before he could recover was kneeling on him; he dragged the broad double-edged dagger from its jewelled sheath, and buried it thrice in Erwelt's breast, then drew it across his throat from ear to ear; then, thrusting the dagger back again into its sheath, after he had carefully wiped it on the white and blue velvet of the dead man's dress, he sprang up and ran back towards the King's tent, leaving the body to lie piteously under the moon which was shining out from dark purple hollows between the clouds.

The light of it flashed on the poor fop's jewels, shone on his upturned face and gashed throat and feeble nerveless hands. How much more dreadful was that one corpse than all the many lying now nearer to the walls, than those even who lay with ghastly breakings of the whole frame, torn by great stones, or slain by wounds that struck them hap-

hazard in strange unlikely places; or slain as they lay already wounded; or who lay with their bodies twisted into unimaginable writhings brought about by pain and fear. All these and many more, many, very many of each sort, they were altogether less horrible than this one corpse of a murdered man.

The murderer found the others already in the tent, for Robert had said: 'Sebald, don't let us see that; you and I know nothing about it for the present, for we must hold together; and for my part I vote that we let Gherard work for us, he is such a clever fellow.'

Sebald made no answer; his eyes were dry, his throat was dry, his heart was dry with intense thinking if by any means he could extend his vengeance beyond the present world. He thought of all the curses he had ever heard; how meaningless and uninventive they all seemed when set beside his hatred! he thought so that I know not into what uttermost hell he had dragged his own heart; he certainly did not feel as if he were on earth; his head grew dizzy, he could scarcely walk under his burden, but somehow between them they managed to get the body into the tent unperceived.

Then he thought: 'I can bear this no longer, I must think of something else just now; but I will make it the work of my whole life hereafter.'

So then Gherard burst in, muttering from between his teeth: 'So much for one marplot;' and Sebald

**Gertha's
Lovers**

woke up and was in the world again. So they began to talk, Robert sitting down and with his elbow on the table, stroking his cheek with his open hand; Sebald standing still, with knit brows, and blood-stained hands crossed over his breast; while Gherard walked up and down, twisting his fingers together behind his back, his cheek all a-flush & his eyes glistening...and Erwelt lay stiffening in the moonlight. So those three fell a-plotting.

Meanwhile such a hubbub and confusion had been going on before the walls, as if the fiends were loose; for the archers, when Richard had passed beyond hope of pursuit, having sent a few arrows into the darkness at nothing, turned and looked about them. Now they knew nothing at all concerning those horsemen who had been sent to take Richard in the rear, so, seeing some helmets glittering in the somewhat doubtful moonlight, they advanced a little towards them, and thinking as a matter of course that they were from the town, sent two or three flights of arrows among them as an experiment, getting ready to run away in case they should be too many for them: doing all this before the horsemen could shout out that they were from the camp; and when they did so, the townsmen, seeing clearly that Richard and his men were away, opened a heavy fire on everything that they saw, & Borrace's archers believed that the horsemen lied, and still shot all they

might. Whereon the horsemen changed their minds, and settled that these were another band of men from the town whom they had not counted on, and so charged with a good will, especially as the long-bows and cross-bows and petrariae were playing on them diligently from the city-walls.

Now the archers were more numerous than the horsemen, and, though not so well armed, fought stoutly, throwing away their bows and using their axes and swords; nor did they find out their mistake till many were slain both of horsemen and archers, and even then they were quite ready to go on with that work from sheer rage and vexation of heart; but restraining themselves, and being restrained by their leaders, they got separated somehow, and marched back to their own quarters, where one and all swore that they would stay, nor move again that night for man or devil, whatever happened.

And so they fell to drinking all they might. But Sir Richard and all his, having won through the camp with but little opposition (for the enemy were all drawn off other-where), crossed the river that lay beyond, by a broad shallow ford that he knew well (higher up it passed by that cottage), then took mere bridle-ways and waggon-roads through the woods that lay beyond the river, after he had told his men that he intended making a circuit and falling from behind on that part of the camp where Leuchnar was. 'For he is probably

**Gertha's
Lovers** hard pressed by this time,' said he, 'the sortie being from the first somewhat desperate and wild, though necessary.' And he made this circuit lest he should be cut off before he could reach Leuchnar; had he known that there would be no pursuit (there would have been but for Borrace's death, and the happy clash between the horsemen and archers)... had he known all this he would certainly not have gone so far about, or gone through such intricate ways where the men could not help straggling. So the rain-drops fell in showers on their armour as they passed, from the low tree-boughs brushed by their crests & lowered spears; the moon flashed on the wet leaves that danced in the rushing sea-wind; with whirr of swift wings the wood-pigeon left the wood.

How often had Richard wandered here in the past days! what thoughts were his in those old times, of the glory of his coming manhood! what wonder at the stories of lovers that he read, and their deeds! what brave purposes never to be fulfilled! yet he meant them then honestly enough, yet he was to do one deed at the last; if only one, that was something; and as he thought this he straightway drove thoughts of all other things from his mind, and thought of what he should do now.

He called a halt, and listened; then perceiving clearly that there was no pursuit at all, he led his men out of the woods, by a way he knew well, round toward Gate Saint George, but cautiously

and quietly for fear of an attack from the camp. Then after a while they halted again, and he heard the noise of the irregular melee I have told you about, and could scarce account for it; he heard the noise of the fight about where Leuchnar was; and he heard withal another sound that made his heart beat with hope: it was a far-off sound swelling and fainting in the rise and fall of the southwest wind that blew from over the sea, the sound of triumphant trumpets: he leaned forward from his saddle to listen better, and many a soldier's eyes sparkled as he cried out suddenly, 'Victory! it is Edwin! quick! to Leuchnar!' So away they went toward Gate Saint George at a smart pace.

They drew rein when they came within a few minutes' gallop from the camp, that their horses might not go blown into the battle; then advanced with as little noise as possible, till they drew near and saw the enormous masses of the enemy surging round something which they knew well to be Leuchnar in a desperate case. Then shouted their leader, 'Richard! Richard for Gertha!' and with one mighty charge, which scattered the enemy to right and left, they were buried in the enormous multitude that was in vain striving to break Leuchnar's array. For he, trying to win his way back to the city that he might sally out at the East Gate to the aid of Sir Richard, beset as he thought he was: as he was doing this he was first cut off

**Gertha's
Lovers**

from the city and driven back towards the camp, and then surrounded. Whereupon the horsemen having dismounted formed a great square with closely planted shields, and long spears set out like the teeth of a great beast, and on this square King Borrace's horsemen, that were King Borrace's no more now, had wasted their strength for long: for howsoever many men of it were slain by the arrows and slings or by the hurling of the long lances, yet the living filled up the places of the dead, and the square, though lessening every moment, was not broken when Richard made that charge, and joined Leuchnar, having hewn his way through with most of his men to that square of serried spears, 'Brother!' he shouted; 'hold out yet awhile, for Edwin is coming in triumph over the sea, and we must live till then.'

So they joined their two bands, & made a thicker and larger square than before, having cleared a space by one or two desperate charges, and soon the fight was fiercer than ever. But the men fell fast before the arrow-flights, & they grew utterly wearied with standing there on foot; in pauses of the fight very anxiously did Richard and Leuchnar listen, and they heard a snatch now and then of the dear trumpet-music, and hoped, or tried to hope: yet it seemed that they must die before help came, the greater part at least. Then an arrow whistled, and Leuchnar staggered and bowed forward; he was wounded, not mortally indeed, but

it dizzied and confused him. Almost at the same time the crowd opened, and there rose a shout of 'Gherard! Gherard!' Forthwith a fresh band of horsemen charged, all armed in proof and splendidly mounted, with Gherard himself at the head of them.

How it all happened Richard scarce knew, but so it was that they broke the terrible hedge of spears, and presently each man found himself fighting separately, or with one or two friends about him; tired men too against fresh ones, men on foot against horsemen, & all things seemed desperate. Yet even then, between all the clash of the battle, Richard heard the roar of the bells from all the belfries and the shouting of the people. Edwin had landed. Then as he thought of this he grew half mad to think that they should die before the very eyes of their friends, and shouted out: 'Gertha! fight on, brave lads, and gather together all you may!' He with some half dozen of his own men tried to gather others again, but, while he struggled desperately, his great sword flashing this way and that, but rising duller from every stroke because of the blood on it, he was suddenly borne away, and Leuchnar beheld him alone amidst a ring of foes, saw his sword still flashing for a little, then saw him fall with many wounds and lie dead, at peace at last.

He himself, though surrounded by a band of friends, was sorely wounded; and, sick with pain

Gertha's
Lovers

and loss of blood, he had nearly fainted; and the few around him were falling, falling fast under axe and sword & spear: when lo! the gates open, and the cry of 'Edwin for Gertha!' rings all about, thousands pour out of the great gates, over the bridge, there is a sharp fight, and the bodies at least of Leuchnar and Richard are rescued. For the pirates are driven back to their camp, not to stay quiet there for long; for even as they stand at bay about their tents the word goes that Borrace is slain; nor only so; the moon sinks, the east begins to redden, and within an hour after her setting many new spears fleck the clear light; the advanced guard of the Lord Hugh's victorious army, who have marched night-long to come to the help of the fair city.

Close them all about, brave sons of the men that go westward! Borrace is dead, Gherard is dead, Erwelt is dead, Sebald lies bleeding to death from four sore wounds, Robert fled soon, but was drowned in crossing the river. The cats are on fire, the petrariae are in ashes, all the camp is one blaze, everywhere the foe are throwing their arms away & crying for quarter; soon they are all slain, wounded, or prisoners.

Meanwhile a messenger, pale and worn out, is brought to Gertha, and kneels down before her feet; he says: 'Lady, I have a message for you.' (O Gertha! words spoken before.)

'Quick, good man,' she says, 'for these things

draw to an end;’ and a smile of quiet triumph passes across her pale face.

‘Three days ago,’ he says, ‘the Emperor strove to force the passes; he and three of his captains were slain, and my Lord Adolf will be here soon.’

‘Thank God!’ she says; ‘but you, poor man, what reward for you? ah! sleep has overmastered him.’

For he has fallen forward before her so that his head rests on her feet; she touches him, takes his hand to raise him up; it is stone-cold, he is dead.

‘But for these men of King Borrace; let the wounded go to our hospitals, that they may learn there something of love which they have not even dreamed about as yet; let the slain be buried, and lie under the earth, under the grass among the roots of the land they came to conquer: let the prisoners depart unarmed, but with provisions for their journey, let them cross the frontier, and never trouble the good land more, lest a worse thing befall them.’

CHAPTER V. WHAT EDITH THE HANDMAIDEN SAW FROM THE WAR-SADDLE.

And in the fresh morning sat Gertha the Queen in the body, while her spirit was a long way off, and round about her sat the Lords and Knights with flushed joyful faces, she alone pale though calm and serene, for she too was joyful.

Then into the midst of the great hall they bore

**Gertha's
Lovers**

Leuchnar dying from his many wounds, not in great pain, for his spirit was leaving his body gently, as if he were worn out merely. And Gertha rose from her throne and went to meet them that bore him, and there was a flutter along the tapestry that the hall was hung with, as the wind rushed through the opened door, and therewithal Gertha woke, her spirit came again as if Olaf had sent it. So she gazed at him as he had hoped she might, as a queen on her faithful subject: before this, often a certain uneasy feeling, not pity exactly, used to come across her when she saw him; it used to seem such a hard thing to her that it should be thus; it was just such a feeling as might have turned to love with one less constant than Gertha: but now even this was gone, and Leuchnar felt that it was so, even by the look of her eyes upon him.

And he, raising himself, hardly said to her: 'Queen Gertha, I am come to say farewell for a little.'

'Poor Leuchnar, who loved me so!'

'Nay,' he said, 'happy Leuchnar, who loves you still! In the time to come it may be that lovers, when they have not all they wish for, will say: Oh that we might be as Leuchnar, who died for Queen Gertha in the old time!'

'True,' she said; 'farewell, Sir Leuchnar.'

Oh! how eagerly he took her hand! 'Happy Leuchnar,' he said faintly; then, 'Domine, in manus tuas,' and he fell asleep, his head falling back.

For a short time she stood, holding his dead hand; then gently disengaged it & laid it with the other one, crossing them downwards. Then they carried him out again silently; and again ran that tremor through the gold-wrought hangings, and her spirit had gone away again.

And within a while, as the great sun rose higher, came the sound of trumpets, and the roar of the bells from all the belfries: Adolf was come. How near the end drew!

That noontide was windless, cloudless, and very bright, except that a soft haze had sprung up everywhere from the moist earth, into which all things far and fair melted.

She came from the midst of that knot of Lords that had clustered about her, and with her dark hair loose, stood in the balcony above the people, and through the hearts of all thrilled her clear speech.

'God has been very good to us, friends, and we have conquered, and now you must let me go as you promised. And you may grieve that I must go, and wish me back often, but still I must go: it is not only because I wish to go that I must leave you, but I cannot help it: I think, nay am sure, that this also is best both for you & me. If I were queen much longer you would be disappointed with me, yet would not say so, because you love me.

Think now! I am but Gertha, the peasant's daughter, and I know it was only the spirit of your

**Gertha's
Lovers**

dead lord working in me that made you love me so. But if I were queen for long I should come to be only Gertha again; so I must go. And if you will, let Barulf, who is old, but very wise, be king.' There was sad silence for a little when she had finished, then a confused sound of weeping, and sobs, and earnest wishes went up towards the balcony, where she stood with her arms lying down her side: already she looked as if she were a different kind of being from them: she said: 'Will you have Barulf for your king? if you will, say so to pleasure me; then farewell.'

They shouted, 'Barulf! God save King Barulf!' and lo! even in that shout she had vanished, like an angel that comes from heaven when God lends him, and goes to heaven again when God calls him.

Gertha walked over the field of battle; no meadow of sweet waving grass & lovely flowers, but something very horrible to gaze at, to pass over. Yet she did not seem to take note of any of its horrors: her handmaiden was with her; but when they came within fifty yards of the aspen circle where he lay, she charged her to stop, and watch all that came to pass there, that she might tell the people hereafter. So the handmaiden sat down there on the mournful battle-field, on some great war-saddle that had been thrown down there.

But Gertha, when she had kissed her, left her and walked toward those aspen-trees; she was clad in

her old peasants' raiment again, and was quite without ornament of gold or jewels; only her black hair hung braided on either side of her face, and round about her head was a garland of yellow flowering stone-crop, such as he wore in his helmet that battle-day: but now when she entered the circle of aspens there seemed to be silence over all the earth, except that when she first stepped among the shadows of the trees, a faint breeze rose out of the south, and the lightly-hung leaves shivered, the golden haze trembled.

Now although all the rest of the battle-field was trodden into bloody mud, dry now again, but loaded with all dreadful things, this spot yet kept the summer flowers, neither was there any mark of his grave.

So there lay down Gertha, and the blue speedwell kissed her white cheek; there her breath left her, and she lay very still, while the wind passed over her now & then, with hands laid across her breast. Nevertheless this was what Edith, her hand-maiden, said to Barulf the King, and his Lords and Knights: 'And so I sat on the war-saddle and watched, and as my Lady stepped forward to enter that circle of trees, I saw my Lord Olaf, the King, as clearly as before he died, step forward to meet her, and he caught her in his arms, and kissed her on the mouth and on both cheeks.

'And they two were together there for hours, talking it seemed, sometimes sitting on the flowers

**Gertha's
Lovers** and grass (for that spot, my lords, is not trodden as the rest of the field is); sometimes walking from tree to tree with fingers interlaced.

'But just about sunset time, I felt as if I must needs go and speak to my dear Lady once again, & hold her hand again: so I went up trembling; and lo! my Lord Olaf was not there any more, and I saw my Lady Gertha only, lying dead upon the flowers, with her hands crossed over her breast, and a soft wind that came from the place where the sun had set shook the aspen leaves. So I came away.' Thereat the King & his Knights wondered. And the People raised a mighty Church above the place where they lay, in memory of Olaf's deeds and Gertha's love: and soon about the Church there gathered a fair City, that was very famous in the after-time. Yet it was strange that this Church, though the people wrought at it with such zeal and love, was never finished: something told them to stop by then they had reached the transepts of it: and to this day the mighty fragment, still unfinished, towering so high above the city roofs toward the sky, seems like a mountain cliff that went a-wandering once, and by earnest longing of the lowlanders was stayed among the poplar trees for ever.

SVEND AND HIS BRETHREN.

A KING in the olden time ruled over a mighty nation: a proud man he must have been, any man who was king of that nation: hundreds of lords, each a prince over many people, sat about him in the council chamber, under the dim vault, that was blue like the vault of heaven, and shone with innumerable glistenings of golden stars.

North, south, east, and west, spread that land of his, the sea did not stop it; his empire clomb the high mountains, and spread abroad its arms over the valleys of them; all along the sea-line shone cities set with their crowns of towers in the midst of broad bays, each fit, it seemed, to be a harbour for the navies of all the world.

Inland the pastures and cornlands lay, chequered much with climbing, over-tumbling grape-vines, under the sun that crumbled their clods, & drew up the young wheat in the spring time, under the rain that made the long grass soft and fine, under all fair fertilizing influences: the streams leapt down from the mountain tops, or cleft their way through the ridged ravines; they grew great rivers, like seas each one.

The mountains were cloven, and gave forth from their scarred sides wealth of ore and splendour of marble; all things this people that King Valdemar ruled over could do; they levelled mountains, that over the smooth roads the wains might go, laden with silk and spices from the sea: they

**Svend and
his Brethren**

drained lakes, that the land might yield more and more, as year by year the serfs, driven like cattle, but worse fed, worse housed, died slowly, scarce knowing that they had souls; they builded them huge ships, and said that they were masters of the sea too; only, I trow the sea was an unruly subject, and often sent them back their ships cut into more pieces than the pines of them were, when the adze first fell upon them; they raised towers, and bridges, & marble palaces with endless corridors rose-scented, and cooled with welling fountains.

They sent great armies and fleets to all the points of heaven that the wind blows from, who took & burned many happy cities, wasted many fields and valleys, blotted out from the memory of men the names of nations, made their men's lives a hopeless shame and misery to them, their women's lives disgrace, and then came home to have flowers thrown on them in showers, to be feasted and called heroes.

Should not then their king be proud of them? Moreover they could fashion stone and brass into the shapes of men; they could write books; they knew the names of the stars, and their number; they knew what moved the passions of men in the hearts of them, and could draw you up cunningly catalogues of virtues and vices; their wise men could prove to you that any lie was true, that any truth was false, till your head grew dizzy

and your heart sick, and you almost doubted if there were a God.

Should not then their king be proud of them? Their men were strong in body, & moved about gracefully, like dancers; and the purple-black, scented hair of their gold-clothed knights seemed to shoot out rays under the blaze of light that shone like many suns in the king's halls. Their women's faces were very fair in red and white, their skins fair & half-transparent like the marble of their mountains, and their voices sounded like the rising of soft music from step to step of their own white palaces.

Should not then their king be proud of such a people, who seemed to help so in carrying on the world to its consummate perfection, which they even hoped their grandchildren would see?

Alas! alas! they were slaves: king and priest, noble and burgher, just as much as the meanest tasked serf, perhaps more even than he, for they were so willingly, but he unwillingly enough.

They could do everything but justice, and truth, and mercy; therefore God's judgments hung over their heads, not fallen yet, but surely to fall one time or other. For ages past they had warred against one people only, whom they could not utterly subdue; a feeble people in numbers, dwelling in the very midst of them, among the mountains; yet now they were pressing them close; acre after acre, with seas of blood to pur-

Svend and
his Brethren

Svend and his Brethren chase each acre, had been wrested from the free people, and their end seemed drawing near; and this time the king, Valdemar, had marched to their land with a great army, to make war on them, he boasted to himself, almost for the last time.

A walled town in the free land; in that town, a house built of rough, splintery stones; and in a great low-browed room of that house, a grey-haired man pacing to and fro impatiently: 'Will she never come?' he says; 'it is two hours since the sun set; news, too, of the enemy's being in the land; how dreadful if she is taken!' His great broad face is marked with many furrows made by the fierce restless energy of the man; but there is a wearied look on it, the look of a man who, having done his best, is yet beaten; he seemed to long to be gone and be at peace: he, the fighter in many battles, who often had seemed with his single arm to roll back the whole tide of fight, felt despairing enough now; this last invasion, he thought, must surely quite settle the matter; wave after wave, wave after wave, had broken on that dear land and been rolled back from it, and still the hungry sea pressed on; they must be finally drowned in that sea; how fearfully they had been tried for their sins! Back again to his anxiety concerning Cissela, his daughter, go his thoughts, and he still paces up and down wearily, stopping

now and then to gaze intently on things which he has seen a hundred times; and the night has altogether come on.

At last the blast of a horn from outside, challenge and counter-challenge, & the wicket to the courtyard is swung open; for this house, being in a part of the city where the walls are somewhat weak, is a little fortress in itself, and is very carefully guarded. The old man's face brightened at the sound of the newcomers, and he went toward the entrance of the house, where he was met by two young knights fully armed, and a maiden. 'Thank God you are come,' he says; but stops when he sees her face, which is quite pale, almost wild with some sorrow. 'The saints! Cissela, what is it?' he says. 'Father, Eric will tell you.' Then suddenly a clang, for Eric has thrown on the ground a richly-jewelled sword, sheathed, & sets his foot on it, crunching the pearls on the sheath; then says, flinging up his head: 'There, father, the enemy is in the land; may that happen to every one of them! but for my part I have accounted for two already.' 'Son Eric, son Eric, you talk for ever about yourself; quick, tell me about Cissela instead: if you go on boasting and talking always about yourself, you will come to no good end, son, after all.' But as he says this, he smiles nevertheless, and his eye glistens. 'Well, father, listen; such a strange thing she tells us, not to be believed if she did not tell us

**Svend and
his Brethren**

herself; the enemy has suddenly got generous, one of them at least, which is something of a disappointment to me...ah! pardon, about myself again; and that is about myself too. Well, father, what am I to do?... But Cissela, she wandered some way from her maidens, when...ah! but I never could tell a story properly, let her tell it herself; here Cissela!...well, well, I see she is better employed, talking namely, how should I know what, with Siur in the window-seat yonder! But she told us that, as she wandered almost by herself, she presently heard shouts and saw many of the enemy's knights riding quickly towards her; whereat she knelt only and prayed to God, who was very gracious to her; for when, as she thought, something dreadful was about to happen, the chief of the knights (a very noble-looking man, she said) rescued her, and, after he had gazed earnestly into her face, told her she might go back again to her own home, and her maids with her, if only she would tell him where she dwelt and her name; and withal he sent three knights to escort her some way toward the city; then he turned and rode away with all his knights but those three, who, when they knew that he had quite gone, she says, began to talk horribly, saying things whereof in her terror she understood the import only: then, before worse came to pass came I and slew two, as I said, and the other ran away 'lustily with a good courage;' and that is

the sword of one of the slain knights, or as one might rather call them, rascally caitiffs.'

The old man's thoughts seemed to have gone wandering after his son had finished; for he said nothing for some time, but at last spoke dejectedly: 'Eric, brave son, when I was your age I too hoped, and my hopes are come to this at last; you are blind in your hopeful youth, Eric, and do not see that this king (for the king it certainly was) will crush us, and not the less surely because he is plainly not ungenerous, but rather a good, courteous knight. Alas! poor old Gunnar, broken down now and ready to die, as your country is! How often, in the olden time, thou usedst to say to thyself, as thou didst ride at the head of our glorious house: This charge may finish this matter, this battle must! They passed away, those gallant fights, and still the foe pressed on, and hope, too, slowly ebbed away, as the boundaries of our land grew less & less: behold this is the last wave but one or two, and then for a sad farewell to name and freedom. Yet, surely the end of the world must come when we are swept from off the face of the earth. God waits long, they say, before He avenges His own.'

As he was speaking, Siur and Cissela came nearer to him, and Cissela, all traces of her late terror gone from her face now, raising her lips to his bended forehead, kissed him fondly, and said, with glowing face: 'Father, how can I help our

**Svend and
his Brethren**

people? Do they want deaths? I will die. Do they want happiness? I will live miserably through years and years, nor ever pray for death.'

Some hope or other seemed growing up in his heart, & showing through his face; and he spoke again, putting back the hair from off her face, and clasping it about with both his hands, while he stooped to kiss her.

'God remember your mother, Cissela! Then it was no dream after all, but true perhaps, as indeed it seemed at the time; but it must come quickly, that woman's deliverance, or not at all. When was it that I heard that old tale, that sounded even then true to my ears? for we have not been punished for nought, my son; that is not God's way. It comes across my memory somehow, mingled in a wonderful manner with the purple of the pines on the hill-side, with the fragrance of them borne from far towards me; for know, my children, that in times past, long, long past now, we did an evil deed; for our forefathers, who have been dead now and forgiven so long ago, once mad with rage at some defeat from their enemies, fired a church, and burned therein many women who had fled thither for refuge; and from that time a curse cleaves to us. Only they say that at the last we may be saved from utter destruction by a woman; I know not. God grant it may be so.'

Then she said, 'Father, brother, and you, Siur,

come with me to the chapel; I wish you to witness me make an oath.'

Svend and
his Brethren

Her face was pale, her lips were pale, her golden hair was pale; but not pale, it seemed, from any sinking of blood, but from gathering of intensest light from somewhere, her eyes perhaps, for they appeared to burn inwardly.

They followed the sweeping of her purple robe in silence through the low heavy-beamed passages: they entered the little chapel, dimly lighted by the moon that night, as it shone through one of the three arrow-slits of windows at the east end. There was little wealth of marble there, I trow; little time had those fighting men for stone-smoothing. Albeit, one noted many semblances of flowers even in the dim half-light, and here and there the faces of BRAVE men, roughly cut enough, but grand, because the hand of the carver had followed his loving heart. Neither was there gold wanting to the altar and its canopy; and above the low pillars of the nave hung banners, taken from the foe by the men of that house, galled with gold and jewels.

She walked up to the altar and took the blessed book of the Gospels from the left side of it; then knelt in prayer for a moment or two, while the three men stood behind her reverently. When she rose she made a sign to them, and from their scabbards gleamed three swords in the moonlight; then, while they held them aloft, & pointed

**Svend and
his Brethren**

toward the altar, she opened the book at the page whereon was painted Christ the Lord dying on the cross, pale against the gleaming gold: she said, in a firm voice, 'Christ God, who diedst for all men, so help me, as I refuse not life, happiness, even honour, for this people whom I love.'

Then she kissed the face so pale against the gold, and knelt again. But when she had risen, and before she could leave the space by the altar, Siur had stepped up to her, and seized her hurriedly, folding both his arms about her; she let herself be held there, her bosom against his; then he held her away from him a little space, holding her by the arms near the shoulder; then he took her hands and led them across his shoulders, so that now she held him. And they said nothing; what could they say? Do you know any word for what they meant?

And the father & brother stood by, looking quite awe-struck, more so they seemed than by her solemn oath. Till Siur, raising his head from where it lay, cried out aloud: 'May God forgive me as I am true to her! hear you, father and brother?' Then said Cissela: 'May God help me in my need, as I am true to Siur.' And the others went, and they two were left standing there alone, with no little awe over them, strange & shy as they had never yet been to each other. Cissela shuddered, and said in a quick whisper: 'Siur, on your knees! & pray that these oaths may never clash.'

'Can they, Cissela?' he said.
'O love,' she cried, 'you have loosed my hand; take it again, or I shall die, Siur!'
He took both her hands, he held them fast to his lips, to his forehead; he said: 'No, God does not allow such things: truth does not lie; you are truth; this need not be prayed for.'
She said: 'Oh, forgive me! yet...yet this old chapel is damp & cold even in the burning summer weather. O knight Siur, something strikes through me; I pray you kneel and pray.'
He looked steadily at her for a long time without answering, as if he were trying once for all to become indeed one with her; then said: 'Yes, it is possible; in no other way could you give up everything.' Then he took from off his finger a thin golden ring, and broke it in two, and gave her the one half, saying: 'When will they come together?'
Then within a while they left the chapel, and walked as in a dream between the dazzling lights of the hall, where the knights sat now, and between those lights sat down together, dreaming still the same dream each of them; while all the knights shouted for Siur and Cissela. Even if a man had spent all his life looking for sorrowful things, even if he sought for them with all his heart and soul, and even though he had grown grey in that quest, yet would he have found nothing in all the world, or perhaps in all the stars either, so sorrowful as Cissela.

**Svend and
his Brethren**

They had accepted her sacrifice after long deliberation, they had arrayed her in purple and scarlet, they had crowned her with gold wrought about with jewels, they had spread abroad the veil of her golden hair; yet now, as they led her forth in the midst of the band of knights, her brother Eric holding fast her hand, each man felt like a murderer when he beheld her face, whereon was no tear, wherein was no writhing of muscle, twitching of nerve, wherein was no sorrow-mark of her own, but only the sorrow-mark which God sent her, and which she must perforce wear.

Yet they had not caught eagerly at her offer, they had said at first almost to a man: 'Nay, this thing shall not be, let us die altogether rather than this.' Yet as they sat and said this, to each man of the council came floating dim memories of that curse of the burned women, and its remedy; to many it ran rhythmically, an old song better known by the music than the words, heard once and again, long ago, when the gusty wind overmastered the chestnut-boughs, and strewed the smooth sward with their star-leaves.

Withal came thoughts to each man, partly selfish, partly wise and just, concerning his own wife and children, concerning children yet unborn; thoughts too of the glory of the old name; all that had been suffered and done that the glorious free land might yet be a nation. And the spirit of hope, never dead but sleeping only, woke up within

their hearts: 'We may yet be a people,' they said to themselves, 'if we can but get breathing time.' And as they thought these things and doubted, Siur rose up in the midst of them and said: 'You are right in what you think, countrymen, and she is right; she is altogether good and noble; send her forth.' Then, with one look of utter despair at her as she stood statue-like, he left the council, lest he should fall down and die in the midst of them, he said; yet he died not then, but lived for many years afterwards.

But they rose from their seats, and when they were armed, and she royally arrayed, they went with her, leading her through the dear streets, whence you always saw the great pine-shadowed mountains; she went away from all that was dear to her, to go & sit a crowned queen in the dreary marble palace, whose outer walls rose right up from the weary-hearted sea. She could not think, she durst not; she feared, if she did, that she would curse her beauty, almost curse the name of love, curse Siur, though she knew he was right, for not slaying her; she feared that she might curse God.

So she thought not at all, steeping her senses utterly in forgetfulness of the happy past, destroying all anticipation of the future: yet, as they left the city amid the tears of women, and fixed sorrowful gaze of men, she turned round once, and stretched her arms out involuntarily, like a dumb

**Svend and
his Brethren**

senseless thing, towards the place where she was born, and where her life grew happier day by day, and where his arms first crept round about her. She turned away and thought, but in a cold speculative manner, how it was possible that she was bearing this sorrow; as she often before had wondered, when slight things vexed her overmuch, how people had such sorrows & lived, and almost doubted if the pain was so much greater in great sorrows than in small troubles, or whether the nobleness only was greater, the pain not sharper, but more lingering.

Halfway toward the camp the king's people met her; and over the trampled ground, where they had fought so fiercely but a little time before, they spread breadth of golden cloth, that her feet might not touch the arms of her dead countrymen, or their brave bodies. And so they came at last with many trumpet-blasts to the king's tent, who stood at the door of it, to welcome his bride that was to be: a noble man truly to look on, kindly and genial-eyed; the red blood sprang up over his face when she came near; & she looked back no more, but bowed before him almost to the ground, and would have knelt, but that he caught her in his arms and kissed her; she was pale no more now; and the king, as he gazed delightedly at her, did not notice that sorrow-mark, which was plain enough to her own people.

So the trumpets sounded again one long peal that

seemed to make all the air reel and quiver, and the soldiers and lords shouted: 'Hurrah for the Peace-Queen, Cissela!' **Svend and his Brethren**

'Come, Harald,' said a beautiful golden-haired boy to one who was plainly his younger brother, 'Come, and let us leave Robert here by the forge, and show our lady-mother this beautiful thing. Sweet master armourer, farewell.' 'Are you going to the queen then?' said the armourer. 'Yea,' said the boy, looking wonderingly at the strong craftsman's eager face. 'But, nay; let me look at you awhile longer, you remind me so much of one I loved long ago in my own land. Stay awhile till your other brother goes with you.' 'Well, I will stay, and think of what you have been telling me; I do not feel as if I should ever think of anything else for long together, as long as I live.'

So he sat down again on an old battered anvil, and seemed with his bright eyes to be beholding something in the land of dreams. A gallant dream it was he dreamed; for he saw himself with his brothers & friends about him, seated on a throne, the justest king in all the earth, his people the lovingest of all people: he saw the ambassadors of the restored nations, that had been unjustly dealt with long ago; everywhere love, and peace if possible, justice and truth at all events.

Alas! he knew not that vengeance, so long de-

**Svend and
his Brethren**

layed, must fall at last in his life-time; he knew not that it takes longer to restore that whose growth has been through age and age, than the few years of a life-time; yet was the reality good, if not as good as the dream.

Presently his twin-brother Robert woke him from that dream, calling out: 'Now, brother Svend, are we really ready; see here! but stop, kneel first; there, now am I the Bishop.' And he pulled his brother down on to his knees, and put on his head, where it fitted loosely enough now, hanging down from left to right, an iron crown fantastically wrought, which he himself, having just finished it, had taken out of the water, cool and dripping.

Robert and Harald laughed loud when they saw the crown hanging all askew, and the great drops rolling from it into Svend's eyes and down his cheeks, looking like tears. Not so Svend; he rose, holding the crown level on his head, holding it back, so that it pressed against his brow hard, and, first dashing the drops to right and left, caught his brother by the hand, and said: 'May I keep it, Robert? I shall wear it some day.' 'Yea,' said the other; 'but it is a poor thing; better let Siur put it in the furnace again and make it into sword hilts.'

Thereupon they began to go, Svend holding the crown in his hand: but as they were going, Siur called out: 'Yet will I sell my dagger at a price,

Prince Svend, even as you wished at first, rather than give it you for nothing.'

'Well, for what?' said Svend, somewhat shortly, for he thought Siur was going back from his promise, which seemed ugly to him.

'Nay, be not angry, prince,' said the armourer; 'only I pray you to satisfy this whim of mine; it is the first favour I have asked of you: will you ask the fair noble lady, your mother, from Siur the smith, if she is happy now?'

'Willingly, sweet master Siur, if it pleases you; farewell.'

And with happy young faces they went away; and when they were gone, Siur from a secret place drew out various weapons and armour, and began to work at them, having first drawn bolt and bar of his workshop carefully.

Svend, with Harald and Robert his two brethren, went their ways to the queen, & found her sitting alone in a fair court of the palace full of flowers, with a marble cloister round about it; and when she saw them coming, she rose up to meet them, her three fair sons. Truly as that right royal woman bent over them lovingly, there seemed little need of Siur's question.

So Svend showed her his dagger, but not the crown; and she asked many questions concerning Siur the smith, about his way of talking and his face, the colour of his hair even, till the boys wondered, she questioned them so closely, with

Svend and his Brethren

beaming eyes and glowing cheeks, so that Svend thought he had never before seen his mother look so beautiful.

Then Svend said: 'And, mother, don't be angry with Siur, will you, because he sent a message to you by me?'

'Angry!' and straightway her soul was wandering where her body could not come, and for a moment or two she was living as before, with him close by her, in the old mountain land.

'Well, mother, he wanted me to ask you if you were happy now.'

'Did he, Svend, this man with brown hair, grizzled as you say it is now? Is his hair soft then, this Siur, going down on to his shoulders in waves? and his eyes, do they glow steadily, as if lighted up from his heart? and how does he speak? Did you not tell me that his words led you, whether you would or no, into dreamland? Ah well! tell him I am happy, but not so happy as we shall be, as we were. And so you, son Robert, are getting to be quite a cunning smith; but do you think you will ever beat Siur?'

'Ah, mother, no,' he said; 'there is something with him that makes him seem quite infinitely beyond all other workmen I have ever heard of.' Some memory coming from that dreamland smote upon her heart more than the others; she blushed like a young girl, and said hesitatingly: 'Does he work with his left hand, son Robert? For

I have heard that some men do so.' But in her heart she remembered how once, long ago in the old mountain country, in her father's house, some one had said that only men who were born so could do cunningly with the left hand; and how Siur, then quite a boy, had said, 'Well, I will try:' and how, in a month or two, he had come to her with an armlet of silver, very curiously wrought, which he had done with his own left hand.

So Robert said: 'Yea, mother, he works with his left hand almost as much as with his right, and sometimes I have seen him change the hammer suddenly from his right hand to his left, with a kind of half smile, as one who would say: Cannot I then? and this more when he does smith's work in metal than when he works in marble; and once I heard him say when he did so: I wonder where my first left hand work is; ah! I bide my time. I wonder also, mother, what he meant by that.' She answered no word, but shook her arm free from its broad sleeve, and something glittered on it, near her wrist, something wrought out of silver set with quaint and uncouthly-cut stones of little value.

In the council-chamber, among the lords, sat Svend and his six brethren; he chief of all in the wielding of sword or axe, in the government of people, in drawing the love of men and women

**Svend and
his Brethren**

to him; perfect in face and body, in wisdom and strength was Svend: next to him sat Robert, cunning in working of marble, or wood, or brass; all things could he make to look as if they lived, from the sweep of an angel's wings down to the slipping of a little field-mouse from under the sheaves in the harvest-time. Then there was Harald, who knew concerning all the stars of heaven and flowers of earth: Richard, who drew men's hearts from their bodies, with the words that swung to & fro in his glorious rhymes: William, to whom the air of heaven seemed a servant when the harp-strings quivered underneath his fingers: there were the two sailor-brothers, who the year before, young though they were, had come back from a long, perilous voyage, with news of an island they had found long and long away to the west, larger than any that this people knew of, but very fair and good, though uninhabited.

But now over all this noble brotherhood with its various gifts, hung one cloud of sorrow; their mother, the Peace-Queen Cissela was dead, she who had taught them truth & nobleness so well; she was never to see the beginning of the end that they would work; truly it seemed sad.

There sat the seven brothers in the council chamber, waiting for the king, speaking no word, only thinking drearily; and under the pavement of the great church Cissela lay, and by the side of her

tomb stood two men, old men both, Valdemar the king and Siur.

Svend and
his Brethren

So the king, after that he had gazed awhile on the carven face of her he had loved well, said at last: 'And now, Sir Carver, must you carve me also to lie there.' And he pointed to the vacant space by the side of the fair alabaster figure.

'O king,' said Siur, 'except for a very few strokes on steel, I have done work now, having carved the queen there; I cannot do this thing for you.'

What was it sent a sharp pang of bitterest suspicion through the very heart of the poor old man? he looked steadfastly at him for a moment or two, as if he would know all secrets; he could not, he had not strength of life enough to get to the bottom of things; doubt vanished soon from his heart and his face under Siur's pitying gaze; he said: 'Then perhaps I shall be my own statue,' and therewithal he sat down on the edge of the low marble tomb, and laid his right arm across her breast; he fixed his eyes on the eastern belt of windows, and sat quite motionless and silent; and he never knew that she loved him not.

But Siur, when he had gazed at him for awhile, stole away quietly, as we do when we fear to awaken a sleeper; and the king never turned his head, but still sat there, never moving, scarce breathing, it seemed.

Siur stood in his own great hall (for his house was large); he stood before the dais, and saw a fair

**Svend and
his Brethren**

sight, the work of his own hands. For, fronting him, against the wall were seven thrones, and behind them a cloth of samite of purple wrought with golden stars, and barred across from right to left with long bars of silver and crimson, and edged below with melancholy, fading green, like a September sunset; and opposite each throne was a glittering suit of armour wrought wonderfully in bright steel, except that on the breast of each suit was a face worked marvellously in enamel, the face of Cissela in a glory of golden hair; and the glory of that gold spread away from the breast on all sides, and ran cunningly along with the steel rings, in such a way as it is hard even to imagine: moreover, on the crest of each helm was wrought the phoenix, the never-dying bird, the only creature that knows the sun; & by each suit lay a gleaming sword terrible to look at, steel from pommel to point, but wrought along the blade in burnished gold that outflashed the gleam of the steel, was written in fantastic letters the word WESTWARD.

So Siur gazed till he heard footsteps coming; then he turned to meet them. And Svend and his brethren sat silent in the council chamber, till they heard a great noise and clamour of the people arise through all the streets; and then they rose to see what it might be. Meanwhile on the low marble tomb, under the dim sweeping vault sat, or rather lay, the king; for, though his right

arm still lay over her breast, his head had fallen forward, and rested now on the shoulder of the marble queen. There he lay, with strange confusion of his scarlet, gold-wrought robes; silent, motionless, and dead.

The seven brethren stood together on a marble terrace of the royal palace, that was dotted about on the baluster of it with white statues: they were helmeted, and armed to the teeth, only over their armour great black cloaks were thrown.

Now the whole great terrace was a-sway with the crowd of nobles and princes, and others that were neither nobles or princes, but true men only; and these were helmeted and wrapped in black cloaks even as the princes were, only the crests of the princes' helms were wrought wonderfully with that bird, the phoenix, all flaming with new power, dying because its old body is not strong enough for its new-found power: & those on that terrace who were unarmed had anxious faces, some fearful, some stormy with devil's rage at disappointment; but among the faces of those helmeted ones, though here and there you might see a pale face, there was no fear or rage, scarcely even any anxiety, but calm, brave joy seemed to be on all.

Above the heads of all men on that terrace shone out Svend's brave face, the golden hair flowing from out of his helmet: a smile of quiet confidence overflowing from his mighty heart, in the depths

**Svend and
his Brethren**

of which it was dwelling, just showed a very little on his eyes and lips; while all the vast square, and all the windows and roofs even of the houses over against the palace, were alive with an innumerable sea of troubled raging faces, showing white, upturned from the under-sea of their many-coloured raiment; the murmur from them was like the sough of the first tempest-wind among the pines; and the gleam of spears here and there like the last few gleams of the sun through the woods when the black thunder-clouds come up over all, soon to be shone through, those woods, by the gleam of the deep lightning. Also sometimes the murmur would swell, and from the heart of it would come a fierce, hoarse, tearing, shattering roar, strangely discordant, of 'War! War! give us war, O king!'

Then Svend, stepping forward, his arms hidden under his long cloak as they hung down quietly, the smile on his face broadening somewhat, sent from his chest a mighty, effortless voice over all the raging: 'Hear, O ye people! War with all that is ugly and base; peace with all that is fair and good. **NO WAR** with my brother's people.' Just then one of those unhelmeted, creeping round about stealthily to the place where Svend stood, lifted his arm and smote at him with a dagger; whereupon Svend, clearing his right arm from his cloak with his left, lifted up his glittering right hand, and the traitor fell to the earth groaning

with a broken jaw, for Svend had smitten him on the mouth a backward blow with his open hand.

Svend and
his Brethren

One shouted from the crowd: 'Ay, murderer Svend, slay our good nobles, as you poisoned the king your father, that you and your false brethren might oppress us with the memory of that devil's witch, your mother!'

The smile left Svend's face and heart now, he looked very stern as he said: 'Hear, O ye people! In years past when I was a boy, my dream of dreams was ever this, how I should make you good, and because good, happy, when I should become king over you; but as year by year passed I saw my dream flitting; the deep colours of it changed, faded, grew grey in the light of coming manhood; nevertheless, God be my witness that I have ever striven to make you just and true, hoping against hope continually; and I had even determined to bear everything and stay with you, even though you should remain unjust and liars, for the sake of the few who really love me; but now, seeing that God has made you mad, and that His vengeance will speedily fall, take heed how you cast out from you all that is good and true-hearted! Once more... which choose you, Peace or War?'

Between the good and the base, in the midst of the passionate faces and changing colours stood the great terrace, cold, and calm, and white, with

**Svend and
his Brethren**

its changeless statues; and for a while there was silence. Broken through at last by a yell, and the sharp whirr of arrows, and the cling, clang, from the armour of the terrace as Prince Harald staggered though unhurt, struck by the broad point on the helmet.

‘What! War?’ shouted Svend wrathfully, and his voice sounded like a clap of thunder following the lightning flash when a tower is struck. ‘What! war? swords for Svend! round about the king, good men and true! Sons of the golden-haired, show these men WAR!’ As he spoke he let his black cloak fall, and up from their sheaths sprang seven swords, steel from pommel to point only; on the blades of them in fantastic letters of gold shone the word WESTWARD. Then all the terrace gleamed with steel, and amid the hurtling of stones and whizz of arrows they began to go westward.

The streets ran with blood, the air was filled with groans & curses, the low waves nearest the granite pier were edged with blood, because they first caught the drippings of the blood.

Then those of the people who durst stay on the pier saw the ships of Svend’s little fleet leaving one by one; for he had taken aboard those ten ships whosoever had prayed to go, even at the last moment, wounded, or dying even; better so, for in their last moments came thoughts of good

things to many of them, and it was good to be among the true.

But those haughty ones left behind, sullen and untamed, but with a horrible indefinable dread on them that was worse than death, or mere pain, howsoever fierce... these saw all the ships go out of the harbour merrily with swelling sail & dashing oar, and with joyous singing of those aboard; and Svend's was the last of all. Whom they saw kneel down on the deck unhelmed, then all sheathed their swords that were about him; and the Prince Robert took from Svend's hand an iron crown fantastically wrought, and placed it on his head as he knelt; then he continued kneeling still, till, as the ship drew further and further away from the harbour, all things aboard of her became indistinct. And they never saw Svend and his brethren again.

Svend and
his Brethren

Here ends what William the Englishman wrote; but afterwards (in the night-time) he found the book of a certain chronicler which saith: 'In the spring-time, in May, the 550th year from the death of Svend the wonderful king, the good knights, sailing due eastward, came to a harbour of a land they knew not: wherein they saw many goodly ships, but of a strange fashion like the ships of the ancients, & destitute of any mariners: besides they saw no beacons for the guidance of seamen, nor was there any sound of bells or sing-

**Svend and
his Brethren**

ing, though the city was vast, with many goodly towers and palaces. So when they landed they found that which is hardly to be believed, but which is nevertheless true: for about the quays and about the streets lay many people dead, or stood, but quite without motion, and they were all white or about the colour of new-hewn free-stone; yet were they not statues but real men, for they had, some of them, ghastly wounds which showed their entrails, and the structure of their flesh, and veins, and bones. Moreover the streets were red and wet with blood, and the harbour waves were red with it, because it dripped in great drops slowly from the quays.

Then when the good knights saw this, they doubted not but that it was a fearful punishment on this people for sins of theirs; thereupon they entered into a church of that city and prayed God to pardon them; afterwards, going back to their ships, sailed away marvelling.

And I John who wrote this history saw all this with mine own eyes.'

LINDENBORG POOL.

I READ once in lazy humour Thorpe's Northern Mythology, on a cold May night when the north wind was blowing; in lazy humour, but when I came to the tale that is here amplified there was something in it that fixed my attention and made me think of it; and whether I would or no, my thoughts ran in this way, as here follows. So I felt obliged to write, and wrote accordingly, and by the time I had done, the grey light filled all my room; so I put out my candles, and went to bed, not without fear and trembling, for the morning twilight is so strange and lonely. This is what I wrote.

Yes, on that dark night, with that wild unsteady north wind howling, though it was Maytime, it was doubtless dismal enough in the forest, where the boughs clashed eerily, and where, as the wanderer in that place hurried along, strange forms half showed themselves to him, the more fearful because half seen in that way: dismal enough doubtless on wide moors where the great wind had it all its own way: dismal on the rivers creeping on and on between the marsh-lands, creeping through the willows, the water trickling through the locks, sounding faintly in the gusts of the wind. Yet surely nowhere so dismal as by the side of that still pool.

Lindenberg
Pool

I threw myself down on the ground there, utterly exhausted with my struggle against the wind, and with bearing the fathoms and fathoms of the heavily-leaded plumb-line that lay beside me. Fierce as the wind was, it could not raise the leaden waters of that fearful pool, defended as they were by the steep banks of dripping yellow clay, striped horribly here and there with ghastly uncertain green and blue. They said no man could fathom it; and yet all round the edges of it grew a rank crop of dreary reeds and segs, some round, some flat, but none ever flowering as other things flowered, never dying and being renewed, but always the same stiff array of unbroken reeds and segs, some round, some flat. Hard by me were two trees leafless and ugly, made, it seemed, only for the wind to go through with a wild sough on such nights as these; and for a mile from that place were no other trees.

True, I could not see all this at that time, then, in the dark night, but I knew well that it was all there; for much had I studied this pool in the daytime, trying to learn the secret of it; many hours I had spent there, happy with a kind of happiness, because forgetful of the past. And even now, could I not hear the wind going through those trees, as it never went through any trees before or since? Could I not see gleams of the dismal moor? Could I not hear those reeds just taken by the wind, knocking against each other, the flat

ones scraping all along the round ones? Could I not hear, moreover, the slow trickling of the land-springs through the clay banks?

The cold, chill horror of the place was too much for me; I had never been there by night before, nobody had for quite a long time, & now to come on such a night! If there had been any moon, the place would have looked more as it did by day; besides, the moon shining on water is always so beautiful, on any water even: if it had been star-light, one could have looked at the stars & thought of the time when those fields were fertile and beautiful (for such a time was, I am sure), when the cowslips grew among the grass, and when there was promise of yellow-waving corn stained with poppies; that time which the stars had seen, but which we had never seen, which even they would never see again: past time!

Ah! what was that which touched my shoulder? Yes, I see, only a dead leaf. Yes, to be here on this eighth of May too of all nights in the year, the night of that awful day when ten years ago I slew him, not undeservedly, God knows, yet how dreadful it was! Another leaf! and another! Strange, those trees have been dead this hundred years, I should think. How sharp the wind is too, just as if I were moving along and meeting it; why, I am moving! what then, I am not there after all; where am I then? There are the trees; no, they are freshly-planted oak saplings, the very

Lindenberg
Pool

Lindenberg
Pool

ones that those withered last-year's leaves were blown on me from.

I have been dreaming then, and am on my road to the lake: but what a young wood! I must have lost my way; I never saw all this before. Well, I will walk on stoutly.

May the Lord help my senses! I am riding! on a mule; a bell tinkles somewhere on him; the wind blows something about with a flapping sound: something? in heaven's name, what? My long black robes! Why, when I left my house I was clad in serviceable broadcloth of the nineteenth century.

I shall go mad, I am mad, I am gone to the devil, I have lost my identity; who knows in what place, in what age of the world I am living now? Yet I will be calm; I have seen all these things before, in pictures surely, or something like them. I am resigned, since it is no worse than that. I am a priest then, in the dim, far-off thirteenth century, riding, about midnight I should say, to carry the blessed sacrament to some dying man.

Soon I found that I was not alone; a man was riding close to me on a horse; he was fantastically dressed, more so than usual for that time, being striped all over in vertical stripes of yellow and green, with quaint birds like exaggerated storks in different attitudes counterchanged on the stripes; all this I saw by the lantern he carried, in the light of which his debauched black eyes quite flashed. On

he went, unsteadily rolling, very drunk, though it was the thirteenth century; but being plainly used to that, he sat his horse fairly well. I watched him in my proper nineteenth-century character, with insatiable curiosity and intense amusement; but as a quiet priest of a long-past age, with contempt and disgust enough, not unmixed with fear and anxiety. He roared out snatches of doggerel verse as he went along, drinking songs, hunting songs, robbing songs, lust-songs, in a voice that sounded far and far above the roaring of the wind, though that was high, and rolled along the dark road that his lantern cast spikes of light along ever so far, making the devils grin: and meanwhile I, the priest, glanced from him wrathfully every now and then to That which I carried very reverently in my hand, and my blood curdled with shame and indignation; but being a shrewd priest, I knew well enough that a sermon would be utterly thrown away on a man who was drunk every day in the year, and, more especially, very drunk then. So I held my peace, saying only under my breath: 'Dixit insipiens in corde suo, Non est Deus. Corrupti sunt et abominabiles facti sunt in studiis suis; non est qui faciat bonum, non est usque ad unum: sepulchrum patens est guttur eorum; linguis suis dolose agebant, venenum aspidum sub labiis eorum. Dominum non invocarunt; illic trepidaverunt timore, ubi non erat timor. Quis dabit ex Sion salutare Israel?' And

so I went on, thinking too at times about the man who was dying and whom I was soon to see: he had been a bold bad plundering baron, but was said lately to have altered his way of life, having seen a miracle or some such thing: he had departed to keep a tournament near his castle lately, but had been brought back sore wounded (so this drunken servant, with some difficulty and much unseasonable merriment, had made me understand), and now lay at the point of death, brought about by unskilful tending and such like. Then I thought of his face; a bad face, very bad, retreating forehead, small twinkling eyes, projecting lower jaw; and such a voice, too, he had! like the grunt of a boar mostly. Now don't you think it strange that this face should be the same, actually the same as the face of my enemy, slain that very day ten years ago? I did not hate him, either that man or the baron, but I wanted to see as little of him as possible, and I hoped that the ceremony would soon be over, and that I should be at liberty again.

And so with these thoughts and many others, but all thought strangely double, we went along, the varlet being too drunk to take much notice of me, only once, as he was singing some doggerel, like this, I think, making allowances for change of language and so forth:

'The Duke went to Treves
On the first of November;
His wife stay'd at Bonn ...
Let me see, I remember;

'When the Duke came back
To look for his wife,
We came from Cologne,
And took the Duke's life;

'We hung him mid-high
Between spire and pavement,
From their mouths dropp'd the cabbage
Of the carles in amazement.'

'Boo...hoo! Church rat! Church mouse! Hilloa,
Priest! have you brought the pyx, eh?' From
some cause or other he seemed to think this an
excellent joke, for he almost shrieked with laugh-
ter as we went along; but by this time we had
reached the castle. Challenge, and counter-chal-
lenge, and we passed the outermost gate and be-
gan to go through some of the courts, in which
stood lime trees here and there, growing green
tenderly with that Maytime, though the north
wind bit so keenly.

How strange again! as I went farther, there seem-
ed no doubt of it; here in the aftertime came that
pool, how I knew not; but in the few minutes
that we were riding from the outer gate to the
castle-porch I thought so intensely over the pro-

Lindenberg
Pool

bable cause for the existence of that pool, that (how strange!) I could almost have thought I was back again listening to the oozing of the land-springs through the high clay banks there. I was wakened from that, before it grew too strong, by the glare of many torches, and, dismounting, found myself in the midst of some twenty attendants, with flushed faces and wildly sparkling eyes, which they were vainly trying to soften to due solemnity; mock solemnity I had almost said, for they did not seem to think it necessary to appear really solemn, and had difficulty enough apparently in not prolonging indefinitely the shout of laughter with which they had at first greeted me. 'Take the holy father to my Lord,' said one at last, 'and we will go with him.'

So they led me up the stairs into the gorgeously-furnished chamber; the light from the heavy waxen candles was pleasant to my eyes after the glare and twisted red smoke of the pine-torches; but all the essences scattered about the chamber were not enough to conquer the fiery breath of those about me. I put on the alb and stole they brought me, and, before I went up to the sick man, looked round on those that were in the rooms; for the rooms opened one into the other by many doors, across some of which hung gorgeous tapestry; all the rooms seemed to have many people, for some stood at these doors, and some passed to and fro, swinging aside the heavy hangings; once several

people at once, seemingly quite by accident, drew aside almost all the veils from the doors, and showed an endless perspective of gorgeousness.

And at these things my heart fainted for horror.

'Had not the Jews of late,' thought I, the priest, 'been very much in the habit of crucifying children in mockery of the Holiest, holding gorgeous feasts while they beheld the poor innocents die? These men are atheists, you are in a trap; yet quit yourself like a man.'

'Ah, sharp one,' thought I, the author, 'where are you at last? try to pray as a test. Well, well, these things are strangely like devils. O man, you have talked about bravery often, now is your time to practise it: once for all trust in God, or I fear you are lost.'

Moreover it increased my horror that there was no appearance of a woman in all these rooms; and yet was there not? there, those things... I looked more intently; yes, no doubt they were women, but all dressed like men; what a ghastly place! 'O man! do your duty,' my angel said; then in spite of the bloodshot eyes of man and woman there, in spite of their bold looks, they quailed before me.

I stepped up to the bed-side, where under the velvet coverlid lay the dying man, his small sparkling eyes (but dulled now by coming death) only showing above the swathings. I was about to kneel down by the bed-side to confess him, when

Lindenberg
Pool

one of those...things...called out (now they had just been whispering and sniggering together, but the priest in his righteous, brave scorn would not look at them; the humbled author, half fearful, half trustful, dared not): so one called out: 'Sir Priest, for three days our master has spoken no articulate word; you must pass over all particulars; ask for a sign only.'

Such a strange ghastly suspicion flashed across me just then; but I choked it, and asked the dying man if he repented of his sins, and if he believed all that was necessary to salvation, and, if so, to make a sign, if he were able: the man moved a little and groaned; so I took it for a sign, as he was clearly incapable either of speaking or moving, and accordingly began the service for the administration of the sacraments; and as I began, those behind me & through all the rooms (I know it was through all of them) began to move about, in a bewildering dance-like motion, mazy and intricate; yes, and presently music struck up through all those rooms, music & singing, lively and gay; many of the tunes I had heard before (in the nineteenth century); I could have sworn to half a dozen of the polkas.

The rooms grew fuller and fuller of people; they passed thick and fast between the rooms, and the hangings were continually rustling; one fat old man with a big belly crept under the bed where I was, and wheezed and chuckled there, laughing

and talking to one who stooped down and lifted up the hangings to look at him.

Lindenberg
Pool

Still more and more people talking and singing and laughing and twirling about, till my brain went round and round, and I scarce knew what I did; yet, somehow, I could not leave off; I dared not even look over my shoulder, fearing lest I should see something so horrible as to make me die. So I got on with the service, and at last took the pyx, & took thereout the sacred wafer; whereupon was a deep silence through all those rooms, which troubled me, I think, more than all which had gone before, for I knew well it did not mean reverence. I held it up, that which I counted so holy, when lo! great laughter, echoing like thunder-claps through all the rooms, not dulled by the veiling hangings, for they were all raised up together: and, with a slow upheaval of the rich clothes among which he lay, with a sound that was half snarl, half grunt, with helpless body swathed in bedclothes, a huge swine that I had been shriving tore from me the Holy Thing, deeply scoring my hand as he did so with tusk and tooth, so that the red blood ran quick on to the floor. Therewithal he rolled down on to the floor, and lay there helplessly, only able to roll to and fro, because of the swathings. Then right madly skirled the intolerable laughter, rising to shrieks that were fearfuller than any scream of agony I ever heard; the hundreds of people

Lindenberg
Pool

through all those grand rooms danced & wheeled about me, shrieking, hemming me in with interlaced arms, the women loosing their long hair and thrusting forward their horribly-grinning unsexed faces toward me till I felt their hot breath. Oh! how I hated them all! almost hated all mankind for their sakes; how I longed to get right quit of all men; among whom, as it seemed, all sacredest things even were made a mock of. I looked about me fiercely, I sprang forward, and clutched a sword from the gilded belt of one of those who stood near me; with savage blows that threw the blood about the gilded walls and their hangings right over the heads of those... things... I cleared myself from them, and tore down the great stairs madly, yet could not, as in a dream, go fast enough, because of my passion.

I was out in the courtyard among the lime trees soon, the north wind blowing freshly on my heated forehead in that dawn. The outer gate was locked and bolted; I stooped and raised a great stone and sent it at the lock with all my strength, and I was stronger than ten men then; iron and oak gave way before it, and through the ragged splinters I tore in reckless fury, like a wild horse through a hazel hedge.

And no one had pursued me. I knelt down on the dear green turf outside, and thanked God with streaming eyes for my deliverance, praying Him forgiveness for my unwilling share in that night's

mockery. Then I arose and turned to go, but even as I did so I heard a roar as if the world were coming in two, and looking toward the castle, saw, not a castle, but a great cloud of white lime-dust swaying this way and that in the gusts of the wind. Then while the east grew bright there arose a hissing, gurgling noise, that swelled into the roar and wash of many waters, and by then the sun had risen a deep black lake lay before my feet. And this is how I tried to fathom the Lindenberg Pool.

Lindenberg Pool

THE HOLLOW LAND. A TALE.

We find in ancient story wonders many told
Of heroes in great glory, with spirit free and bold;
Of joyances and high-tides, of weeping & of woe,
Of noble Recken striving, mote ye now wonders know.
 Nibelungen Lied (see Carlyle's *Miscellanies*).

CHAPTER I. STRUGGLING IN THE WORLD.

DO you know where it is, the Hollow Land? I have been looking for it now so long, trying to find it again, the Hollow Land; for there I saw my love first. I wish to tell you how I found it first of all; but I am old, my memory fails me: you must wait and let me think if I perchance can tell you how it happened. Yea, in my ears is a confused noise of trumpet-blasts singing over desolate moors, in my ears and eyes a clashing and clanging of horse-hoofs, a ringing and glittering of steel: drawn-back lips, set teeth, shouts, shrieks and curses.

How was it that no one of us ever found it till that day? For it is near our country: but what time have we to look for it or any good thing, with such biting carking cares hemming us in on every side? Cares about great things, mighty things; mighty things, O my brothers! or rather little things enough, if we only knew it. Lives passed in turmoil, in making one another unhappy; in bitterest misunderstanding of our brothers' hearts,

making those sad whom God has not made sad: alas, alas! what chance for any of us to find the Hollow Land? what time even to look for it? Yet who has not dreamed of it? Who, half miserable yet the while, for that he knows it is but a dream, has not felt the cool waves round his feet, the roses crowning him, and through the leaves of beech and lime the many whispering winds of the Hollow Land?

Now my name was Florian, and my House was the House of the Lilies; and of that House was my father Lord, and after him my eldest brother Arnald: and me they called Florian de Liliis. Moreover, when my father was dead there arose a feud between the Lilies' House and Red Harald: and this that follows is the history of it. Lady Swanhilda, Red Harald's mother, was a widow with one son, Red Harald; and when she had been in widowhood two years, being of princely blood, and besides comely and fierce, King Urrayne sent to demand her in marriage. And I remember seeing the procession leaving the town, when I was quite a child; and many young knights and squires attended the Lady Swanhilda as pages, and amongst them Arnald, my eldest brother. And as I gazed out of the window, I saw him walking by the side of her horse, dressed in white and gold very delicately; but as he went it chanced that he stumbled. Now he was one of those that held a golden canopy over the

**The Hollow
Land**

lady's head, so that it now sank into wrinkles, and the lady had to bow her head full low, and even then the gold brocade caught in one of the long slim gold flowers that were wrought round about the crown she wore. She flushed up in her rage, and her smooth face went suddenly into the carven wrinkles of a wooden water-spout, and she caught at the brocade with her left hand, and pulled it away furiously, so that the warp and woof were twisted out of their places, and many gold threads were left dangling about the crown: but Swanhilda stared about when she rose, then smote my brother across the mouth with her gilded sceptre, and the red blood flowed all about his garments; yet he only turned exceeding pale, and dared say no word, though he was heir to the House of the Lilies: but my small heart swelled with rage, and I vowed revenge, and as it seems he did too.

So when Swanhilda had been queen three years, she suborned many of King Urrayne's knights and lords, and slew her husband as he slept, and reigned in his stead. And her son Harald grew up to manhood, and was counted a strong knight and well spoken of by then I first put on my armour. Then one night as I lay dreaming I felt a hand laid on my face, and starting up saw Arnald before me fully armed. He said: 'Florian, rise and arm.' I did so, all but my helm, as he was. He kissed me on the forehead: his lips felt hot and

dry, and when they brought torches and I could see his face plainly, I saw he was very pale. He said: 'Do you remember, Florian, this day sixteen years ago? It is a long time, but I shall never forget it unless this night blots out its memory.' I knew what he meant, and because my heart was wicked I rejoiced exceedingly at the thought of vengeance, so that I could not speak, but only laid my palm across his lips. 'Good; you have a good memory, Florian. See now, I waited long and long: I said at first, I forgive her; but when the news came concerning the death of the king, and how that she was shameless, I said: I will take it as a sign, if God does not punish her within certain years, that He means me to do so; and I have been watching and watching now these two years for an opportunity, and behold it is come at last; and I think God has certainly given her into our hands, for she rests this night, this very Christmas Eve, at a small walled town on the frontier, not two hours' gallop from this: they keep little ward there, and the night is wild: moreover the prior of a certain house of monks just without the walls is my fast friend in this matter, for she has done him some great injury. In the courtyard below a hundred and fifty knights and squires, all faithful and true, are waiting for us: one moment and we shall be gone.' Then we both knelt down and prayed God to give her into our hands; we put on our helms and went down into the courtyard.

The Hollow Land

It was the first time I expected to use a sharp sword in anger, and I was full of joy as the muffled thunder of our horse-hoofs rolled through the bitter winter night. In about an hour and a half we had crossed the frontier, and in half an hour more the greater part had halted in a wood near the Abbey, while I with a few others went up to the Abbey gates and knocked loudly four times with my sword-hilt, stamping on the ground meantime. A long low whistle answered me from within, which I in my turn answered; then the wicket opened and a monk came out holding a lantern. He seemed yet in the prime of life, and was a tall, powerful man. He held the lantern to my face, then smiled, and said: 'The banners hang low.' I gave the countersign: 'The crest is lopped off.' 'Good, my son,' said he; 'the ladders are within here. I dare not trust any of the brethren to carry them for you, though they love not the witch either; but they are timorsome.' 'No matter,' I said; 'I have men here.' So they entered and began to shoulder the tall ladders: the prior was very busy. 'You will find them just the right length, my son; trust me for that.' He seemed quite a jolly pleasant man; I could not understand his nursing furious revenge: but his face darkened strangely whenever he happened to mention her name.

As we were starting he came and stood outside the gate, and putting his lantern down that the

light of it might not confuse his sight, looked earnestly into the night; then said: 'The wind has fallen, the snowflakes get thinner and smaller every moment; in an hour it will be freezing hard, and will be quite clear: everything depends upon the surprise being complete; stop a few minutes yet, my son.' He went away chuckling, and returned presently with two more sturdy monks carrying something: they threw their burdens down before my feet; they consisted of all the white albs in the abbey. 'There, trust an old man who has seen more than one stricken fight in his carnal days; let the men who scale the walls put these over their arms, and they will not be seen in the least. God make your sword sharp, my son.' So we departed; & when I met Arnald again he said that what the prior had done was well thought of: so we agreed that I should take thirty men, an old squire of our house well skilled in war along with them; scale the walls as quietly as possible, and open the gates to the rest.

I set off accordingly, after that with low laughing we had put the albs all over us, wrapping the ladders also in white. Then we crept very warily and slowly up to the wall; the moat was frozen over, and on the ice the snow lay quite thick: we all thought that the guards must be careless enough, when they did not even take the trouble to break the ice in the moat. So we listened: there was no sound at all; the Christmas midnight mass had

The Hollow Land

long ago been over; it was nearly three o'clock, and the moon began to clear; there was scarce any snow falling now, only a flake or two from some low hurrying cloud or other: the wind sighed gently about the round towers there, but it was bitter cold, for it had begun to freeze again. We listened for some minutes, about a quarter of an hour, I think; then at a sign from me they raised the ladders carefully, muffled as they were at the top with swathings of wool. I mounted first, old Squire Hugh followed last; noiselessly we ascended, and soon stood all together on the walls: then we carefully lowered the ladders again with long ropes; we got our swords and axes from out of the folds of our priest's raiment, and set forward till we reached the first tower along the wall. The door was open; in the chamber at the top there was a fire slowly smouldering, nothing else: we passed through it, and began to go down the spiral staircase, I first, with my axe shortened in my hand. What if we were surprised there, I thought, and I longed to be out in the air again; what if the door were fast at the bottom? As we passed the second chamber we heard some one within snoring loudly: I looked in quietly, and saw a big man, with long black hair that fell off his pillow and swept the ground, lying snoring with his nose turned up and his mouth open; but he seemed so sound asleep that we did not stop to slay him. Praise be! the door was open. Without even a

whispered word, without a pause, we went on along the streets, on the side that the drift had been on, because our garments were white. For the wind being very strong all that day, the houses on that side had caught in their cornices and carvings, and on the rough stone and wood of them, so much snow that except here and there where the black walls grinned out they were quite white. No man saw us as we stole along, noiselessly because of the snow, till we stood within a hundred yards of the gates and their house of guard. And we stood, because we heard the voice of some one singing:

‘Queen Mary’s crown was gold,
King Joseph’s crown was red,
But Jesus’ crown was diamond
That lit up all the bed

Mariae Virginis.’

So they had some guards after all: this was clearly the sentinel that sang to keep the ghosts off. Now for a fight. We drew nearer, a few yards nearer, then stopped to free ourselves from our monk’s clothes.

‘Ships sail through the heaven
With red banners dressed,
Carrying the planets seven
To see the white breast

Mariae Virginis.’

The Hollow
Land

Thereat he must have seen the waving of some alb or other as it shivered down to the ground, for his spear fell with a thud, and he seemed to be standing openmouthed, thinking something about ghosts; then plucking up heart of grace he roared out like ten bull-calves, and dashed into the guard-house. We followed smartly, but without hurry, and came up to the door of it just as some dozen half-armed men came tumbling out under our axes; thereupon, while our men slew them, I blew a great blast upon my horn, and Hugh with some others drew bolt and bar and swung the gates wide open. Then the men in the guard-house understood that they were taken in a trap, and began to stir with great confusion; so lest they should get quite waked and armed I left Hugh at the gates with ten men, and myself led the rest into that house. There, while we slew all those that yielded not, came Arnald with the others, bringing our horses with them; then all the enemy threw their arms down. And we counted our prisoners and found them over fourscore; therefore, not knowing what to do with them (for they were too many to guard, and it seemed un-knightly to slay them all), we sent up some bowmen to the walls, and turning our prisoners out of gates bade them run for their lives; which they did fast enough, not knowing our numbers, and our men sent a few flights of arrows among them that they might not be undeceived.

Then the one or two prisoners that we had left told us, when we had crossed our axes over their heads, that the people of the good town would not willingly fight us, in that they hated the Queen; that she was guarded at the palace by some fifty knights, and that beside there were no others to oppose us in the town. So we set out for the palace spear in hand. We had not gone far before we heard some knights coming; and soon, in a turn of the long street, we saw them riding towards us: when they caught sight of us they seemed astonished, drew rein, and stood in some confusion. We did not slacken our pace for an instant, but rode right at them with a yell, to which I lent myself with all my heart. After all they did not run away, but waited for us with their spears held out; I missed the man I had marked, or hit him rather just on the top of the helm: he bent back, and the spear slipped over his head, but my horse still kept on, and I felt presently such a crash that I reeled in my saddle, and felt mad. He had lashed out at me with his sword as I came on, hitting me in the ribs (for my arm was raised), but only flatlings. I was quite wild with rage; I turned, almost fell upon him, caught him by the neck with both hands & threw him under the horse-hoofs, sighing with fury. I heard Arnold's voice close to me, 'Well fought, Florian'; and I saw his great stern face bare among the iron, for he had made a vow in remembrance of

The Hollow Land

that blow always to fight unhelmed: I saw his great sword swinging in wide gyres & hissing as it started up, just as if it were alive and liked it. So joy filled all my soul, & I fought with my heart, till the big axe I swung felt like nothing but a little hammer in my hand, except for its bitterness: and as for the enemy, they went down like grass, so that we destroyed them utterly; for those knights would neither yield nor fly, but died as they stood, so that some fifteen of our men also died there.

Then at last we came to the palace, where some grooms and such like kept the gates armed; but some ran, and some we took prisoners, one of whom died for sheer terror in our hands, being stricken by no wound; for he thought we would eat him. These prisoners we questioned concerning the Queen, and so entered the great hall. There Arnald sat down in the throne on the dais, and laid his naked sword before him on the table, and on each side of him sat such knights as there was room for, and the others stood round about; while I took ten men, & went to look for Swanhilda. I found her soon, sitting by herself in a gorgeous chamber. I almost pitied her when I saw her looking so utterly desolate & despairing; her beauty too had faded, deep lines cut through her face. But when I entered she knew who I was, and her look of intense hatred was so fiend-like that it changed my pity into horror of her.

'Knight,' she said, 'who are you? and what do you want, thus discourteously entering my chamber?' 'I am Florian de Liliis, and I am to conduct you to judgment.' She sprang up. 'Curse you & your whole house! you I hate worse than any, girl's face! Guards, guards!' and she stamped on the ground, the veins in her forehead swelled, her eyes grew round and flamed out, as she kept crying for her guards, stamping the while; for she seemed quite mad. Then at last she remembered that she was in the power of her enemies; she sat down, and lay with her face between her hands and wept passionately. 'Witch,' I said between my closed teeth, 'will you come, or must we carry you down to the great hall?' Neither would she come, but sat there clutching at her dress and tearing her hair. Then I said: 'Bind her, and carry her down.' And they did so.

I watched Arnald as we came in; there was no triumph on his stern white face, but resolution enough; he had made up his mind. They placed her on a seat in the midst of the hall over against the dais. He said: 'Unbind her, Florian.' They did so; she raised her face and glared defiance at us all, as though she would die queenly after all. Then rose up Arnald and said: 'Queen Swanhilda, we judge you guilty of death; and because you are a queen and of a noble house you shall be slain by my knightly sword, and I will even take the reproach of slaying a woman, for no other

The Hollow
Land

hand than mine shall deal the blow.' Then she said: 'O false knight, show your warrant from God, man, or devil.' 'This warrant from God, Swanhilda,' he said, holding up his sword; 'listen! Fifteen years ago, when I was just winning my spurs, you struck me, disgracing me before all the people: you cursed me, & meant that curse well enough. Men of the House of the Lilies, what sentence for that?' 'Death!' they said. 'Listen! Afterwards you slew my cousin your husband, treacherously, in the most cursed way, stabbing him in the throat, as the stars in the canopy above him looked down on the shut eyes of him. Men of the House of the Lily, what sentence for that?' 'Death!' they said. 'Do you hear them, Queen? There is warrant from man: for the devil, I do not reverence him enough to take warrant from him; but as I look at that face of yours I think that even he has left you.' And indeed just then all her pride seemed to leave her; she fell from the chair & wallowed on the ground moaning; she wept like a child, so that the tears lay on the oak floor; she prayed for another month of life; she came to me & kneeled and kissed my feet and prayed piteously, so that water ran out of her mouth. But I shuddered and drew away; it was like having an adder about one: I could have pitied her had she died bravely, but for one like her to whine and whine! pah!

Then from the dais rang Arnald's voice terrible,

much changed: 'Let there be an end of all this.' And he took his sword and strode through the hall towards her; she rose from the ground and stood up, stooping a little, her head sunk between her shoulders, her black eyes turned up & gleaming, like a tigress about to spring. When he came within some six paces of her something in his eye daunted her, or perhaps the flashing of his terrible sword in the torchlight: she threw her arms up with a great shriek, and dashed screaming about the hall. Arnald's lip never once curled with any scorn, no line in his face changed; he said: 'Bring her here and bind her.' But when one came up to her to lay hold on her she first of all ran at him, hitting him with her head in the belly. Then while he stood doubled up for want of breath, & staring with his head up, she caught his sword from the girdle, and cut him across the shoulders; and many others she wounded sorely before they took her. Then Arnald stood by the chair to which she was bound, and poised his sword; and there was a great silence. Then he said: 'Men of the House of the Lilies, do you justify me in this? Shall she die?' Straightway rang a great shout through the hall; but before it died away the sword had swept round, & therewithal was there no such thing as Swanhilda left upon the earth, for in no battlefield had Arnald struck truer blow. Then he turned to the few servants of the palace and said: 'Go now, bury this

The Hollow Land accursed woman, for she is a king's daughter.' Then to us all: 'Now, knights, to horse & away, that we may reach the good town by about dawn.' So we mounted and rode off.

What a strange Christmas-day that was! for there, about nine o'clock in the morning, rode Red Harald into the good town to demand vengeance. He went at once to the King, and the King promised that before nightfall that very day the matter should be judged: albeit the King feared somewhat, because every third man you met in the streets had a blue cross on his shoulder, and some likeness of a lily, cut out or painted, stuck in his hat; and this blue cross and lily were the bearings of our House, called De Liliis. Now we had seen Red Harald pass through the streets, with a white banner borne before him, to show that he came peaceably as for this time; but I trow he was thinking of other things than peace. And he was called Red Harald first at this time, because over all his arms he wore a great scarlet cloth that fell in heavy folds about his horse and all about him. Then, as he passed our house, someone pointed it out to him, rising there with its carving and its barred marble, but stronger than many a castle on the hill-tops; and its great overhanging battlement cast a mighty shadow down the wall and across the street; and above all rose the great tower, our banner floating proudly from the top, whereon was emblazoned on a white

ground a blue cross, and on a blue ground four white lilies. And now faces were gazing from all the windows, & all the battlements were thronged: so Harald turned, and rising in his stirrups, shook his clenched fist at our house; nathless as he did so the east wind coming down the street caught up the corner of that scarlet cloth & drove it over his face, and therewithal disordering his long black hair, well-nigh choked him, so that he bit both his hair and that cloth. So from base to coping rose a mighty shout of triumph and defiance, and he passed on.

Then Arnald caused it to be cried that all those who loved the good House of the Lilies should go to mass that morning in Saint Mary's church, hard by our house. Now this church belonged to us, and the abbey that served it, and always we appointed the abbot of it on condition that our trumpets should sound all together when on high masses they sing the Gloria in Excelsis. It was the largest and most beautiful of all the churches in the town, and had two exceeding high towers, which you could see from far off, even when you saw not the town, or any of its other towers; and in one of these towers were twelve great bells named after the twelve Apostles, one name being written on each one of them, as Peter, Matthew, and so on; and in the other tower was one great bell only, much larger than any of the others, which was called Mary. Now this bell was

The Hollow
Land

never rung but when our House was in great danger; and it had this legend on it: WHEN MARY RINGSTHE EARTH SHAKES; and indeed from this we took our war-cry, which was 'Mary rings': somewhat justifiably indeed, for the last time that Mary rang, on that day before nightfall there were four thousand bodies to be buried, which bodies wore neither cross nor lily.

So Arnald gave me in charge to tell the abbot to cause Mary to be tolled for an hour before mass that day. The abbot leaned on my shoulder as I stood within the tower and looked at the twelve monks laying their hands to the ropes. Far up in the dimness I saw the wheel before it began to swing round about; then it moved a little: the twelve men bent down to the earth, and a roar rose that shook the tower from base to spire-vane. Backwards and forwards swept the wheel, as Mary now looked downwards towards earth, now looked up at the shadowy cone of the spire, shot across by bars of light from the dormers. And the thunder of Mary was caught up by the wind and carried through all the country; and when the goodman heard it he said good-bye to wife and child, slung his shield behind his back, and set forward with his spear sloped over his shoulder; and many a time, as he walked toward the good town, he tightened the belt that went about his waist that he might stride the faster, so

long and furiously did Mary toll. And before the great bell Mary had ceased ringing all the ways were full of armed men. The Hollow
Land

But at each door of the church of Saint Mary stood a row of men armed with axes; and when any came meaning to go into the church, the two first of these would hold their axes, whose helves were about four feet long, over his head, & would ask him: 'Who went over the moon last night?' Then if he answered nothing, or at random, they would bid him turn back, which he for the more part would be ready enough to do: but some, striving to get through that row of men, were slain outright. But if he were one of those that were friends to the House of the Lilies he would answer to that question: 'Mary and John.'

By the time the mass began the whole church was full, and in the nave and transept thereof were three thousand men, all of our House and all armed. But Arnald and myself and Squire Hugh and some others sat under a gold-fringed canopy near the choir; and the abbot said mass, having his mitre on his head. Yet as I watched him it seemed to me that he must have something on beneath his priest's vestments, for he looked much fatter than usual, being really a tall lithe man. Now as they sang the Kyrie someone shouted from the other end of the church: 'My lord Arnald, they are slaying our people without;' for indeed all the square about the church was

**The Hollow
Land**

full of our people, who for the press had not been able to enter, and were standing there in no small dread of what might come to pass.

Then the abbot turned round from the altar, and began to fidget with the fastenings of his rich robes. And they made a lane for us up to the west door; then I put on my helm, and we began to go up the nave; then suddenly the singing of the monks and all stopped. I heard a clinking and a buzz of voices in the choir; I turned and saw that the bright noon sun was shining on the gold of the priests' vestments as they lay on the floor, and on the mail that the priests carried. So we stopped; the choir gates swung open, and the abbot marched out at the head of his men, all fully armed, and began to strike up the psalm *Exsurgat Deus*.

When we got to the west door, there was indeed a tumult, but as yet no slaying. The square was all a-flicker with steel, & we beheld a great body of knights, at the head of them Red Harald and the King, standing over against us: but our people, pressed against the houses & into the corners of the square, were some striving to enter the doors, some beside themselves with rage, shouting out to the others to charge; withal, some were pale, and some were red with the blood that had gathered to the wrathful faces of them. Then said Arnald to those about him: 'Lift me up.' So they laid a great shield on two lances, and these four

men carried, and thereon stood Arnald and gazed about him. Now the King was unhelmed, and his white hair (for he was an old man) flowed down behind him on to his saddle; but Arnald's hair was cut short, and was red. And all the bells rang. Then the King said: 'O Arnald of the Lilies, will you settle this quarrel by the judgment of God?' And Arnald thrust up his chin and said: 'Yea.' 'How then?' said the King, 'and where?' 'Will it please you try now?' said Arnald. Then the King understood what he meant, and took in his hand from behind tresses of his long white hair, twisting them round his hand in his wrath, but yet said no word, till I suppose his hair put him in mind of something, and he raised it in both his hands above his head, and shouted out aloud: 'O knights, hearken to this traitor!' Whereat indeed the lances began to move ominously. But Arnald spoke: 'O you king and lords, what have we to do with you? Were we not free in the old time up among the hills there? Wherefore give way, and we will go to the hills again, and if any man try to stop us, his blood be on his own head. Wherefore now' (and he turned) 'all you House of the Lily, both soldiers and monks, let us go forth together fearing nothing, for I think there is not bone enough or muscle enough in these fellows here that have a king that they should stop us withal, but only skin and fat.' And truly no man dared to stop us, and we went.

Now at that time we drove cattle in Red Harald's land, and we took no hoof but from the lords and rich men; but of these we had a mighty drove, both oxen and sheep, and horses, and besides even hawks and hounds, and a huntsman or two to take care of them. And about noon we drew away from the corn lands that lay beyond the pastures and mingled with them, and reached a wide moor, which was called Goliah's Land; I scarce know why, except that it belonged neither to Red Harald nor to us, but was debatable. And the cattle began to go slowly, and our horses were tired, and the sun struck down very hot upon us; for there was no shadow, and the day was cloudless. All about the edge of the moor, except on the side from which we had come, was a rim of hills, not very high, but very rocky and steep; otherwise the moor itself was flat; and through these hills was one pass, guarded by our men, which pass led to the Hill-Castle of the Lilies.

It was not wonderful that of this moor many wild stories were told, being such a strange lonely place; some of them one knew, alas! to be over-true. In the old time, before we went to the good town, this moor had been the mustering-place of our people; and our House had done deeds enough of blood and horror to turn our white lilies red, and our blue cross to a fiery one. But some of those wild tales I never believed; they had to do mostly

with men losing their way without any apparent cause (for there were plenty of landmarks), finding some well-known spot, and then, just beyond it, a place they had never even dreamed of. 'Florian! Florian!' said Arnald. 'For God's sake stop, as every one else is stopping, to look at the hills yonder! I always thought there was a curse upon us! What does God mean by shutting us up here? Look at the cattle! O Christ, they have found it out too! See, some of them are turning to run back again towards Harald's land! O unhappy, unhappy, from that day forward!' He leaned forward, rested his head on his horse's neck, and wept like a child. I felt so irritated with him that I could almost have slain him then and there. Was he mad? Had these wild doings of ours turned his strong wise head? 'Are you my brother Arnald, that I used to think such a grand man when I was a boy?' I said. 'Or are you changed too, like everybody and everything else? What do you mean?' 'Look, look!' he said, grinding his teeth in agony. I raised my eyes: where was the one pass between the rim of stern rocks? Nothing: the enemy behind us, that grim wall in front: what wonder that each man looked in his fellow's face for help, and found it not? Yet I refused to believe that there was any truth either in the wild stories that I had heard when I was a boy, or in this story told me so clearly by my eyes now. I called out cheerily: 'Hugh, come here!' He came. 'What do you

think of this? Some mere dodge on Harald's part? Are we cut off?' 'Think, Sir Florian? God forgive me for ever thinking at all! I have given up that long and long ago, because thirty years ago I thought this; that the House of the Lilies would deserve anything in the way of bad fortune that God would send them: so I gave up thinking, and took to fighting. But if you think that Harald had anything to do with this, why...why, in God's name, I wish I could think so!' I felt a dull weight on my heart. Had our House been the devil's servants all along? I thought we were God's servants.

The day was very still, but what little wind there was was at our backs. I watched Hugh's face, not being able to answer him. He was the cleverest man at war that I have known, either before or since that day; sharper than any hound in ear and scent, clearer-sighted than any eagle: he was listening now intently. I saw a slight smile cross his face; heard him mutter: 'Yes, I think so; verily that is better, a great deal better.' Then he stood up in his stirrups and shouted: 'Hurrah for the Lilies! Mary rings!' 'Mary rings!' I shouted, though I did not know the reason for his exultation: my brother lifted his head and smiled too, grimly. Then as I listened I heard clearly the sound of a trumpet, an enemy's trumpet too. 'After all it was only mist or some such thing,' I said; for the pass between the hills was clear

enough now. 'Hurrah! only mist!' said Arnald, quite elated. 'Mary rings!' And we all began to think of fighting; for after all what joy is equal to that?

There were five hundred of us: two hundred spears, the rest archers; and both archers and men-at-arms were picked men. 'How many of them are we to expect?' said I. 'Not under a thousand, certainly; probably more, Sir Florian.' My brother Arnald, by the way, had knighted me before we left the good town, and Hugh liked to give me the handle to my name. How was it, by the way, that no one had ever made him a knight? 'Let every one look to his arms and horse, and come away from these silly cows' sons!' shouted Arnald. Hugh said: 'They will be here in an hour, fair sir.' So we got clear of the cattle, and dismounted, and both ourselves took food and drink, and our horses. Afterwards we tightened our saddlegirths, shook our great pots of helmets on, except Arnald, whose rusty-red hair had been his only headpiece in battle for years and years, and stood with our spears close by our horses, leaving room for the archers to retreat between our ranks: and they got their arrows ready, and planted their stakes before a little peat moss: and there we waited, and saw their pennons at last floating high above the corn of the fertile land; then heard their many horse-hoofs ring upon the hard-parched moor, & the archers began to shoot.

The Hollow
Land

IT HAD been a strange battle; we had never fought better, and yet withal it had ended in a retreat; indeed all along every man but Arnald and myself, even Hugh, had been trying at least to get the enemy between him and the way toward the pass: and now we were all drifting that way, the enemy trying to cut us off, but never able to stop us, because he could only throw small bodies of men in our way, whom we scattered and put to flight in their turn. I never cared less for my life than then; indeed, in spite of all my boasting and hardness of belief, I should have been happy to have died, such a strange weight of apprehension was on me; and yet I got no scratch even. I had soon put off my great helm, and was fighting in my mail-coif only: and here I swear that three knights together charged me, aiming at my bare face, yet never touched me; for as for one, I put his lance aside with my sword, and the other two in some wonderful manner got their spears locked in each other's armour, and so had to submit to be knocked off their horses.

And we still neared the pass, and began to see distinctly the ferns that grew on the rocks, and the fair country between the rift in them spreading out there blue-shadowed. Whereupon came a great rush of men of both sides, striking side blows at each other, spitting, cursing, and shrieking, as they tore away like a herd of wild hogs. So being careless of life, as I said, I drew rein, and

turning my horse waited quietly for them; and I knotted the reins, and laid them on the horse's neck, and stroked him that he whinnied; then got both my hands to my sword. Then as they came on I noted hurriedly that the first man was one of Arnald's men, and one of our men behind him leaned forward to prod him with his spear, but could not reach so far; till he himself was run through the eye with a spear, and throwing his arms up fell dead with a shriek. Also I noted concerning this first man, that the laces of his helmet were loose, and when he saw me he lifted his left hand to his head, took off his helm, and cast it at me, and still tore on. The helmet flew over my head, and I sitting still there swung out, hitting him on the neck; his head flew right off, for the mail no more held than a piece of silk. 'Mary rings!' And my horse whinnied again, and we both of us went at it, and fairly stopped that rout, so that there was a knot of quite close and desperate fighting, wherein we had the best of that fight, and slew most of them, albeit my horse was slain and my mail-coif cut through. Then I bade a squire fetch me another horse, and began meanwhile to upbraid those knights for running such a strange disorderly race, instead of standing and fighting cleverly. Moreover we had drifted even in this successful fight still nearer to the pass, so that the conies who dwelt there were beginning to consider whether they should not run into their

holes. But one of those knights said: 'Be not angry with me, Sir Florian, but do you think you will go to Heaven?' 'The saints! I hope so,' I said. But one who stood near him whispered to him to hold his peace, so I cried out: 'O friend, I hold this world & all therein so cheap now, that I see not anything in it but shame which can any longer anger me; wherefore speak out.' 'Then, Sir Florian, men say that at your christening some fiend took on him the likeness of a priest and strove to baptise you in the devil's name; but God had mercy on you, so that the fiend could not choose but baptise you in the name of the most holy Trinity: and yet men say that you hardly believe any doctrine such as other men do, and will in the end only go to Heaven round about as it were, not at all by the intercession of Our Lady: they say too that you can see no ghosts or other wonders, whatever happens to other Christian men.' I smiled: 'Well, friend, I scarcely call this a disadvantage; moreover what has it to do with the matter in hand?'

How was this, in Heaven's name? We had been quite still, resting, while this talk was going on; but we could hear the hawks chattering from the rocks, we were so close now. And my heart sank within me: there was no reason why this should not be true; there was no reason why anything should not be true. 'This, Sir Florian,' said the knight again; 'how would you feel inclined to

fight if you thought that everything about you was mere glamour, this earth here, the rocks, the sun, the sky? I do not know where I am for certain, I do not know that it is not midnight instead of undern, I do not know if I have been fighting men or only simulacra; but I think, we all think that we have been led into some devil's trap or other, and...and (may God forgive me my sins) I wish I had never been born.' There now! he was weeping; they all wept. How strange it was to see those rough bearded men blubbering there, and snivelling till the tears ran over their armour and mingled with the blood, so that it dropped down to the earth in a dim, dull, red rain!

My eyes indeed were dry, but then so was my heart; I felt far worse than weeping came to, but nevertheless I spoke cheerily: 'Dear friends, where are your old men's hearts gone to now? See now! this is a punishment for our sins, is it? Well, for our forefathers' sins, or our own? If the first, O brothers, be very sure that if we bear it manfully God will have something very good in store for us hereafter; but if for our sins, is it not certain that He cares for us yet? For note that He suffers the wicked to go their own ways pretty much; moreover brave men, brothers, ought to be the masters of simulacra. Come, is it so hard to die once for all?' Still no answer came from them; they sighed heavily only. I heard the sound of more than one or two swords as they rattled back

**The Hollow
Land**

to their scabbards; nay, one knight, stripping himself of surcoat and hauberk, and drawing his dagger, looked at me with a grim smile, and said: 'Sir Florian, do so!' Then he drew the dagger across his throat & he fell back dead. They shuddered, those brave men, and crossed themselves. And I had no heart to say a word more, but mounted the horse which had been brought to me, and rode away slowly for a few yards: then I became aware that there was a great silence over the whole field. So I lifted my eyes, and looked; and behold, no man struck at another.

Then from out of a band of horsemen came Harald, and he was covered all over with a great scarlet cloth as before, put on over the head, and flowing all about his horse, but rent with the fight. He put off his helm and drew back his mail-coif; then took a trumpet from the hand of a herald and blew strongly. And in the midst of this blast I heard a voice call out: 'O Florian, come and speak to me for the last time!' So when I turned I beheld Arnald standing by himself, but near him stood Hugh and ten others with drawn swords. Then I wept, and so went to him weeping; and he said: 'Thou seest, brother, that we must die, and I think by some horrible and unheard-of death; & the House of the Lilies is just dying too: and now I repent me of Swanhilda's death; now I know that it was a poor cowardly piece of revenge instead of a brave act of justice;

thus has God shown us the right. O Florian, curse me! So will it be straighter. Truly thy mother when she bore thee did not think of this; rather saw thee in the tourney at this time in her fond hopes, glittering with gold & doing knightly, or else mingling thy brown locks with the golden hair of some maiden weeping for the love of thee. God forgive me! God forgive me!' 'What harm, brother?' I said; 'this is only failing in the world; what if we had not failed? In a little while it would have made no difference. Truly just now I felt very miserable, but now it has passed away, and I am happy.' 'O brave heart!' he said; 'yet we shall part just now. Florian, farewell!' 'The road is long,' I said; 'farewell.' Then we kissed each other, and Hugh and the others wept.

Now all this time the trumpets had been ringing, ringing, great doleful peals; then they ceased, & above all sounded Red Harald's voice. So I looked round towards that pass, and when I looked I no longer doubted any of those wild tales of glamour concerning Goliah's Land: for though the rocks were the same, and though the conies still stood gazing at the doors of their dwellings; though the hawks still cried out shrilly, though the fern still shook in the wind; yet beyond, O such a land! not to be described by any because of its great beauty; lying, a great Hollow Land, the rocks going down on this side in precipices; then reaches & reaches of loveliest country, trees

**The Hollow
Land**

and flowers and corn; then the hills, green and blue and purple, till their ledges reached the white snowy mountains at last. Then, with all manner of strange feelings, my heart in the midst of my body was even like melting wax.

‘O you House of the Lily! you are conquered, yet I will take vengeance only on a few; therefore let all those who wish to live come and pile their swords and shields and helms behind me in three great heaps, and swear fealty afterwards to me: yes, all but the false knights Arnald and Florian.’ We were holding each other’s hands and gazing; and we saw all our knights, yea, all but Squire Hugh and his ten heroes, pass over the field singly, or in groups of three or four, with their heads hanging down in shame; and they cast down their notched swords and dented liliated shields and brave-crested helms into three great heaps behind Red Harald, then stood behind, no man speaking to his fellow, or touching him.

Then dolefully the great trumpets sang over the dying House of the Lily, and Red Harald led his men forward, but slowly; on they came, spear and mail glittering in the sunlight; and I turned and looked at that good land, and a shuddering delight seized my soul. But I felt my brother’s hand leave mine, and saw him turn his horse’s head and ride swiftly toward the pass, that was a strange pass now. And at the edge he stopped, turned round, and called out aloud: ‘I pray thee,

Harald, forgive me! Now farewell all!' Then the horse gave one bound forward, and we heard the poor creature's scream when he felt that he must die, and we heard afterwards (for we were near enough for that even) a clang and a crash. So I turned me about to Hugh, & he understood me though I could not speak. We shouted all together: 'Mary rings!' then laid our bridles on the necks of our horses, spurred forward, and in five minutes they were all slain, and I was down among the horse-hoofs. Not slain though, not wounded. Red Harald smiled grimly when he saw me rise and lash out again; he and some ten others dismounted and came holding their long spears out: I went back, back, back: I saw what it meant, and sheathed my sword, & their laughter rolled all about, and I too smiled.

Presently they all stopped, and I felt the last foot of turf giving under my feet; I looked down, and saw the crack there widening: then in a moment I fell, and a cloud of dust and earth rolled after me. Then again their mirth rose into thunder-peals of laughter; but through it all I heard Red Harald shout: 'Silence, evil dogs!' For as I fell I stretched out my arms, and caught a tuft of yellow broom some three feet from the brow; and hung there by the hands, my feet being loose in the air. Then Red Harald came and stood on the precipice above me, his great axe over his shoulder; and he looked down on me not ferociously,

The Hollow
Land

almost kindly, while the wind from the Hollow Land blew about his red raiment, tattered and dusty now. And I felt happy, though it pained me to hold straining by the broom; yet I said: 'I will hold out to the last.' It was not long; the plant itself gave way, and I fell; and as I fell I fainted.

CHAP. III. LEAVING THE WORLD.
FYTTE THE FIRST.

I HAD thought when I fell that I should never wake again; but I woke at last. For a long time I was quite dizzied and could see nothing at all: horrible doubts came creeping over me: I half expected to see presently great half-formed shapes come rolling up to me to crush me; something fiery, not strange, too utterly horrible to be strange, but utterly vile & ugly, the sight of which would have killed me when I was upon the earth, come rolling up to torment me. In fact I doubted if I were in hell. I knew I deserved to be, but I prayed, and then it came into my mind that I could not pray if I were in hell. Also there seemed to be a cool green light all about me which was sweet. Then presently I heard a glorious voice ring out clear, close to me:

Christ keep the Hollow Land
Through the sweet springtide,
When the apple-blossoms bless
The lowly bent hillside.

Thereat my eyes were slowly unsealed, and I saw the blessedest sight I have ever seen before or since; for I saw my Love. She sat about five yards from me on a great grey stone that had much moss on it, one of the many scattered along the side of the stream by which I lay; she was clad in loose white raiment close to her hands & throat; her feet were bare, her hair hung loose a long way down, but some of it lay on her knees. I said white raiment, but long spikes of light scarlet went down from the throat, lost here and there in the shadows of the folds, and growing smaller and smaller died before they reached her feet.

I was lying with my head resting on soft moss that someone had gathered and placed under me. She, when she saw me moving and awake, came and stood over me with a gracious smile. She was so lovely and tender to look at, and so kind; yet withal no one, man or woman, had ever frightened me half so much. She was not fair in white and red as many beautiful women are, being rather pale, but like ivory for smoothness; and her hair was quite golden, not light yellow but dusky golden. I tried to get up on my feet, but was too weak, and sank back again. She said: 'No, not just yet; do not trouble yourself, or try to remember anything just at present.' Therewithal she kneeled down & hung over me closer. 'To-morrow you may perhaps have something hard to do or bear, I know, but now you must be

The Hollow
Land

as happy as you can be, quietly happy. Why did you start and turn pale when I came to you? Do you not know who I am? Nay, but you do, I see; and I have been waiting here so long for you, so you must have expected to see me. You cannot be frightened of me; are you?' But I could not answer a word; but all the time strange knowledge, strange feelings, were filling my brain and my heart. She said: 'You are tired; rest, & dream happily.' So she sat by me, and sang to lull me to sleep, while I turned on my elbow and watched the waving of her throat: and the singing of all the poets I had ever heard, and of many others too, not born till years after I was dead, floated all about me as she sang, and I did indeed dream happily.

When I awoke it was the time of the cold dawn, and the colours were gathering themselves together; whereat in fatherly approving fashion the sun sent all across the east long bars of scarlet and orange, that after faded through yellow to green and blue. And she sat by me still: I think she had been sitting there and singing all the time; all through hot yesterday, for I had been sleeping day-long and night-long; all through the falling evening, under moonlight and starlight the night through; and now it was dawn. And I think too that neither of us had moved at all; for the last thing I remembered before I went to sleep was the tips of her fingers brushing my cheek as

she knelt over me with down-drooping arm, and still now I felt them there. Moreover she was just finishing some fainting measure that died before it had time to get painful in its passion.

Dear Lord, how I loved her! yet did I not dare to touch her or even speak to her. She smiled with delight when she saw I was awake again, and slid down her hand on to mine; but some shuddering dread made me draw it away again hurriedly: then I saw the smile leave her face. What would I not have given for courage to hold her body quite tight to mine? But I was so weak. She said: 'Have you been very happy?' 'Yea,' I said. It was the first word I had spoken there, and my voice sounded strange. 'Ah!' she said, 'you will talk more when you get used to the air of the Hollow Land. Have you been thinking of your past life at all? If not, try to think of it. What thing in Heaven or Earth do you wish for most?' Still I said no word; but she said in a wearied way: 'Well now, I think you will be strong enough to get to your feet and walk; take my hand and try.' Therewith she held it out; I strove hard to be brave enough to take it, but could not; I only turned away shuddering, sick and grieved to the heart's core of me. Then, struggling hard with hand and knee and elbow, I scarce rose, and stood up totteringly, while she watched me sadly, still holding out her hand. But as I rose, in my swinging to and fro the steel sheath of my sword struck

The Hollow
Land

her on the hand so that the blood flowed from it; which she stood looking at for awhile, then dropped it downwards, and turned to look at me, for I was going. Then as I walked she followed me; so I stopped and turned, and said almost fiercely: 'I am going alone to look for my brother.' The vehemence with which I spoke, or something else, burst some blood-vessel within my throat, and we both stood there with the blood running from us on to the grass and summer flowers. She said: 'If you find him, wait with him till I come.' 'Yea;' and I turned and left her, following the course of the stream upwards; and as I went I heard her low singing, that almost broke my heart for its sadness.

And I went painfully because of my weakness, and because also of the great stones; and sometimes I went along a spot of earth where the river had been used to flow in flood-time, and which was now bare of everything but stones; and the sun, now risen high, poured down on everything a great flood of fierce light and scorching heat, and burnt me sorely, so that I almost fainted. But about noontide I entered a wood close by the stream, a beech-wood, intending to rest myself. The herbage was thin and scattered there, sprouting up from amid the leaf-sheaths and nuts of the beeches which had fallen year after year on that same spot. The outside boughs swept low down; the air itself seemed green when you en-

tered within the shadow of the branches, they over-roofed the place so with tender green, only here and there showing spots of blue.

But what lay at the foot of a great beech-tree but some dead knight in armour, only the helmet off? A wolf was prowling round about it, who ran away snarling when he saw me coming. So I went up to that dead knight, and fell on my knees before him, laying my head on his breast; for it was Arnald. He was quite cold, but had not been dead for very long: I would not believe him dead, but went down to the stream and brought him water, tried to make him drink...what would you? He was as dead as Swanhilda; neither came there any answer to my cries that afternoon but the moaning of the wood-doves in the beeches. So then I sat down and took his head on my knees, and closed his eyes, and wept quietly while the sun sank lower.

But a little after sunset I heard a rustle through the leaves that was not the wind, and looking up, my eyes met the pitying eyes of that maiden. Something stirred rebelliously within me; I ceased weeping, and said: 'It is unjust, unfair! What right had Swanhilda to live? Did not God give her up to us? How much better was he than ten Swanhildas? and look you... See! he is dead!' Now this I shrieked out, being mad; and though I trembled when I saw some stormy wrath that vexed her very heart and loving lips gathering on

The Hollow Land

her face, I yet sat there looking at her & screaming, screaming, till all the place rang. But when, growing hoarse and breathless, I ceased, she said with straightened brow and scornful mouth: 'So! bravely done! Must I then, though I am a woman, call you a liar for saying God is unjust? How many times when she woke in the dead night do you suppose she missed seeing King Urrayne's pale face and hacked head lying on the pillow by her side? Whether by night or day, what things but screams did she hear when the wind blew loud round about the palace corners? And did not that face too often come before her pale and bleeding as it was long ago, and gaze at her from unhappy eyes? Poor eyes! with changed purpose in them; no more hope of converting the world when that blow was once struck...truly it was very wicked...no more dreams, but only fierce struggles with the devil for very life; no more dreams, but failure at last, and death; happier so in the Hollow Land.' She grew so pitying as she gazed at his dead face that I began to weep again unreasonably, while she saw not that I was weeping, but looked only on Arnald's face; but after turned on me frowning. 'Unjust? yes, truly unjust enough to take away life and all hope from her! You have done a base cowardly act, you and your brother here, disguise it as you may: you deserve all God's judgments; you...' But I turned my eyes and wet face to her, and said: 'Do not

curse me...there! do not look like Swanhilda! for see now, you said at first that you had been waiting long for me: give me your hand now, for I love you so.' Then she came and knelt by where I sat, and I caught her in my arms, & she prayed to be forgiven. 'O Florian! I have indeed waited long for you, and when I saw you my heart was filled with joy; but you would neither touch me nor speak to me, so that I became almost mad. Forgive me; we will be so happy now! O, do you know, this is what I have been waiting for all these years: it made me glad, I know, when I was a little baby in my mother's arms, to think I was born for this; and afterwards, as I grew up, I used to watch every breath of wind through the beech-boughs, every turn of the silver poplar leaves, thinking it might be you, or some news of you.' Then I rose, and drew her up with me; but she knelt again by my brother's side, and kissed him, and said: 'O brother! the Hollow Land is only second best of the places God has made; for Heaven also is the work of His hand.' Afterwards we dug a deep grave among the beech-roots, and there we buried Arnald de Liliis.

And I have never seen him since, scarcely even in dreams. Surely God has had mercy on him, for he was very leal and true and brave; he loved many men, and was kind and gentle to his friends, neither did he hate any but Swanhilda. But as for us two, Margaret and me, I cannot tell you

The Hollow Land

concerning our happiness; such things cannot be told: only this I know, that we abode continually in the Hollow Land until I lost it. Moreover, this I can tell you. Margaret was walking with me, as she often walked, near the place where I had first seen her. Presently we came upon a woman sitting, dressed in scarlet and gold raiment, with her head laid down upon her knees; likewise we heard her sobbing. 'Margaret, who is she?' I said; 'I knew not that any dwelt in the Hollow Land but we two only.' She said: 'I know not who she is; only sometimes these many years I have seen her scarlet robe flaming from far away amid the quiet green grass; but I was never so near her as this. Florian, I am afraid; let us come away.'

FYTTE THE SECOND.

Such a horrible grey November day it was; the fog-smell all about, the fog creeping into our very bones. And I sat there, trying to recollect at any rate something, under those fir-trees that I ought to have known so well. Just think now; I had lost my best years somewhere, for I was past the prime of life; my hair and beard were scattered with white, my body was growing weaker, my memory of all things was very faint. My raiment, purple and scarlet and blue once, was so stained that you could scarce call it any colour, was so tattered that it scarce covered my body, though it seemed once to have fallen in heavy folds to my

feet, and still when I rose to walk, though the miserable November mist lay in great drops upon my bare breast, yet was I obliged to wind my raiment over my arm, it dragged so (wretched, slimy, textureless thing) in the brown mud. On my head was a light morion which pressed on my brow and pained me; so I put my hand up to take it off, but when I touched it I stood still in my walk shuddering, I nearly fell to the earth with shame and horror; for I laid my hand on a lump of slimy earth with worms coiled up in it. I could scarce forbear from shrieking; but breathing such a prayer as I could think of I raised my hand again and seized it firmly. Worse horror still! the rust had eaten it into holes, and I gripped my own hair as well as the rotting steel, the sharp edge of which cut into my fingers; but setting my teeth I gave a great wrench, for I knew that if I let go of it then no power on the earth or under it could make me touch it again. God be praised! I tore it off and cast it far from me; I saw the earth and the worms, and green weeds, and sun-begotten slime, whirling out from it radiatingly as it spun round about.

I was girt with a sword too, the leathern belt of which had shrunk and squeezed my waist; dead leaves had gathered in knots about the buckles of it, the gilded handle was encrusted with clay in many parts, the velvet sheath miserably worn. But verily when I took hold of the hilt, and dread-

The Hollow Land

ed lest instead of a sword I should find a serpent in my hand, lo, then I drew out my own true blade and shook it, flawless from hilt to point, gleaming white in that mist. Therefore it sent a thrill of joy to my heart to know that there was one friend left me yet; I sheathed it again carefully, and undoing it from my waist hung it about my neck. Then catching up my rags in my arms, I drew them up till my legs and feet were altogether clear from them; afterwards I folded my arms over my breast, gave a long leap, and ran looking downward, but not giving heed to my way. Once or twice I fell over stumps of trees and such like, for it was a cut-down wood that I was in; but I rose always, though bleeding and confused, and went on still, sometimes tearing madly through briars and furze bushes, so that my blood dropped on the dead leaves as I went.

I ran in this way for about an hour; then I heard a gurgling and splashing of waters; I gave a great shout, and leapt strongly with shut eyes, and the black water closed over me. When I rose again, I saw near me a boat with a man in it, but the shore was far off. I struck out toward the boat, but my clothes, which I had knotted and folded about me, weighed me down terribly. The man looked at me, and began to paddle toward me with the oar he held in his left hand, having in his right a long slender spear, barbed like a fishhook: perhaps, thought I, it is some fishing spear:

moreover his raiment was of scarlet, with upright stripes of yellow and black all over it. When my eye caught his, a smile widened his mouth as if some one had made a joke: but I was beginning to sink, and indeed my head was almost under water just as he came and stood above me; but before it went quite under I saw his spear gleam, then felt it in my shoulder, and for the present felt nothing else.

When I woke I was on the bank of that river; the flooded waters went hurrying past me, no boat on them now. From the river the ground went up in gentle slopes till it grew a great hill, and there, on that hill-top... Yes, I might forget many things, almost everything, but not that; not the old castle of my fathers up among the hills, its towers blackened now and shattered, yet still no enemy's banner waved from it. So I said I would go and die there; and at this thought I drew my sword, which yet hung about my neck, and shook it in the air till the true steel quivered; then began to pace towards the castle. I was quite naked, no rag about me; I took no heed of that, only thanking God that my sword was left, and so toiled up the hill. I entered the castle soon by the outer court; I knew the way so well that I did not lift my eyes from the ground, but walked on over the lower drawbridge, through the unguarded gates, and stood in the great hall at last, my father's hall, as bare of everything but my sword

The Hollow Land

as when I came into the world fifty years before: I had as little clothes, as little wealth, less memory and thought, I verily believe, than then.

So I lifted up my eyes and gazed: no glass in the windows, no hangings on the walls; the vaulting yet held good throughout, but seemed to be going; the mortar had fallen out from between the stones, and grass and fern grew in the joints; the marble pavement was in some places gone, and water stood about in puddles, though one scarce knew how it had got there. No hangings on the walls; no; yet strange to say instead of them the walls blazed from end to end with scarlet paintings, only striped across with green damp-marks in many places, some falling bodily from the wall, the plaster hanging down with the fading colour on it. In all of them, except for the shadows and the faces of the figures, there was scarce any colour but scarlet and yellow; here and there it seemed the painter, whoever it was, had tried to make his trees or his grass green, but it would not do: some ghastly thoughts must have filled his head, for all the green went presently into yellow, out-sweeping through the picture dismally. But the faces were painted to the very life, or it seemed so; there were only five of them, however, that were very marked or came much in the foreground; and four of these I knew well, though I did not then remember the names of those that had borne them. They were Red Har-

ald, Swanhilda, Arnald, and myself. The fifth I did not know; it was a woman's face, and very beautiful. The Hollow Land

Then I saw that in some parts a small penthouse roof had been built over the paintings to keep them from the weather. Near one of these stood a man painting, clothed in red, with stripes of yellow and black. Then I knew that it was the same man who had saved me from drowning by spearing me through the shoulder; so I went up to him, and saw furthermore that he was girt with a heavy sword. He turned round when he saw me coming, and asked me fiercely what I did there. I asked why he was painting in my castle. Thereupon, with that same grim smile widening his mouth as heretofore, he said: 'I paint God's judgments.' And as he spoke he rattled the sword in his scabbard. But I said: 'Well then, you paint them very badly. Listen; I know God's judgments much better than you do. See now; I will teach you God's judgments, and you shall teach me painting.' While I spoke he still rattled his sword, and when I had done shut his right eye tight, screwing his nose on one side; then said: 'You have got no clothes on, and may go to the devil! What do you know about God's judgments?' 'Well, they are not all yellow & red at all events; you ought to know better.' He screamed out: 'O you fool! yellow and red! Gold and blood; what do they make?' 'Well,' I said; 'what?'

'HELL!' And coming close up to me, he struck me with his open hand in the face, so that the colour with which his hand was smeared was dabbed about my face. The blow almost threw me down; and while I staggered he rushed at me furiously with his sword. Perhaps it was good for me that I had got no clothes on, for being utterly unencumbered I leapt this way and that, and avoided his fierce eager strokes till I could collect myself somewhat: while he had a heavy scarlet cloak on that trailed on the ground, and which he often trod on so that he stumbled.

He very nearly slew me during the first few minutes, for it was not strange that together with other matters I should have forgotten the art of fence; but yet as I went on, and sometimes bounded about the hall under the whizzing of his sword, as he rested sometimes leaning on it, as the point sometimes touched my bare flesh, nay, once as the whole sword fell flatlings on my head and made my eyes start out, I remembered the old joy that I used to have, and the swy, swy of the sharp edge as one gazed between one's horse's ears; moreover at last one fierce swift stroke, just touching me below the throat, tore up the skin all down my body and fell heavy on my thigh, so that I drew my breath in and turned white. Then first as I swung my sword round my head our blades met; O to hear that tchink again! and I felt the notch my sword made in his and swung

out at him; but he guarded it and returned on me: I guarded right and left, and grew warm, and opened my mouth to shout, but knew not what to say, and our sword-points fell to the ground together. Then when we had panted awhile, I wiped from my face the blood that had been dashed over it, shook my sword, and cut at him; then we spun round and round in a mad waltz to the measured music of our meeting swords; and sometimes either wounded the other somewhat, but not much, till I beat down his sword on to his head that he fell grovelling, but not cut through. Verily thereupon my lips opened mightily with 'Mary rings!' Then when he had gotten to his feet, I went at him again, he staggering back, guarding wildly; I cut at his head, he put his sword up confusedly, so I fitted both hands to my hilt and smote him mightily under the arm. Then his shriek mingled with my shout made a strange sound together; he rolled over and over, dead as I thought. I walked about the hall in great exultation at first, striking my sword-point on the floor every now and then, till I grew faint with loss of blood; then I went to my enemy, and stripped off some of his clothes to bind up my wounds withal; afterwards I found in a corner bread and wine, and I ate and drank thereof. Then I went back to him and looked; and a thought struck me, and I took some of his paints and brushes, and kneeling down, painted his face thus, with stripes of

The Hollow Land

yellow & red, crossing each other at right angles; and in each of the squares so made I put a spot of black, after the manner of the painted letters in the prayer books and romances, when they are ornamented. So I stood back as painters use, folded my arms, and admired my own handiwork. Yet there struck me as being something so utterly doleful in the man's white face, and the blood running all about him and washing off the stains of paint from his face and hands and splashed clothes, that my heart misgave me, and I hoped that he was not dead. I took some water from a vessel he had been using for his painting, and kneeling washed his face.

Was it some resemblance to my father's dead face, which I had seen when I was young, that made me pity him? I laid my hand upon his heart and felt it beating feebly; so I lifted him up gently and carried him towards a heap of straw that he seemed used to lie upon. There I stripped him and looked to his wounds, and used leech-craft, the memory of which God gave me for this purpose, I suppose; and within seven days I found that he would not die. Afterwards, as I wandered about the castle, I came to a room in one of the upper stories that had still the roof on, and windows in it with painted glass; and there I found green raiment and swords and armour, and I clothed myself.

So when he got well I asked him what his name

was, and he me; and we both of us said: 'Truly, I know not.' Then said I: 'But we must call each other by some name, even as men call days.' 'Call me Swerker,' he said; 'some priest I knew once had that name.' 'And me Wulf,' said I; 'though wherefore I know not.' Then he said: 'Wulf, I will teach you painting now; come and learn.' Then I tried to learn painting till I thought I should die; but at last learned it through very much pain and grief. And as the years went on and we grew old and grey we painted purple pictures and green ones instead of the scarlet and yellow, so that the walls looked altered; & always we painted God's judgments. And we would sit in the sunset and watch them, with the golden light changing them as we yet hoped God would change both us and our works. Often too we would sit outside the walls and look at the trees and sky, and the ways of the few men and women we saw: therefrom sometimes befell adventures. Once there went past a great funeral of some king going to his own country, not as he had hoped to go, but stiff and colourless, spices filling up the place of his heart. And first went by very many knights with long bright hauberks on, that fell down before their knees as they rode; and they all had tilting-helms on with the same crest, so that their faces were quite hidden: and this crest was two hands clasped together tightly, as though they were the hands of one praying forgiveness from

The Hollow Land

the one he loves best, and the crest was wrought in gold. Moreover they had on over their hauberks surcoats which were half scarlet and half purple, strewn about with golden stars; also long lances that had forked knight's pennons, half purple and half scarlet, strewn with golden stars. And these went by with no sound but the fall of their horse-hoofs: and they went slowly, so slowly that we counted them all, five thousand five hundred and fifty-five. Then went by many fair maidens, whose hair was loose and yellow, and who were all clad in green raiment ungirded, and shod with golden shoes; these also we counted, being five hundred. Moreover some of them, to wit, one maiden to every twenty, had long silver trumpets, which they swung out to right and left, blowing them; and their sound was very sad. Then many priests and bishops and abbots, who wore white albs, and golden copes over them; and they all sang together mournfully: 'Super flumina Babylonis'; and these were three hundred. After that came a great knot of the lords, who wore tilting-helmets and surcoats emblazoned with each one his own device; only each had in his hand a small staff two feet long, whereon was a pennon of scarlet and purple. These also were three hundred. And in the midst of these was a great car hung down to the ground with purple, drawn by grey horses whose trappings were half scarlet, half purple. And on this car lay the king, whose

head and hands were bare; and he had on him a surcoat half purple and half scarlet, strewn with golden stars. And his head rested on a tilting-helmet whose crest was the hands of one praying passionately for forgiveness. But his own hands lay by his side as if he had just fallen asleep. And all about the car were little banners, half purple and half scarlet, strewn with golden stars. Then the king, who counted but as one, went by also. And after him came again many maidens clad in ungirt white raiment strewn with scarlet flowers, and their hair was loose and yellow, and their feet bare; and except for the falling of their feet and the rustle of the wind through their raiment they went past quite silently. These also were five hundred. Then lastly came many young knights with long bright hauberks falling over their knees as they rode, and surcoats half scarlet and half purple, strewn with golden stars. They bore long lances with forked pennons which were half purple, half scarlet, strewn with golden stars; their heads and their hands were bare, but they bore shields, each one of them, which were of bright steel wrought cunningly in the midst with that bearing of the two hands of one who prays for forgiveness, which was done in gold. These were but five hundred.

Then they all went by, winding up and up the hill roads; and when the last of them had departed out of our sight we put down our heads and

The Hollow Land

wept, and I said: 'Sing us one of the songs of the Hollow Land.' Then he whom I had called Swerkerput his hand into his bosom, and slowly drew out a long, long tress of black hair, and laid it on his knee and smoothed it, weeping on it. So then I left him there, and went and armed myself, and brought armour for him, and then came back to him and threw the armour down so that it clanged, and said: 'O Harald, let us go!' He did not seem surprised that I called him by the right name, but rose and armed himself, and then he looked a good knight.

So we set forth, and in a turn of the long road we came suddenly upon a most fair woman clothed in scarlet, who sat and sobbed, holding her face between her hands; and her hair was very black. And when Harald saw her he stood and gazed at her for long through the bars of his helmet; then suddenly turned, and said: 'Florian, I must stop here; do you go on to the Hollow Land. Farewell.' 'Farewell.' And then I went on, never turning back; and him I never saw more. And so I went on, quite lonely but happy, till I had reached the Hollow Land; into which I let myself down most carefully by the jutting rocks and bushes and strange trailing flowers, and there lay down and fell asleep.

FYTTE THE THIRD.

And I was waked by someone singing. I felt very

happy; I felt young again; I had fair delicate raiment on, my sword was gone and my armour. I tried to think where I was, and could not for my happiness; I tried to listen to the words of the song: nothing, only an old echo in my ears; only all manner of strange scenes from my wretched past life before my eyes in a dim far-off manner. Then at last, slowly, without effort, I heard what she sang.

‘Christ keep the Hollow Land
All the summer-tide;
Still we cannot understand
Where the waters glide:
Only dimly seeing them
Coldly slipping through
Many green-lipped cavern mouths
Where the hills are blue.

‘Then,’ she said, ‘come now and look for it, love, a hollow city in the Hollow Land.’ I kissed Margaret, and we went.

Through the golden streets under the purple shadows of the houses we went, and the slow fanning backward and forward of the many-coloured banners cooled us: we two alone; there was no one with us; no soul will ever be able to tell what we said, how we looked. At last we came to a fair palace, cloistered off in the old time before the city grew golden from the din and hubbub of

The Hollow Land traffic. Those who dwelt there in the old ungolden times had had their own joys, their own sorrows, apart from the joys and sorrows of the multitude: so in like manner was it now cloistered off from the eager leaning and brotherhood of the golden dwellings: so now it had its own gaiety, its own solemnity apart from theirs; unchanged, unchangeable were its marble walls, whatever else changed about it.

We stopped before the gates and trembled, and clasped each other closer; for there, among the marble leafage and tendrils that were round and under and over the archway that held the golden valves, were wrought two figures of a man and woman winged and garlanded, whose raiment flashed with stars; and their faces were like faces we had seen or half seen in some dream long and long and long ago, so that we trembled with awe and delight. And I turned, and seeing Margaret, saw that her face was that face seen or half seen long and long and long ago; and in the shining of her eyes I saw that other face, seen in that way and no other long & long and long ago; my face. And then we walked together toward the golden gates, and opened them; and no man gainsaid us. And before us lay a great space of flowers.

GOLDEN WINGS.

'Lef lythes to me,
Two wordes or three,
Of one that was faire and fre,
And felle in his fighte.'
Sir Perceval.

I SUPPOSE my birth was somewhat after the birth of Sir Perceval of Galles, for I never saw my father, and my mother brought me up quaintly, not like a poor man's son; though indeed we had little money, and lived in a lone place: it was on a bit of waste land near a river, moist, and without trees; on the drier parts of it folk had built cottages... see, I can count them on my fingers... six cottages, of which ours was one.

Likewise, there was a little chapel, with a yew tree and graves in the church-yard... graves... yes, a great many graves, more than in the yards of many Minsters I have seen, because people fought a battle once near us, and buried many bodies in deep pits, to the east of the chapel; but this was before I was born.

I have talked to old knights since who fought in that battle, and who told me that it was all about a lady that they fought; indeed, this lady, who was a queen, was afterwards, by her own wish, buried in the aforesaid chapel in a most fair tomb; her image was of latoun gilt, and with a colour on it; her hands and face were of silver, and her hair,

Golden Wings

gilded and most curiously wrought, flowed down from her head over the marble. It was a strange thing to see that gold and brass and marble inside that rough chapel which stood on the marshy common, near the river.

Now, every St. Peter's day, when the sun was at its hottest, in the mid-summer noontide, my mother (though at other times she only wore such clothes as the folk about us) would dress herself most richly, and shut the shutters against all the windows, and light great candles, and sit as though she were a queen, till the evening: sitting and working at a frame, and singing as she worked.

And what she worked at was two wings, wrought in gold, on a blue ground. And as for what she sang, I could never understand it, though I know now it was not in Latin. And she used to charge me straitly never to let any man into the house on St. Peter's day; therefore I and our dog, which was a great old bloodhound, always kept the door together.

But one St. Peter's day, when I was nearly twenty, I sat in the house watching the door with the bloodhound, & I was sleepy, because of the shut-up heat and my mother's singing, so I began to nod, and at last, though the dog often shook me by the hair to keep me awake, went fast asleep, and began to dream a foolish dream without hearing, as men sometimes do: for I thought that my

mother and I were walking to mass through the snow on a Christmas day, but my mother carried a live goose in her hand, holding it by the neck, instead of her rosary, and that I went along by her side, not walking, but turning somersaults like a mountebank, my head never touching the ground. When we got to the chapel-door, the old priest met us, & said to my mother: 'Why, dame alive, your head is turned green! Ah! never mind, I will go and say mass, but don't let little Mary there go,' and he pointed to the goose, and went. Then mass began, but in the midst of it the priest said out loud: 'Oh! I forgot,' and turning round to us began to wag his gray head and white beard, throwing his head right back and sinking his chin on his breast alternately; and when we saw him do this, we presently began also to knock our heads against the wall, keeping time with him and with each other, till the priest said: 'Peter! it's dragon-time now,' whereat the roof flew off, and a great yellow dragon came down on the chapel-floor with a flop, and danced about clumsily, wriggling his fat tail, and saying to a sort of tune, 'O the Devil, the Devil, the Devil, O the Devil,' so I went up to him, and put my hand on his breast, meaning to slay him, and so awoke, and found myself standing up with my hand on the breast of an armed knight; the door lay flat on the ground, and under it lay Hector our dog, whining and dying.

Golden
Wings

For eight hours I had been asleep; on awaking, the blood rushed up into my face, I heard my mother's low mysterious song behind me, and knew not what harm might happen to her and me if that knight's coming made her cease in it; so I struck him with my left hand where his face was bare under his mail-coif, & getting my sword in my right, drove its point under his hauberk, so that it came out behind, & he fell, turned over on his face, and died. Then, because my mother still went on working and singing, I said no word, but let him lie there, and put the door up again, and found Hector dead.

I then sat down again and polished my sword with a piece of leather after I had wiped the blood from it; and in an hour my mother arose from her work, & raising me from where I was sitting, kissed my brow, saying: 'Well done, Lionel; you have slain your greatest foe, and now the people will know you for what you are before you die... Ah God! though not before I die.'

So I said: 'Who is he, mother? he seems to be some lord; am I a lord then?'

'A king, if the people will but know it,' she said. Then she knelt down by the dead body, turned it round again, so that it lay face uppermost as before, then said: 'And so it has all come to this, has it? To think that you should run on my son's sword-point at last, after all the wrong you have done me and mine! Now must I work carefully,

lest when you are dead you should still do me harm, for that you are a king. Lionel!

'Yea, mother.'

'Come here and see; this is what I have wrought these many Peter's days by day, and often other times by night.'

'It is a surcoat, mother; for me?'

'Yea, but take a spade, and come into the wood.'

So we went, and my mother gazed about her for a while as if she were looking for something, but then suddenly went forward with her eyes on the ground, and she said to me: 'Is it not strange that I who know the very place I am going to take you to as well as our own garden, should have a sudden fear come over me that I should not find it after all; though for these nineteen years I have watched the trees change and change all about it? Ah! here, stop now.'

We stopped before a great oak; a beech tree was behind us; she said: 'Dig, Lionel, hereabouts.' So I dug, & for an hour found nothing but beech roots, while my mother seemed as if she were going mad, sometimes running about muttering to herself, sometimes stooping into the hole and howling, sometimes throwing herself on the grass and twisting her hands together above her head; she went once down the hill to a pool that had filled an old gravel pit, and came back dripping and with wild eyes; 'I am too hot,' she said, 'far too hot this St. Peter's day.'

Golden Wings Clink just then from my spade against iron; my mother screamed, and I dug with all my might for another hour, and then beheld a chest of heavy wood bound with iron, ready to be heaved out of the hole. 'Now Lionel, weigh it out... hard for your life!'

And with some trouble I got the chest out; she gave me a key, I unlocked the chest, and took out another wrapped in lead, which also I unlocked with a silver key that my mother gave me, and behold therein lay armour; mail for the whole body, made of very small rings wrought most wonderfully, for every ring was fashioned like a serpent, and though they were so small yet could you see their scales and their eyes, and of some even the forked tongue was on it, and lay on the rivet, and the rings were gilded here & there into patterns and flowers so that the gleam of it was most glorious. And the mail-coif was all gilded, and had red and blue stones at the rivets; and the tilting helm (inside which the mail lay when I saw it first) was gilded also, and had flowers pricked out on it; and the chain of it was silver, and the crest was two gold wings. And there was a shield of blue set with red stones, which had two gold wings for a cognisance; and the hilt of the sword was gold, with angels wrought in green and blue all up it, & the eyes in their wings were of pearls and red stones, and the sheath was of silver with green flowers on it.

Now when I saw this armour and understood that my mother would have me put it on, & ride out without fear, leaving her alone, I cast myself down on the grass so that I might not see its beauty (for it made me mad), and strove to think; but what thoughts soever came to me were only of the things that would be, glory in the midst of ladies, battle-joy among knights, honour from all kings and princes and people: these things.

But my mother wept softly above me, till I arose with a great shudder of delight and drew the edges of the hauberk over my cheek, I liked so to feel the rings slipping, slipping, till they fell off altogether; then I said: 'O Lord God that made the world, if I might only die in this armour!' Then my mother helped me to put it on, and I felt strange and new in it, and yet I had neither lance nor horse.

So when we reached the cottage again she said: 'See now, Lionel, you must take this knight's horse and his lance, and ride away, or else the people will come here to kill another king; and when you are gone, you will never see me any more in life.'

I wept thereat, but she said: 'Nay, but see here.' And taking the dead knight's lance from among the garden lilies, she rent from it the pennon (which had a sword on a red ground for bearing), and cast it carelessly on the ground, then she bound about it a pennon with my bearing, gold

Golden Wings wings on a blue ground; she bid me bear the knight's body, all armed as he was, to put on him his helm and lay him on the floor at her bed's foot, also to break his sword and cast it on our hearth-stone; all which things I did.

Afterwards she put the surcoat on me, and then lying down in her gorgeous raiment on her bed, she spread her arms out in the form of a cross, shut her eyes, and said: 'Kiss me, Lionel, for I am tired.' And after I had kissed her she died. And I mounted my dead foe's horse and rode away; neither did I ever know what wrong that was which he had done me, not while I was in the body at least. And do not blame me for not burying my mother; I left her there because, though she did not say so to me, yet I knew the thoughts of her heart, and that the thing she had wished so earnestly for these years, and years, and years, had been but to lie dead with him lying dead close to her.

So I rode all that night, for I could not stop because of the thoughts that were in me; and stopping at this place and that, in three days came to the city. And there the King held his court with great pomp.

And so I went to the palace, and asked to see the King; whereupon they brought me into the great hall where he was with all his knights, and my heart swelled within me to think that I too was a king. So I prayed him to make me a knight,

and he spake graciously and asked me my name; so when I had told it him, and said that I was a king's son, he pondered, not knowing what to do, for I could not tell him whose son I was.

Whereupon one of the knights came near me and shaded his eyes with his hand as one does in a bright sun, meaning to mock at me for my shining armour, and he drew nearer and nearer till his long stiff beard just touched me, and then I smote him on the face, and he fell on the floor. So the King being in a rage roared out from the door, 'Slay him!' but I put my shield before me and drew my sword, & the women drew together aside and whispered fearfully, and while some of the knights took spears & stood about me, others got their armour on.

And as we stood thus we heard a horn blow, and then an armed knight came into the hall & drew near to the King; and one of the maidens behind me came and laid her hand on my shoulder; so I turned and saw that she was very fair, and then I was glad, but she whispered to me: 'Sir Squire, for a love I have for your face and gold armour, I will give you good counsel; go presently to the King and say to him: 'In the name of Alys des Roses and Sir Guy le Bon Amant I pray you three boons.' Do this, and you will be alive and a knight by to-morrow, otherwise I think hardly the one or the other.'

'The Lord reward you, damoyzel,' I said. Then

Golden Wings I saw that the King had left talking with that knight and was just going to stand up and say something out loud, so I went quickly and called out with a loud voice: 'O King Gilbert of the Rose-land, I, Lionel of the Golden Wings, pray of you three boons in the name of Alys des Roses and Sir Guy le Bon Amant.'

Then the King gnashed his teeth, because he had promised if ever his daughter Alys des Roses came back safe again, he would on that day grant any three boons to the first man who asked them, even if he were his greatest foe. He said: 'Well, then, take them; what are they?' 'First, my life; then, that you should make me a knight; and thirdly, that you should take me into your service.' He said, 'I will do this, and moreover, I forgive you freely if you will be my true man.'

Then we heard shouting arise through all the city because they were bringing the Lady Alys from the ship up to the palace, and the people came to the windows, and the houses were hung with cloths and banners of silk and gold, that swung down right from the eaves to the ground; likewise the bells all rang: and within a while they entered the palace, and the trumpets rang & men shouted, so that my head whirled; and they entered the hall, and the King went down from the dais to meet them. Now a band of knights and of damoyzels went before and behind, and in the midst Sir Guy led the Lady Alys by the hand,

and he was a most stately knight, strong and fair. And I indeed noted the first band of knights and damoyzels well, and wondered at the noble presence of the knights, and was filled with joy when I beheld the maids, because of their great beauty; the second band I did not see, for when they passed I was leaning back against the wall wishing to die, with my hands before my face.

But when I could see, she was hanging about her father's neck, weeping, and she never left him all that night, but held his hand in feast and dance; and even when I was made knight, while the king with his right hand laid his sword over my shoulder, she held his left hand and was close to me.

And the next day they held a grand tourney, that I might be proven; and I had never fought with knights before, yet I did not doubt. And Alys sat under a green canopy, that she might give the degree to the best knight, and by her sat the good knight Sir Guy, in a long robe, for he did not mean to joust that day; and indeed at first none but young knights jousted, for they thought that I should not do much. But I, looking up to the green canopy, overthrew so many of them, that the elder knights began to arm, and I grew most joyful as I met them, and no man unhorsed me; and always I broke my spear fairly, or else overthrew my adversary.

Now that maiden who counselled me in the hall

Golden Wings told me afterwards that as I fought the Lady Alys held fast to the rail before her, and leaned forward and was most pale, never answering any word that any one might say to her, till the Knight Guy said to her in anger; 'Alys! what ails you? you would have been glad enough to speak to me when King Wadrayns carried you off shrieking, or that other time when the chain went round about you, and the faggots began to smoke in the Brown City: do you not love me any longer? O Alys, Alys! just think a little, and do not break your faith with me; God hates nothing so much as this. Sweet, try to love me, even for your own sake! See, am I not kind to you?'

That maiden said that she turned round to him wonderingly, as if she had not caught his meaning, and that just for one second, then stretched out over the lists again.

Now till about this time I had made no cry as I jousted. But there came against me a very tall knight on a great horse, and when we met our spears both shivered, and he howled with vexation, for he wished to slay me, being the brother of that knight I had struck down in the hall the day before.

And they say that when Alys heard his howl sounding faintly through the bars of his great helm, she trembled; but I know not, for I was stronger than that knight, and when we fought with swords, I struck him right out of his saddle,

and near slew him with that stroke. Whereupon I shouted 'Alys' out loud, and she blushed red for pleasure, and Sir Guy took note of it, and rose up in a rage and ran down and armed.

Then presently I saw a great knight come riding in, with three black chevrons on a gold shield: and so he began to ride at me, and at first we only broke both our spears, but then he drew his sword, and fought in quite another way to what the other knights had, so that I saw at once that I had no chance against him: nevertheless, for a long time he availed nothing, though he wounded me here and there; but at last he drove his sword right through mine, through my shield and my helm, and I fell, and lay like one dead. And thereat the King cried out to cease, and the degree was given to Sir Guy, because I had overthrown forty knights, and he had overthrown me. Then, they told me, I was carried out of the lists and laid in a hostelry near the palace, and Guy went up to the pavilion where Alys was and she crowned him, both of them being very pale, for she doubted if I were slain, and he knew that she did not love him, thinking before that she did; for he was good and true, and had saved her life and honour, and she (poor maid!) wished to please her father, and strove to think that all was right.

But I was by no means slain, for the sword had only cleft my helm, and when I came to myself

Golden Wings again I felt despair of all things, because I knew not that she loved me; for how should she, knowing nothing of me? Likewise dust had been cast on my gold wings, and she saw it done.

Then I heard a great crying in the street, that sounded strangely in the quiet night, so I sent to ask what it might be: and there came presently into my chamber a man in gilded armour; he was an old man, and his hair and beard were gray, and behind him came six men armed, who carried the dead body of a young man between them, and I said: 'What is it? who is he?' Then the old man, whose head was heavy for grief, said: 'O sir! this is my son; for as we went yesterday with our merchandise some twenty miles from this fair town, we passed by a certain hold, and therefrom came a knight and men-at-arms, who when my son would have fought with them, overthrew him and bound him, and me and all our men they said they would slay if we did aught; so then they cut out my son's eyes, and cut off his hands, and then said: 'The Knight of High Gard takes these for tribute.' Therewithal they departed, taking with them my son's eyes and his hands on a platter; and when they were gone I would have followed them, and slain some of them at least, but my own people would not suffer me, and for grief and pain my son's heart burst, and he died, and behold I am here.'

Then I thought I could wing glory, and I was much

rejoiced thereat, and said to the old man: 'Would you love to be revenged?'

But he set his teeth, and pulled at the skirt of his surcoat, as hardly for his passion he said, 'Yes.' 'Then,' I said, 'I will go and try to slay this knight, if you will show me the way to La Haute Garde.'

And he, taking my hand, said: 'O glorious knight, let us go now!' And he did not ask who I was, or whether I was a good knight, but began to go down the stairs at once; so I put on my armour and followed him. And we two set forth alone to La Haute Garde, for no man else dared follow us, & I rejoiced in thinking that while Guy was sitting at the King's table feasting, I was riding out to slay the King's enemies; for it never once seemed possible to me that I should be worsted.

It was getting light again by then we came in sight of High Gard; we wound up the hill on foot, for it was very steep; I blew at the gates a great blast which was even as though the stag should blow his own mort, or like the blast that Balen heard. For in a very short while the gates opened, and a great band of armed men, more than thirty I think, and a knight on horseback among them who was armed in red, stood before us; and on one side of him was a serving man with a silver dish, on the other, one with a butcher's cleaver, a knife, and pincers.

Golden Wings So when the knight saw us he said, 'What, are you come to pay tribute in person, old man, and is this another fair son? Good sir, how is your lady?'

So I said grimly, being in a rage: 'I have a will to slay you. But I could scarce say so before the old merchant rushed with a yell at the Red Knight, who without moving slew his horse with an axe, and then the men-at-arms speared the old man, slaying him as one would an otter or a rat.

Afterwards they were going to set on me, but the Red Knight held them back, saying: 'Nay, I am enough,' and we spurred our horses. As we met, I felt just as if some one had thrown a dull brown cloth over my eyes, and I felt the wretched spear-point slip off his helm; then I felt a great pain somewhere, that did not seem to be in my body, but in the world, or the sky, or something of that sort. And I know not how long that pain seemed to last now, but I think years, though really I grew well and sane again in a few weeks. And when I woke, scarce knowing whether I was in the world or heaven or hell, I heard some one singing.

I tried to listen but could not, because I did not know where I was, and was thinking of that; I missed verse after verse of the song, this song, till at last I saw I must be in the King's palace.

There was a window by my bed; I looked out at it, and saw that I was high up; down in the street

the people were going to and fro, and there was a knot of folks gathered about a minstrel, who sat on the edge of a fountain, with his head laid sideways on his shoulder, and nursing one leg on the other; he was singing only, having no instrument, and he sang the song I had tried to listen to. I heard some of it now:

‘He was fair and free,
At every tourney
He wan the degree,
 Sir Guy the good knight.

He wan Alys the fair,
The King’s own daughtere,
With all her gold hair,
 That shone well bright.

He saved a good knight,
Who also was wight,
And had winges bright
 On a blue shield.

And he slew the Knight
Of the High Gard in fight,
In red weed that was dight
 In the open field.’

I fell back in my bed and wept, for I was weak with my illness; to think of this! truly this man was a perfect knight, and deserved to win Alys. Ah well! but was this the glory I was to have? And no one believed that I was a king’s son!

Golden Wings And so I passed days and nights, thinking of my dishonour and misery, and my utter loneliness; no one cared for me; verily, I think, if any one had spoken to me lovingly, I should have fallen on his neck and died, while I was so weak.

But I grew strong at last, and began to walk about, and in the palace pleasaunce, one day, I met Sir Guy walking by himself. So I told him how that I thanked him with all my heart for my life, but he said it was only what a good knight ought to do; for that hearing the mad enterprise I had ridden on, he had followed me swiftly with a few knights, and so saved me.

He looked stately and grand as he spoke, yet I did not love him, nay, rather hated him, though I tried hard not to do so, for there was some air of pitiless triumph and coldness of heart in him that froze me; so scornfully, too, he said that about 'my mad enterprise,' as though I must be wrong in everything I did. Yet afterwards, as I came to know more, I pitied him instead of hating; but at that time I thought his life was without a shadow, for I did not know that the Lady Alys loved him not.

And now I turned from him, and walked slowly up and down the garden-paths, not exactly thinking, but with some ghosts of former thoughts passing through my mind. The day, too, was most lovely, as it grew towards evening, and I had all the joy of a man lately sick in the flowers and all

things; if any bells at that time had begun to chime, I think I should have lain down on the grass and wept; but now there was but the noise of the bees in the yellow musk, and that had not music enough to bring me sorrow.

And as I walked I stooped and picked a great orange lily, and held it in my hand, and lo! down the garden-walk, the same fair damoyzel that had before this given me good counsel in the hall. Thereat I was very glad, and walked to meet her smiling, but she was very grave, and said: 'Fair sir, the Lady Alys des Roses wishes to see you in her chamber.'

I could not answer a word, but turned, and went with her while she walked slowly beside me, thinking deeply, and picking a rose to pieces as she went; and I, too, thought much: what could she want me for? surely but for one thing; and yet...and yet...

But when we came to the lady's chamber, behold before the door stood a tall knight, fair and strong, and in armour, save his head, who seemed to be guarding the door, though not so as to seem so to all men. He kissed the damoyzel eagerly, & then she said to me: 'This is Sir William de la Fosse, my true knight.' So the knight took my hand and seemed to have such joy of me, that all the blood came up to my face for pure delight.

But then the damoyzel Blanche opened the door and bade me go in while she abode still without;

Golden
Wings

so I entered, when I had put aside the heavy silken hanging that filled the doorway. And there sat Alys; she arose when she saw me, and stood pale, and with her lips apart, and her hands hanging loose by her side.

And then all doubt and sorrow went quite away from me; I did not even feel drunk with joy, but rather felt that I could take it all in, lose no least fragment of it; then at once I felt that I was beautiful and brave and true; I had no doubt as to what I should do now.

I went up to her, and first kissed her on the forehead, and then on the feet, and then drew her to me, and with my arms round about her, and her arms hanging loose, and her lips dropped, we held our lips together so long that my eyes failed me, and I could not see her, till I looked at her green raiment.

And she had never spoken to me yet; she seemed just then as if she were going to, for she lifted her eyes to mine, and opened her mouth; but she only said, 'Dear Lionel,' and fell forward as though she were faint; and again I held her, and kissed her all over; and then she loosed her hair that it fell to her feet, and when I clipped her next, she threw it over me, that it fell all over my scarlet robes like trickling of some golden well in Paradise.

Then, within a while, we called in the Lady Blanche and Sir William de la Fosse, and while they talked about what we should do, we sat to-

gether and kissed; and what they said I know not.

Golden
Wings

But I remember that that night, quite late, Alys and I rode out side by side from the good city in the midst of a great band of knights and men-at-arms, and other bands drew to us as we went, and in three days we reached Sir William's castle, which was called La Garde des Chevaliers. And straightway he caused toll the great bell, and to hang out from the highest tower a great banner of red and gold, cut into so many points that it seemed as if it were tattered; for this was the custom of his house when they wanted their vassals together.

And Alys and I stood up in the tower by the great bell as they tolled it; I remember now that I had passed my hand underneath her hair, so that the fingers of it folded over and just lay on her cheek; she gazed down on the bell, and at every deafening stroke she drew in her breath and opened her eyes to a wide stare downwards.

But on the very day that we came, they arrayed her in gold and flowers (and there were angels and knights and ladies wrought on her gold raiment), and I waited for an hour in the chapel till she came, listening to the swallows outside, and gazing with parted lips at the pictures on the golden walls; but when she came, I knelt down before the altar, and she knelt down and kissed my lips; and then the priest came in, and the singers and

Golden Wings the censer-boys; and that chapel was soon confusedly full of golden raiment, and incense, and ladies and singing; in the midst of which I wedded Alys.

And men came into Knights' Gard till we had two thousand men in it, and great store of munitions of war and provisions.

But Alys and I lived happily together in the painted hall and in the fair water-meadows, and as yet no one came against us. And still her talk was of deeds of arms, and she was never tired of letting the serpent rings of my mail slip off her wrist and long hand, and she would kiss my shield and helm and the gold wings on my surcoat, my mother's work, and would talk of the ineffable joy that would be when we had fought through all the evil that was coming on us. Also she would take my sword and lay it on her knees and talk to it, telling it how much she loved me.

Yea in all things, O Lord God, Thou knowest that my love was a very child, like thy angels. O my wise soft-handed love! endless passion! endless longing always satisfied!

Think you that the shouting curses of the trumpet broke off our love, or in any ways lessened it? No, most certainly; but from the time the siege began, her cheeks grew thinner, and her passionate face seemed more and more a part of me; now too, whenever I happened to see her between the grim fighting she would do nothing but kiss me all

the time, or wring my hands, or take my head on her breast, being so eagerly passionate that sometimes a pang shot through me that she might die. Till one day they made a breach in the wall, and when I heard of it for the first time, I sickened, and could not call on God; but Alys cut me a tress of her yellow hair and tied it in my helm, and armed me, and saying no word, led me down to the breach by the hand, and then went back most ghastly pale.

So there on the one side of the breach were the spears of William de la Fosse and Lionel of the Gold Wings, and on the other the spears of King Gilbert and Sir Guyle Bon Amant, but the King himself was not there; Sir Guy was.

Well, what would you have? in this world never yet could two thousand men stand against twenty thousand; we were almost pushed back with their spear-points, they were so close together: slay six of them and the spears were as thick as ever; but if two of our men fell there was straightway a hole. Yet just at the end of this we drove them back in one charge two yards beyond the breach, and behold in the front rank, Sir Guy, utterly fearless, cool, and collected; nevertheless, with one stroke I broke his helm, and he fell to the ground before the two armies, even as I fell that day in the lists; and we drove them twenty feet farther, yet they saved Sir Guy. Well, again, what would you have? They drove us back again, and they

**Golden
Wings**

drove us into our inner castle-walls. And I was the last to go in, and just as I was entering, the boldest and nearest of the enemy clutched at my love's hair in my helm, shouting out quite loud: 'Whore's hair for John the goldsmith!'

At the hearing of which blasphemy the Lord gave me such strength, that I turned and caught him by the ribs with my left hand, and with my right, by sheer strength, I tore off his helm and part of his nose with it, and then swinging him round about, dashed his brains out against the castle-walls. Yet thereby was I nearly slain, for they surrounded me; only Sir William and the others charged out and rescued me, but hardly.

May the Lord help all true men! In an hour we were all fighting pell-mell on the walls of the castle itself, & some were slain outright, and some were wounded, and some yielded themselves and received mercy; but I had scarce the heart to fight any more, because I thought of Alys lying with her face upon the floor and her agonised hands outspread, trying to clutch something, trying to hold to the cracks of the boarding. So when I had seen William de la Fosse slain by many men, I cast my shield and helm over the battlements, and gazed about for a second, and lo! on one of the flanking towers, my gold wings still floated by the side of William's white lion, and in the other one I knew my poor Love, whom they had left quite alone, was lying.

So then I turned into a dark passage and ran till I reached the tower stairs; up that too I sprang as though a ghost were after me, I did so long to kiss her again before I died; to soothe her too, so that she should not feel this day, when in the after-times she thought of it, as wholly miserable to her. For I knew they would neither slay her nor treat her cruelly, for in sooth all loved her; only they would make her marry Sir Guy le Bon Amant.

In the topmost room I found her, alas! alas! lying on the floor, as I said; I came to her and kissed her head as she lay, then raised her up; and I took all my armour off and broke my sword over my knee. And then I led her to the window away from the fighting, from whence we only saw the quiet country, and kissed her lips till she wept and looked no longer sad and wretched; then I said to her: 'Now, O Love, we must part for a little; it is time for me to go and die.'

'Why should you go away?' she said, 'they will come here quick enough, no doubt, and I shall have you longer with me if you stay; I do not turn sick at the sight of blood.'

'O my poor love!' And I could not go because of her praying face; surely God would grant anything to such a face as that!

'Oh!' she said, 'you will let me have you yet a little longer, I see; also let me kiss your feet.'

She threw herself down and kissed them, and then did not get up again at once, but lay there

**Golden
Wings**

holding my feet. And while she lay there, behold a sudden tramping that she did not hear, and over the green hangings the gleam of helmets that she did not see, and then one pushed aside the hangings with his spear, and there stood the armed men. 'Will not somebody weep for my darling?' She sprung up from my feet with a low bitter moan, most terrible to hear, she kissed me once on the lips, and then stood aside, with her dear head thrown back, and holding her lovely loose hair strained over her outspread arms, as though she were wearied of all things that had been or that might be. Then one thrust me through the breast with a spear, and another with his sword, which was three inches broad, gave me a stroke across the thighs that bit to the bone; and as I fell forward one cleft me to the teeth with his axe. And then I heard my darling shriek.

FRANK'S SEALED LETTER.

EVER since I can remember, even when I was quite a child, people have always told me that I had no perseverance, no strength of will; they have always kept on saying to me, directly and indirectly: 'Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel'; and they have always been quite wrong in this matter, for of all men I ever heard of I have the strongest will for good and evil. I could soon find out whether a thing were possible or not to me; then if it were not I threw it away for ever, never thought of it again; no regret, no longing for that; it was past and over to me. But if it were possible, and I made up my mind to do it, then and there I began it, and in due time finished it, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left till it was done.

So I did with all things that I set my hand to; love only, and the wild restless passions that went with it, were too strong for me; and they bent my strong will so that people think me now a weak man, with no end to make for in the purposeless wanderings of my life. Yes, my life is purposeless now. I have failed, I know, but I know that I have fought too. I know the weary struggle from day to day, in which, with my loins girded and my muscles all astrain, I have fought while years and years have passed away. I know what they do not, how that passion trembled in my grasp, shook, staggered; how I grew stronger & stronger,

**Frank's
Sealed
Letter** till as I stood at last quivering with collected force, the light of victory across my lips and brow, God's hand struck me, and I fell at once and without remedy, and am now a vanquished man, and really without any object in life, not desiring death any more than life, or life any more than death; a vanquished man, though no coward; forlorn, hopeless, unloved, living now altogether in the past.

I will tell you how I fell; and then I pray you all to pity me, and if you can love me, and pray for me that I may be forgiven. I said when I left her that day that I would forget her, look upon her as if she had never been; coming and going to and from that house, indeed; seeing her often, talking to her as to any other friendly and accomplished lady, but seeing Mabel, my Mabel that had been, no more. She was dead, and the twenty years that I had lived with her, man and boy and little child, were gone, dead too and forgotten; no shadow of them should rest upon my path, I said. Meantime the world wanted help; I was strong and willing, and would help it. I saw all about me men without a leader looking and yearning for one to come and help them. I would be that leader, I said; there was no reason for me to be bitter and misanthropical, for I could forget the past utterly, could be another man in short. Why, I never loved that woman there with her heavy sweeping black hair & dreamily passionate eyes;

that was some one passed away long ago; who knows when he lived? But I am the man who knows, that feels all poetry and art, that can create, that can sympathise with every man and woman that ever lived, even with that cold proud woman there, without a heart, but with heavy sweeping hair and great dreamily passionate eyes which might cause a weak man to love her.

Frank's
Sealed
Letter

Yes, I said so when I left her, nay even before I left her; for in my agonized pleading I had said words that made her cold selfish blood run quick enough to speak scornful things to me. 'Mabel,' I said; 'Mabel, think awhile before you turn from me for ever! Am I not good enough for you? Yet tell me, I pray you, for God's sake, what you would have me do, what you would have me make myself, and I will do that thing, make myself such, whatever it is. Think how long I have worshipped you, looked on all the world through your eyes! I loved you as soon as I saw you, even when I was a child, before I had reason almost; and my love and my reason have grown together till now. O Mabel, think of the things we have talked of together, thought of together! Will you ever find another man who thinks the same as you do in everything? Nay, but you must love me! Such letters you have written me too! O Mabel, I know God will never let love like mine go unrequited! You love me, I know, I am sure of it; you are trying me only; let it be enough

**Frank's
Sealed
Letter** now, my own Mabel, the only one that loves me. See, do I not love you enough?' I fell there before her feet, I caught the hem of her garment, I buried my face in its folds; madly I strove to convince myself that she was but trying me, that she could not speak for her deep love, that it was a dream only. O how I tried to wake, to find myself, with my heart beating wildly and the black night round me, lying on my bed, as often when a child I used to wake from a dream of lions and robbers and ugly deaths and the devil to find myself in the dear room, though it was dark, my heart bounding with the fear of pursuit and the joy of escape! But no dream breaks now; it is desperate, desperate earnest. The dreams have closed round me and become the dimmest reality, as I often used to fear those other dreams might; the walls of this fact are closed round about me now like the sides of an iron chest hurrying on down some swift river, with the black water above, to the measureless rolling sea. I shall never any more wake to anything but that. For listen to what she said, you who are happy lovers. Can you believe it? I can scarce do so myself. I, not looking up from where I lay, felt her lips curl into a cruel smile as she drew herself from my grasp, and said: 'Listen, Hugh! I call you Hugh, by the way, not because I am fond of you, but because surnames never seemed to me to express anything; they are quite meaningless. Hugh, I never

loved you, never shall; nay, something more: I am not quite sure that I do not hate you for coming to claim me as a right in this way, and appealing to God against me. Who gave you any right to be lord over me and question my heart? Why, for this long time I have seen that you would claim me at last; and your love which I now cast from me for ever and trample upon, so, so... your love, I say, has been a bitterly heavy burden to me, dogging me up and down, everywhere. You think my thoughts? Yes, verily; you who think yourself the teacher of such an one as I am have few thoughts of your own to think. What do I want better than you? Why, I want a man who is brave and beautiful; you are a coward and a cripple. Am I trying you? No, Hugh, there is no need for that; I think I know you well enough; weak and irresolute, you will never do anything great. I must marry a great man.

Frank's
Sealed
Letter

White honour shall be like a plaything to him,
Borne lightly, a pet falcon on his wrist;
One who can feel the very pulse o' the time,
Instant to act, to plunge into the strife,
And with a strong arm hold the rearing world.'

But before she had begun to quote my life had changed. While I lay there in I know not what agony, that which I have just said came suddenly across me. I became calm all at once; I began to

**Frank's
Sealed
Letter** bend my passion beneath my strong will; the
fight I fought so bravely had begun.

I rose up quietly before she began to quote; and when she saw me standing there so calmly, ay, and looking so brave too, though I was a cripple and a coward, she quailed before me; her voice fell even in the midst of her scornful speech. Then I thought: So cool, and can quote pretty verses at such a time! O but my revenge is good & sure too; it is almost as if I killed her, stabbed her to the heart here in this room. Then my heart grew quite obedient and my purpose began to work, so that I could speak with no shadow of passion in my words, and with no forced unnatural calm either. I could seem, and for years and years did seem to be no hard cold man of the world, no mere calculating machine for gauging God's earth by modern science, but a kindly genial man; though so full of knowledge, yet having room for love too and enthusiasm and faith. Ah, they who saw me as such did not see the fight, did not see that bitter passage in the room of the old house at Riston, where the river widens.

I stood there silent for a very short time, then raising my eyes to hers said: 'Well, Mabel, I shall go up to London and see the publishers, and perhaps stay there a day or two, so that I shall probably be back again at Casley by Tuesday; and I dare say I shall find time to walk over to Riston on Wednesday or Thursday, to tell you what we

have determined on. Goodbye.' She trembled and turned pale as I gave her my hand, and said goodbye in a forced tone that was in strong contrast to my natural-seeming calmness. She was frightened of me then already: good!

Frank's
Sealed
Letter

So I walked away from Riston to my own house at Casley, which was about two miles from Riston, and got ready to start for London; then, about an hour after I had parted from her, set out again across the fields to the railway that was five miles from my house. It was on the afternoon of a lovely spring day; I took a book with me, a volume of poems just published, and my dead friend's manuscript; for my purpose in going to London was to see to its publication. Then looking at that over which so many years of toil and agony of striving had been spent, I thought of him who wrote it; thought how admirable he was, how that glorious calm purpose of his shone through all his restless energy. I thought too, as I had never done before, of the many, many ways he had helped me; and my eyes filled with tears as I remembered remorsefully the slight return I had given him for his affection, my forgetfulness of him in the years when I was happy. I thought of his quiet successful love, and of that sweet wife of his, the poor widow that was now, who lived at Florence watching the shadows come and go on her husband's tomb, the rain that washed it, the sun and moon that shone on it; then how he had

Frank's
Sealed
Letter

died at Florence, and of the short letter he had written to me, or rather that had been written just before his death by his wife from his dictation, and was stained with the many tears of the poor heart-broken lady. Those farewell words, that threw but a slight shadow over the happy days when I loved Mabel, had more weight now both for sorrow and consolation; for the thought that that dead man cared for me surely did me good, made me think more of the unseen world, less of the terrible earth-world that seemed all going wrong, & which the unseen was slowly righting. I had the letter with me at that very time. I had taken it out with the manuscript, and together with that another, a sealed letter that came with it, which, according to the dying man's wish, I had never yet opened. I took out both the letters, and turning aside from the path sat down under a willow by the side of the river, a willow just growing grey-green with the spring. And there to the music of the west wind through the slim boughs, to the very faint music of the river's flow, I read the two letters, and first the one I had read before: 'Dear friend, I am going the last journey, and I wish to say farewell before I go. My wife's tears fall fast as she writes, and I am sorry to go, though I think not afraid to die. Two things I want to say to you. The first and least has to do with my writings; I do not wish them to perish: you know I wrote thinking I might do someone

good; will you see about this for me? Do you know, Hugh, I never cared for any man so much as for you; there was something which drew me to you wonderfully. It used to trouble me sometimes to think that you scarcely cared for me so much, but only sometimes; for I saw that you knew this and tried to love me more: it was not your fault that you could not; God bless you for the trying even! When you see my wife be kind to her; we have had happy talk about you often, thinking what a great man you ought to be. Yet one thing more. I send you with this a sealed enclosure. On the day that you are married to Mabel, or on the day that she dies still loving you, burn this unopened; but, O friend, if such a misfortune happen to you as I scarce dare hint at even, then open it and read it for the sake of Frank.' Then I remembered sadly how when I read this I was angry at first, even with the dead man, for his suspicion; only when I thought of him dying and how loving he was, my anger quickly sank into regret for him, not deep anguish, but quiet regret. Ah, what a long time it was since I loved Mabel! How I had conquered my raging passion! Frank will surely applaud my resolution. Dear heart, how wise he was in his loving simplicity! I looked at the sealed letter; it also was directed in his wife's handwriting. I broke the seal, and saw Frank's writing there; it was written there some time before his death. How solemn the

**Frank's
Sealed
Letter** wind was through the willow boughs! how solemn
the faint sound of the swirls of the lowland river! I
read: 'O Hugh, Hugh, poor wounded heart! I saw
it all along, that she was not worthy of that heart
stored up with so much love. I do not ask for that
love, dear friend; I know you cannot give it me:
I was never jealous of her, and I know moreover
that your love for her will not be wasted. I think
for my part that there is One who gathers up all
such wandering love and keeps it for himself.
Think, Hugh, of those many weary hours on the
cross; in that way did they requite His love then,
and how do we requite it now? Should He not
then sympathise with all those whose love is not
returned? And Hugh, sweet friend, I pray you
for Christ's love never to forget the love you bore
her in the days when you thought her noble, the
noblest of all things; never cast away the gift of
memory, never cast it away for your ease, never
even for the better serving of God: He will help
Himself, and does not want mere deeds; you are
weak, and love cannot live without memory. O
Hugh, if you do as I pray you, this remembered
love will be a very bright crown to you up in
heaven; meantime may it not be that your love
for others will grow; that you will love all men
more, and me perhaps even much more? And I,
though I never see you again in the body till the
Day of Doom, will nevertheless be near you in
spirit, to comfort you somewhat through the days

of your toiling on earth. And now Frank prays God to bless poor wounded Hugh.'

Frank's
Sealed
Letter

I ceased reading; a dull pain came about my forehead and eyes. What, must I be all alone in my struggle with passion, not even Frank to help me? Dear fellow; to think how fond he was of me! I am very sorry he cannot be with me in this fight; for I must kill her utterly in my memory, and I think if he knew all, how very noble I thought her, how altogether base she really is, he would be with me after all. Yet, Frank, though I do not do this that you pray me to do, you will still be my friend, will you not? You shall help me to become more like you, if that is possible in any degree. So I determined to forget her; and was I not successful at first, ah, and for long too? Nevertheless, alas, alas! Frank's memory faded with her memory, and I did not feel his spirit by me often, only sometimes; and those were my weakest times, when I was least fit to have him by me. For then my purpose would give in somewhat, and memory would come to me; not clear and distinct, but only as a dull pain about my eyes and forehead. But my strong will could banish that, for I had much work to do trying to help my fellow-men, with all my heart as I thought. I threw myself heart and soul into that work, and joy grew up in my soul; and I was proud to think that she had not exhausted the world for me.

Nor did I shrink once from the sight of her; but

Frank's
Sealed
Letter

came often and saw her at her father's house at Riston, that the broadening river flows by always; nay, I sat at her wedding, and saw her go up to the altar with firm step, and heard her say her part in the unfaltering music of her rich voice, wherein was neither doubt nor love; & there I prayed that the brave noble-hearted soldier her husband might be happy with her, feeling no jealousy of him, pitying him rather, for I did not think that it was in her nature to love any one but herself thoroughly. Yet what a queen she looked on that marriage-day, her black hair crowning her so, her great deep eyes looking so full of all slumbering passion as of old, her full lips underneath, whence the music came! And as she walked there between the grey walls of that Abbey where they were married, the light fell on her through the jewel-like windows, colouring strangely the white and gold of her gorgeous robes. She also seemed or wished to seem to have forgotten that spring day at Riston; at least she spoke to me when she went away quite kindly and very calmly: 'Goodbye, Hugh; we hear of you already: you will be a great man soon, and a good man you always were and always will be; and we shall think of you often, and always with pleasure.' Yet I knew she hated me. O her hollow heart! The dull pain came about my forehead and eyes; somehow I could not keep up the farce just then. I spoke bitterly, a smile that I know now I should not have smiled curling my lip:

'Well done, Mabel! it is a nicely composed parting speech to an old friend, but you were always good at that kind of thing. Forget you? No! you are too handsome for that; and if I were a painter or sculptor I would paint you or carve you from memory. As it is, I never forget beautiful faces. Goodbye.' And I turned away from her a little without giving my hand. She grew pale at first, then flushed bright crimson like a stormy sky, and turned from me with a scornful devil's glance. She was gone, and a sharp pang of memory shot through me for a single instant, a warning of my fall which was to be. For a single instant I saw her sitting there as of old in the garden hard by the river under the gold-dropping laburnums, heard her for an instant singing wildly in her magnificent voice as of old:

'Wearily, drearily,
Half the day long,
Flap the great banners
High over the stone;
Strangely and eerily
Sounds the wind's song
Bending the banner-poles.

While all alone,
Watching the loophole's spark,
Lie I with life all dark,
Feet tethered, hands fettered
Fast to the stone,

Frank's
Sealed
Letter

The grim walls, square lettered
With prisoned men's groan.

Still strain the banner-poles
Through the wind's song,
Westward the banner rolls
Over my wrong.'

But it was gone directly, that pang; everything, face, voice, and all: like the topmost twigs of some great tree-limb, that as it rolls round and round, griding the gravel and mud at the bottom of a flooded river, shows doubtfully for a second, flashing wet in the February sunlight, then sinking straightway goes rolling on toward the sea in the swift steady flow of the flooded river; yet it appears again often, till it is washed ashore at last, who knows where or when? But for me these pangs of memory did not come often; nay, they came less and less frequently for long, till at last in full triumph, as I thought it, I fell.

That marriage-day was more than two years after the day in April that I have told you of, when I read the sealed letter; then for three years after her marriage I went on working, famous now, with many who almost worshipped me for the words I had said, the many things I had taught them. And I in return verily loved these earnestly; yet round about me clung some shadow that was not the mere dulled memory of what had been, and it deepened sometimes in my drearier moods into

fearful doubts that these last five years of my life had been after all a mistake, a miserable failure. Yet still I had too much to do to go on doubting for long, so these shadowy doubts had to hold back till (though I knew it not) a whole army of them was marching upon me in my fancied security.

Well, it was springtime, just about five years from that day. I was living in London, and for the last few months had been working very hard indeed, writing and reading all day long and every day, often all night long also; and in those nights the hours would pass so quickly that the time between nightfall and dawn scarcely seemed ten minutes long. So I worked; worked so hard that one day, one morning early, when I saw through my window on waking about six o'clock how blue the sky was even above the London roofs, and remembered how in the fields all about it was the cowslip time of the year, I said to myself: 'No work to-day: I will make holiday for once in the sweet springtime. I will take a book with some tale in it, go into the country, and read it there, not striving particularly to remember it, but enjoying myself only.' And as I said this my heart beat with joy like a boy's at the thought of holiday. So I got up; and as I was dressing I took up a volume of Shakespeare, and opened it at Troilus and Cressida, and read a line or two just at the place where the parting comes; it almost brought the tears to my eyes. 'How soft-hearted I am this

**Frank's
Sealed
Letter** morning!' I said; 'Yet I will take this and read it: it is quite a long time since I read any Shakespeare, and I think years and years since I have read *Troilus and Cressida*.' Yes, I was soft-hearted that morning; and when I looked in the glass and saw my puny deformed figure there, and my sallow thin face eaten into many furrows by those five years, furrows that gave a strange grotesque piteousness to the ugly features, I smiled at first, then almost wept for self-pity. The tears were in my eyes again, but I thought: 'I will not spoil my holiday,' and so forbore. Then I went out into the streets, with a certain kind of light-heartedness, which I knew might turn at any moment into very deep sadness. The bells of a church that I passed in my way Essex-ward were ringing, and their music struck upon my heart so that I walked the faster to get beyond their sound. I was in the country soon; people called it an ugly country, I knew, that spreading of the broad marsh lands round the river Lea: but I was so weary with my hard work that it seemed very lovely to me then; indeed I think I should not have despised it at any time; I was always a lover of the sad lowland country. I walked on, my mind keeping up a strange balance between joy and sadness for some time, till gradually all the beauty of things seemed to be stealing into my heart and making me very soft and womanish; so that at last, when I was now quite a long way off from the river Lea and walk-

ing close by the side of another little river, a mere brook, all my heart was filled with sadness, and joy had no place there at all. All the songs of birds ringing through the hedges and about the willows, all the sweet colours of the sky, and of the clouds that floated in the blue of it, of the tender fresh grass and the sweet young shoots of flowering things, were very pensive to me; pleasantly so at first perhaps; but soon they were lying heavy on me with all the rest of things created, for within my heart rose memory green and fresh as the young spring leaves. Ah! such thoughts of the old times came about me thronging that they almost made me faint. I tried hard to shake them off; I noticed every turn of the banks of the little brook, every ripple of its waters over the brown stones, every line of the broad-leaved water-flowers. I went down towards the brook, and stooping down gathered a knot of lush marsh-marigolds; then kneeling on both knees, bent over the water with my arm stretched down to it, till both my hand and the yellow flowers were making the swift-running little stream bubble about them. And even as I did so, still stronger and stronger came the memories, till they came quite clear at last, those shapes and words of the past days. I rose from the water in haste, and getting on to the road again walked along tremblingly, my head bent towards the earth, my wet hand and flowers marking the dust of it as I went.

Frank's
Sealed
Letter

**Frank's
Sealed
Letter**

Ah, what was it all, that picture of the old past days? I see a little girl sitting on the grass beneath the limes in the hot summertide, with eyes fixed on the far-away blue hills, and seeing who knows what shapes there; for the boy by her side is reading to her wondrous stories of knight and lady and fairy thing that lived in the ancient days. His voice trembles as he reads: 'And so Sir Isumbras, when he had slain the giant, cut off his head, and came to the town where the Lady Alicia lived, bringing with him that grim thing the giant's head; and the people pressed all about him at the gate and brought him to the king; and all the court was there, and the whole palace blazed with gold and jewels. So there among the ladies was the Lady Alicia, clothed in black, because she thought that through her evil pride she had caused the death of the good knight and true who loved her. And when she saw Sir Isumbras with the head of the giant, even before the king and all, she gave a great cry, and ran before all, and threw her arms round about him.' 'Go on, Hugh,' says the little girl, still looking into the blue distance; 'why do you stop?' 'I was... I was looking at the picture, Mabel,' says the boy. 'O, is there a picture of that? Let's see it!' and her eyes turn towards him at last; what a very beautiful child she is! 'Not exactly of that,' says Hugh, blushing as their eyes meet, and when she looks away for a second drawing his hand across his eyes, for he is soft-hearted;

'not exactly of that, but afterwards, where she crowns him at the tournament; here it is.' 'O, that is pretty though! Hugh, I say; Hugh!' 'Yes,' says Hugh. 'Go and get me some of the forget-not down by the brook there, and some of the pretty white star-shaped flower; I'll crown you too.' Off runs Hugh directly, carrying the book with him. 'Stop, don't lose the place, Hugh; here, give me the book!' Back he goes, then starts again in a great hurry; the flowers are not easy to get, but they are got somehow; for Hugh though deformed is yet tolerably active, and for her.

So when the flowers come she weaves them into a crown, blue flowers golden-hearted and white ones star-shaped, with the green leaves between them. Then she makes him kneel down, and looking at the picture in the fairy story-book, places him this way and that, with her smooth brows knit into a puzzled frown. At last she says: 'It won't do, somehow, I can't make it out. I say, Hugh!' she blurts out at last; 'I tell you what, it won't do; you are too ugly.' 'Never mind, Mabel,' he says; 'shall I go on reading again?' 'Yes, you may go on.' Then she sits down, and again her eyes are fixed on the far-away blue hills; and Hugh is by her reading again, only stumbling sometimes, seemingly not so much interested as he was before. 'Poor Hugh!' I said out loud; for strangely the thing was so strong that it had almost wrought its own cure, and I found myself

Frank's
Sealed
Letter

Frank's
Sealed
Letter

looking at my old self and at her as at people in a story: yet I was stunned as it were, and knew well that I was incapable of resistance against that memory now. Yes, I knew well what was coming. I had by this time left the brook, and gone through a little village on the hill above and on the other side of it; then turned to my right into the forest that was all about, the quaint hornbeam forest. There sitting down I took out the Troilus and Cressida I had brought with me, and began to read, saying to myself (though I did not believe it) that I would cast those memories quite away from me, be triumphantly victorious over them. Yes, there under the hornbeams I read Troilus and Cressida, the play with the two disappointments in it, Hector dead, and Cressida unfaithful, Troy and Troilus undone. And when I had finished I thought no more of Troilus and Cressida, nor of any one else in the wide world but Mabel. 'O Mabel!' I said, burying my face in the grass as I had before long ago in her long robes; 'O Mabel, could you not have loved me? I would have loved you more than any woman was ever loved. Or if you could not love me, why did you speak as you did on that day? I thought you so much above me, Mabel, and yet I could not have spoken so to any one. O Mabel, how will it be between us when we are dead? O Lord, help me, help me! Is it coming over again?' For as I lay there I saw again as clearly as years ago the room

in the old house at Riston, at the noontide of the warm sunny spring weather; the black oak paneling carved so quaintly all round the room, whereon, in the space of sunlight that pouring through the window lit up the shadowed wall, danced the shadows of the young lime-leaves; the great bay window with its shattered mullions round which the creepers clung; the rustling of the hard magnolia leaves in the fresh blast of the west wind; the garden with its clusters of joyous golden daffodils under the acacia-trees, seen through the open window; and beyond that, rolling and flashing in the sun between its long lines of willows and poplars, the mighty lowland river going to the sea.

And she sat there by the fire-place, where there was no fire burning now. She sat by the cold hearth with her back to the window, her long hands laid on her knees, bending forward a little, as if she were striving to look through and through something that was far off. There she sat, with her heavy rolling purple hair like a queen's crown above her white temples, with her great slumbrously-passionate eyes, and her full lips underneath, whence the music came. Except that the wind moved a little some of the folds of her dress she was motionless and quiet as an old Egyptian statue, sitting out its many thousand years of utter rest that it may the better ponder on its own greatness. More lifeless far she looked than any one of the grey saints that hang through rain and wind and sunshine in

Frank's the porches of the abbey which looks down on
Sealed the low river waves.

Letter And there was one watched her from near the door; a man with long arms, crooked shoulders, and pale ugly-featured face looking out from long lank black hair. Yes, his face is pale always, but now it is much paler than usual, as pale almost as the face of a dead man; you can almost hear his heart beat as he stands there; the cold sweat gathers on his brow. Presently he moves towards the lady; he stands before her with one hand raised and resting on the mantelshelf; you can see his arm trembling as he does this. He stands so while you might count twenty, she never looking up the while. Then half choking he says: 'Mabel, I want to speak to you if you please for a moment.' And she looks round with a calm unconcerned look at first, but presently a scornful smile begins to flicker about the corners of her mouth. Then that pale man says: 'Ah, I have told you all the rest before!' For he knew the meaning of the flickering smile. ... And that was five years ago. And I shall never forget it while I live; never forget those words of hers; never forget a single line of her beautiful cruel face as she stood there five years ago. All the world may go by me now; I care not. I cannot work any more. I think I must have had some purpose in coming here, but I forget what it was; I will go back to London and see if I can remember when I get there.

So that day under the hornbeam trees I fell from my steady purpose of five years; I was vanquished then once and for ever; there was no fighting for me any more. And have I ever forgotten it, that day and the words she spoke? No, not for one moment. I have lived three years since then of bitter anguish; every moment of that time has been utter pain and woe to me; that is what my life has been these three years; and what death may be like I cannot tell, I dare not even think for fear. And I have fled from the world; no one of all my worshippers knows what has become of me, and the people with whom I live now call me a man without a purpose, without a will. Yes, I wonder what death would be like. The Eure is deep at Louviers, I know; deep, and runs very swiftly towards the Seine past the cloth mills...

Louviers? Louviers? What am I saying? Where am I? O Christ! I hold the sealed letter, Frank's sealed letter, in my hand, the seal just broken. Five years? Eight years? It was but two hours ago that my head lay before her feet, yet I seem to have lived those eight years. Then I have not been famous, have not been forgotten; never sat under the hornbeams by Chigwell; and she is sitting there still perhaps, in that same oak room. How strange it is! fearfully strange, yet true. For here is Frank's letter, here is his manuscript, the ink on it brown through the years of toil and long-

Frank's
Sealed
Letter

ing. There close by my side the great river is going to the sea, and the wind goes softly through the willow-boughs this sunny spring afternoon. And now what shall I do? I know my will is strong, though I failed so in that dream I have awaked from. I know too

That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.

Shall I wear this crown then while I live on earth, or forget and be brave and strong? Ah, it must be a grand thing to be crowned; and if it cannot be with gold and jewels, or better still with the river flowers, then must it be with thorns. Shall I wear this or cast it from me? I hear the wind going through the willow-boughs; it seems to have a message for me: 'Good and true, faithful and brave, loving always, and crowned with all wisdom in the days gone by; he was all this and more. Trust your friend, Hugh, your friend who loved you so though you hardly knew it; wear the crown of memory.' Yes, I will wear it; and, O friend, you who sent me this dream of good and evil, help me I pray you, for I know how bitter it will be. Yes, I will wear it, and then, though never forgetting Mabel and the things that have been, I may be happy at some time or other. Yet I cannot see how that can ever come to pass. O Mabel, if you could only have loved me! Lord, keep my memory green!

'MEN AND WOMEN.' BY ROBERT BROWNING.

I AM not going to attempt a regular classification of Robert Browning's 'Men and Women;' yet the poems do fall naturally into some order, or rather some of them go pretty much together; and, as I have no great space, I will go through those that do so fall together, saying little or nothing about the others.

The three that strike me first are 'The Epistle of Karshish,' 'Cleon,' and 'Bishop Blougram's Apology.' They have all three to do with belief and doubt, with the thoughts and fancies and strange longings that circle round these; they are dramatic too, not expressing, except quite incidentally, the poet's own thoughts. 'Cleon,' and the 'Epistle of Karshish,' are especially dramatic, and are very considerably alike: they both tell of the desires and doubts of men out of Christianity, and in the days when Christianity was the true faith of a very few unknown men, not a mere decent form to all the nations.

Karshish is an Arab physician, a man of science; Cleon is poet, painter, sculptor. The Arab is the more genial of the two, less selfish, somewhat deeper too, I think; Cleon, with his intense appreciation of beauty, even with his long life spent in producing that beauty, is yet intensely selfish; he despises utterly the common herd; he would bring about, if he could, a most dreary aristocracy

Men and Women of intellect, where the commoners would be bound hand and foot, mere slaves to the great men and their great lordly minds, not loyal freemen, honouring the heroes; he plumes himself, too, on being no less great than his fathers, greater even than they, saying:

‘Marvel not.

We of these latter days, with greater mind
Than our forerunners, since more composite,
Look not so great (beside their simple way)
To a judge who only sees one way at once,
One mind-point, and no other at a time;
Compares the small part of a man of us
With some whole man of the heroic age,
Great in his way, not ours, nor meant for ours,
And ours is greater, had we skill to know.’

Saying wrongly, too, as I am sure, for it was little more than mere restless vanity that made him try to master so many things, instead of giving up his mind to one, as the grand elders did.

Yes, he is selfish, so selfish that he can see little joy in those powers of creation which he possessed; the king had said in his letter, that though he, a mere king, would die utterly, yet it would not be so with Cleon, for his pictures, poems, statues, would live after him, he would live through them. Cleon says the king stumbles at mere words; that the reality is otherwise:

'What? dost thou verily trip upon a word,
Confound the accurate view of what joy is
(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine)
With feeling joy? confound the knowing how
And showing how to live (my faculty)
With actually living? Otherwise,
Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king?
I know the joy of kingship: well, thou art king!'

He says too, that this same appreciation of beauty,
of enjoyment, all the knowledge that he has, all
his desires, so much finer than those of other men,
only make the fear of death bitterer than it other-
wise would be:

'Every day my sense of joy
Grows more acute, my soul (intensified
In power and insight) more enlarged, more keen;
While every day my hairs fall more and more,
My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase;
The horror quickening still from year to year,
The consummation coming past escape
When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy.'

Till at last, in his agony, fierce words are wrung
from the calm proud man; he cannot help it; he
cries out:

'It is so horrible,
I dare at times imagine to my need
Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,
Unlimited in capability

**Men and
Women**

For joy, as this is in desire for joy,
To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us.
That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait
On purpose to make sweet the life at large,
Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death
We burst there as the worm into the fly,
Who, while a worm still, wants his wings. But no!
Zeus has not yet revealed it; and, alas!
He must have done so, were it possible!

And from this agony he comes down again to a kind of careless despair, and ends by saying just a little, contemptuously enough, of Paulus and his new doctrines; the cursed pride of knowledge lowering him so, that he even seems to be jealous that the king has sent presents and enquiries to Paulus also, a barbarian, one circumcised; so that about the doctrines of Paulus, he says:

‘And (as I gathered from a bystander)
Their doctrines could be held by no sane man.’

Poor Cleon! he was not wont to accept things on hearsay; yet now so has his pride lowered him; and we must leave him and his longings for Karshish the Arab.

Karshish is, as I said, a better man than Cleon; a simpler man, one with great knowledge, always thirsting after more, and brave in his pursuit of it; yet, on the whole, I think, kindly, & not puffed up with that knowledge. He writes from Jerusa-

lem to his old master, to tell him how he has seen Lazarus; yet he is half fearful that he will seem ridiculous, unphilosophical, and does not like to acknowledge at first, even to himself, till he grows warmer from the longings that stir within him, what impression has been made on him; and he breaks off now and then to talk about his knowledge; yet he comes back to this always at last, for he cannot help it; & so he writes; very beautifully does he tell of the perfect faith of Lazarus, of his love of God and man, nay, of beasts, nay, of the very flowers; of his resignation and obedience to God through everything; of his strange clear second-sight; yearningly does he dwell on all this, excusing himself from ridicule now and then by saying, 'yet the man was mad.' He knows how little all knowledge is, how it can never be perfected through all the generations; but he longs to love perfectly; his God is different from Lazarus's God; his idea of Him is so different that he mentions with shuddering horror that which Lazarus had told him, 'that he, Lazarus, who stood there in the flesh, had seen God in the flesh too:' in horror; yet if it only could be true, that story told by the madman!

'The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too;
So, through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!

Men and
Women

Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself.
Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of mine,
But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,
And thou must love me who have died for thee!
The madman saith He said so: it is strange.'

You see, too, he does not say, as Cleon did to his dream of Heaven, 'it is not possible;' he only says, 'it is strange.'

It is all gloriously told; here is something beside our present question which I quote for its beauty; Karshish's first meeting with Lazarus:

'I met him thus:

I cross'd a ridge of short sharp broken hills,
Like an old lion's cheek-teeth. Out there came
A moon made like a face with certain spots
Multiform, manifold, and menacing:
Then a wind rose behind me. So we met
In this old sleepy town at unaware,
The man and I.'

Concerning 'Bishop Blougram's Apology' I can say little here, it embraces so many things; the Bishop's interlocutor, 'Gigadibs, the literary man,' comes in only as an objector, or little else; he is a man without fixed faith; the bishop is one who is trying to 'believe that he believes,' and is succeeding, I think, pretty well: for my part I dislike him thoroughly, yet he says many true things, as Browning says in the Epilogue; 'he said true things, but called them by wrong names.' He

agrees too with Cleon concerning the unpleasantness of the possession of the creative power. It is of no use to him, he says; he is more selfish even than Cleon, and not nearly so interesting: he is tolerably well content with the present state of things as regards himself, has no such very deep longings, and is not so much troubled with doubts probably as even he says he is. Browning says of him: 'For Blougram, he believed say half he spoke.'

I will go on to the next band that seem to go together, those about art, namely; they are 'Andrea del Sarto,' 'Fra Lippo Lippi,' 'Old Pictures at Florence,' 'A Toccata of Galuppi,' and 'Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha.'

'Andrea del Sarto' and 'Fra Lippo Lippi' are a good deal alike, only the first has more about the man, the second about the art he lives in. What a joy it is to have these men brought up before us, made alive again, though they have passed away from the earth so long ago; made alive, seeming indeed not as they might very likely have seemed to us, the lesser men, had we lived in their times; but rescued from the judgment of the world, 'which charts us all in its broad blacks or whites,' and shown to us as they really were.

Think of Andrea del Sarto sitting there in Florence, looking over to Fiesole, trying to forget all the shame, all the weariness, to forget the pain of them at least, to live for one half-hour in the present; yet so that the past and the future may mingle

Men and
Women

with it very quietly, like the long weeds that the stream sways with it. And Lucrezia is sitting by him, Lucrezia, who he knows is not worthy of his love; no, not even of his love, the breaker of troth, the runaway; and yet he goes on loving her nevertheless, she has wound her toils about him so. Oh! true story, told so often, in so many ways! And it shall all go into a picture for the wearied man resting there:

‘The whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was bound to be and do,
A twilight-piece.’

And how calmly he can talk of himself and his art, his great success that was rather a bitter failure to him now:

‘I do what many dream of all their lives;
Dream? strive to do, and agonise to do,
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive ... you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,
Yet do much less, so much less, some one says,
(I know his name, no matter) so much less!
Well, less is more, Lucrezia! I am judged.
There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped-up brain,

Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of
mine.

Men and
Women

Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.'

Calmly he speaks of the wrong she had been to him, of what she might have been; calmly of his life in France, and of his sin even when he fled from thence a very thief: and she, in spite of all, is rather in a hurry to get away, is rather bored by his talk, howsoever loving, for her 'cousin' waits for her below: and so you can almost see the flutter of her dress through the doorway, almost hear her feet down the stairs, and the greeting of the bad woman without a heart with that 'cousin.' Almost? nay, quite!

Then for Fra Lippo Lippi. He, found in questionable haunts by the police, first awes them somewhat by mention of his patron's name, Cosimo de Medici; then, being a man with wrongs and one who must speak to somebody, he tells the officer the very simple story of his life, and his grievance:

'Rub all out! well, well, there's my life, in short,
And so the thing has gone on ever since.
I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds.

Men and Women And yet the old schooling sticks; the old grave eyes
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
The heads shake still: 'It's Art's decline, my son!
You're not of the true painters, great and old:
Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find:
Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer.
Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the third.'
I'm not the third then: bless us, they must know!
Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,
They, with their Latin? so I swallow my rage,
Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint
To please them.'

This too is an often-told tale, to be told many
times again, I fear, before the world is done with.
To this same officer he vindicates himself: every-
thing almost is worth painting; surely it is best
(whatever may be good) to paint everything as
well as possible:

'You be judge!

You speak no Latin more than I, belike;
However, you're my man, you've seen the world,
The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises ... and God made it all!

What's it all about?

To be pass'd o'er, despised? or dwelt upon,
Wonder'd at? oh, this last of course, you say.
But why not do as well as say; paint these

Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
God's works... paint any one, and count it crime
To let a truth slip. Don't object, 'His works
Are here already, nature is complete:
Suppose you reproduce her (which you can't)
There's no advantage! you must beat her, then!
For, don't you mark, we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted; better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that.
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out.'

It is very grand, this intense love of art; and I suppose that those who cannot paint, and who therefore cannot feel quite the same herein, have nevertheless sometimes had a sick longing for the power to do so, without being able to give any reason for it; such a longing as I think is felt for nothing else under the sun, at least for no other power.

And so we leave Fra Lippo Lippi, certainly not feeling altogether disgusted with the man, in spite of his sins; you see, he had not a very good education, and yet is not so selfish as one might have expected him to be either.

No less great than these two is 'Old Pictures at Florence;' beautiful in the beginning, that gazing on Florence from the garden in spring-tide;

**Men and
Women**

beautiful and very true, that indignant vindication of the early mediæval painters; that comparison of their imperfect painting with the perfect sculpture of the Greeks, perfect, but not so good as the other; for the other was higher in its aim, higher in the thoughts that it called up in men's minds; higher too, that in its humility it gave more sympathy to poor struggling, falling men. Here is a stanza or two of that vindication:

‘Wherever a fresco peels and drops,
Wherever an outline weakens and wanes
Till the latest life in the painting stops,
Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick pains!
One, wishful each scrap should clutch its brick,
Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,
A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
The wronged great soul of an ancient Master.

For oh, this world and the wrong it does!
They are safe in heaven with their backs to it,
The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and buzz
Round the works of, you of the little wit!
Do their eyes contract to the earth's old scope,
Now that they see God face to face,
And have all attained to be poets, I hope?
'Tis their holiday now, in any case.

Much they reckon of your praise and you!
But the wronged great souls, can they be quit
Of a world where all their work is to do?’

These are the three that have most to do with artists and painting. Then come two concerning music, 'A Toccata of Galuppi,' and 'Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha.'

There is not so much to say about the first of these, it seems to have been written principally for the music; yet I think Galuppi's music itself could not have beaten it, played though it was between the sea and the palaces, it rings so gloriously throughout; not one line in it falls from beginning to end, from the first:

'Oh, Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to find!
I can hardly misconceive you; it would prove me
deaf and blind;
But although I give you credit, 'tis with such a
heavy mind!'

to the last:

'Dust and ashes! So you creak it, and I want the
heart to scold.
Dear dead women, with such hair, too: what's be-
come of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly
and grown old.'

Worthy to go with this for music is 'Master Hugues;' exquisite in melody, it is beautiful also in its pictures, true in its meaning. As to its melody, there is to me something perfectly wonderful in the piling up of the words from verse to verse.

**Men and
Women**

The thing fascinates me, though I cannot tell where the wonder is; but it is there; the first stanza is almost as good as any for this music:

‘Hist, but a word, fair and soft!

Forth and be judged, Master Hugues!

Answer the question I’ve put you so oft:

What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?
See, we’re alone in the loft.’

Then these others go together in my mind; ‘Before’ & ‘After,’ ‘Childe Roland to the dark tower came,’ ‘The Patriot,’ ‘A light Woman,’ and perhaps some others; but these will do. They are all more concerned with action than thought, and are wholly dramatical. Here is the first stanza from ‘The Patriot:’

‘It was roses, roses, all the way,

With myrtle mixed in my path like mad.

The house-roofs seem’d to heave and sway,

The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,

A year ago on this very day!’

The poem is very short, yet very attractive, somehow; the man’s life is shown wonderfully, though the poem is so short; how he knew before, when he liberated these people, that they would not be faithful to him for long, yet nevertheless went on hoping against hope. He is not vain, for he knows he could not have done other than he did;

yet he knows he has done well, and so comforts himself, thinking of the next world: Men and
Women

‘Thus I entered Brescia, and thus I go!

In such triumphs people have dropp’d down dead.

‘Thou paid by the World... what dost thou owe

Me?’ God might have questioned: but now instead,

‘Tis God shall requite! I am safer so.’

Yet, to the reader, it is very sad to read this ‘old story;’ and I think also it was bitter to him, in spite of all.

Telling lies for truth’s sake, acting unfaithfully for faith’s sake, are what is treated of in the ‘Light Woman;’ it is told, slight sketch though it is, in a masterly way; perhaps we shall hear something more about it soon, judging from the last two lines:

‘And, Robert Browning, you writer of plays,

Here’s a subject made to your hand!’

‘Before’ and ‘After,’ are rather parts of the same poem, than separate poems. ‘Before,’ written in a splendid fighting measure, is spoken by a bystander, just before a duel: listen, here!

‘Why, you would not bid men, sunk in such a slough,
Strike no arm out further, stick and stink as now,
Leaving right and wrong to settle the embroilment,
Heaven with snaky Hell, in torture and entailment?’

Which of them’s the culprit, how must he conceive
God’s the queen he caps to, laughing in his sleeve!

Men and Women 'Tis but decent to profess one's self beneath her.
Still, one must not be too much in earnest either.

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God observes,
Then go live his life out! life will try his nerves,
When the sky which noticed all, makes no disclosure,
And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.

Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls of rose,
Pluck their fruits when grape-trees graze him as he goes.
For he 'gins to guess the purpose of the garden,
With the sly mute thing beside there for a warden.

What's the leopard-dog-thing, constant to his side,
A leer and lie in every eye on its obsequious hide?
When will come an end of all the mock obeisance,
And the price appear that pays for the misfeasance?'

Yes, truly so! the one poisoning sin in a man's life,
never to leave him in the midst of his dearly-
bought pleasures; he has gone wrong once, and
the chance of his turning back is desperate indeed;
all his life is a lie now, with that terrible unre-
pentent sin lying on him. Did ever any of you read
Hawthorne's 'Scarlet Letter?' Then for his ad-
versary:

'So much for the culprit? Who's the martyred man?
Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he can.
He that strove thus evil's lump with good to leaven,
Let him give his blood at last and get his heaven.'

Yet with neither wronger nor wronged has it come

to this yet; death may equalize it somewhat: so in 'After,' this has indeed happened. I quote it entire without comment:

'Take the cloak from his face, and at first
Let the corpse do its worst.
How he lies in his rights of a man!
Death has done all death can.
And absorbed in the new life he leads,
He recks not, he heeds
Nor his wrong nor my vengeance; both strike
On his senses alike,
And are lost in the solemn and strange
Surprise of the change.
Ha, what avails death to erase
His offence, my disgrace?
I would we were boys as of old
In the field, by the fold;
His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn
Were so easily borne.
I stand here now, he lies in his place;
Cover the face.'

I think these two among the most perfect short poems that Robert Browning has written, as perfect in their way as 'Evelyn Hope' among the love-poems. 'Childe Roland,' how grand that is! Some reviewer thinks it an allegory, and rates the poet for not having told us what happened to Childe Roland inside the 'round, squat turret.' Well, it may in some sort be an allegory, for in a

Men and Women

certain sense everything is so, or almost everything that is done on this earth. But that is not its first meaning; neither, as some people think, was it written for the sake of the fearful pictures merely, or even principally; they, grand as they are, the grandest things of the kind that I have ever read, are yet only a means to an end; for the poet's real design was to show us a brave man doing his duty, making his way on to his point through all dreadful things. What do all these horrors matter to him? he must go on, they cannot stop him; he will be slain certainly, who knows by what unheard-of death; yet he can leave all this in God's hands, and go forward, for it will all come right at the end. And has not Robert Browning shown us this well? Do you not feel as you read, a strange sympathy for the lonely knight, so very, very lonely, not allowed even the fellowship of kindly memories?

'I shut my eyes and turn'd them on my heart.
As a man calls for wine before he fights,
I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights
Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
Think first, fight afterwards... the soldier's art:
One taste of the old times sets all to rights!

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,

That way he used. Alas! one night's disgrace!
Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

Better this present than a past like that.

Back therefore to my darkening path again.'

Yet, for all this utter loneliness, for all these horrors, so subtly has the consummate poet wrought, through the stately flow of the magnificent rhythm, that we do not feel desponding, but rather triumphant at the glorious end; an end so glorious, that the former life, whatever it was, was well worth living with that to crown it; and it was well too for the poet to leave us there, so that we see not the mere struggle of physical courage, or the mere groans and tears of suffering humanity under those things which are to be borne indeed, but hardly ever very calmly, hardly ever very resignedly; but now Childe Roland passes straight from our eyes to the place where the true and brave live for ever; and as far as we go, his life flows out triumphantly with that blast he blew.

And was it not well to leave us with that snatch of old song ringing through our ears like the very horn-blast that echoed all about the windings of that dismal valley of death?

'I saw them and I knew them all; and yet
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
And blew. Childe Roland to the dark tower came.'

In my own heart I think I love this poem the best

Men and
Women

of all in these volumes. And yet I scarcely know; for this and all the others seem to me but a supplement to the love-poems, even as it is in all art, in all life; love, I mean, of some sort; and that life or art where this is not the case is but a wretched mistake after all.

And in these love-poems of Robert Browning there is one thing that struck me particularly; that is their intense, unmixed love; love for the sake of love, and if that is not obtained, disappointment comes, falling-off, misery. I suppose the same kind of thing is to be found in all very earnest love-poetry, but I think more in him than in almost anybody else. 'Any Wife to Any Husband,' 'The Last Ride Together;' read them, and I think you will see what I mean. I cannot say it clearly, it cannot be said so but in verse; love for love's sake, the only true love, I must say. Pray Christ some of us attain to it before we die!

Yet after all I am afraid I shall be able to say less about these love-poems than the others. 'Evelyn Hope' is quite perfect in its way; Tennyson himself has written nothing more beautiful; it is easy to be understood, very simple, everybody must like it; so full of faith and quiet manly tenderness, hopeful and brave; a very jewel set in the gold of the poet's crown. I must quote a little:

'I claim you still, for my own love's sake!
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,

Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few:
Much is to learn and much to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you.

But the time will come, at last it will,
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant, I shall say,
In the lower earth, in the years long still,
That body and soul so pure and gay?
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
And your mouth of your own geranium's red;
And what you would do with me, in fine,
In the new life come in the old one's stead.

I have lived, I shall say, so much since then,
Given up myself so many times,
Gained me the gains of various men,
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;
Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
Either I missed or itself missed me;
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!
What is the issue? let us see!

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while;
My heart seemed full as it could hold;
There was place and to spare for the frank young smile
And the red young mouth and the hair's young gold:
So, hush! I will give you this leaf to keep;
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand.
There, that is our secret! go to sleep;
You will wake, and remember, and understand.'

Do you not see them there, in the darkened room,

Men and Women the wise, learned, world-worn man hanging over the fair, dead girl, who 'perhaps had scarcely heard his name?' Coming close to 'Evelyn Hope' is 'A Woman's Last Word,' and almost as beautiful as that:

'Be a god and hold me
With a charm:
Be a man and fold me
With thine arm!

Teach me, only teach, Love!
As I ought
I will speak thy speech, Love,
Think thy thought;

'Meet, if thou require it,
Both demands,
Laying flesh and spirit
In thy hands!

That shall be to-morrow
Not to-night:
I must bury sorrow
Out of sight.

Must a little weep, Love
Foolish me!
And so fall asleep, Love,
Loved by thee.'

Is it not perfect in thought as in music? and does

it not illustrate what I said just now about the intense passion of these poems?

So does this next one that I come to, 'By the Fireside.' It is the history of a life of love, that life which first began by the chapel there in Italy; all things to this man, past, present, and to come, are centred in that one fact:

'I am named and known by that hour's feat,
There took my station and degree.
So grew my own small life complete
As nature obtained her best of me...
One born to love you, sweet!'

It reminds me a good deal of Tennyson in parts, of 'Maud' especially; but I suppose that is the effect of its melody; it is all told in such sweet, half-mournful music, as though in compassion to those who have not obtained this love, who will not obtain it while they live on earth, though they may in heaven.

Such love too is in it for the beautiful country where the new life came to him:

'Oh, woman-country, wooed, not wed,
Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,
Laid to their hearts instead!'

Such pictures of the fair autumn-tide:

'Oh, the sense of the yellow mountain flowers,
And the thorny balls, each three in one,

Men and
Women

The chestnuts throw on our path in showers,
For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun,
These early November hours.'

I like it one of the best of all.

'The Statue and the Bust' is a story, a sad story too. Unlawful love that was never acted, but thought only, thought through life; yet were the lovers none the less sinners, therefore; rather the more in that they were cowards; for in thought they indulged their love freely, and no fear of God, no hate of wrong or love of right restrained them, but only a certain cowardly irresolution. So Robert Browning thinks:

'So! while these wait the trump of doom,
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,
Nights and days in the narrow room?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder
What a gift life was, ages ago,
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Surely they see not God, I know,
Nor all that chivalry of His,
The soldier-saints, who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss:
Since the end of life being manifest,
He had cut his way thro' the world to this.'

I cannot tell the story, you must read it; it is one of the best in the two volumes: the rhythm so

wonderfully suited to the story, it draws you along through the days and years that the lovers passed in delay, so quietly, swiftly, smoothly.

Here is another, 'The Last Ride Together'; one disappointed in his best hopes of love, looking on the whole world struggling so, with calm hopeless eyes; so calm, though not altogether miserable. There is no need for him to struggle now, he thinks; he has failed, that is enough; failed as all others fail; he is not worse off than his fellows. Meanwhile she is riding with him; the present is somewhat blissful; moreover he says:

'Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate

Proposed bliss here should sublimate

My being; had I signed the bond...

Still one must lead some life beyond,

Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.

This foot once planted on the goal,

This glory-garland round my soul,

Could I descry such? Try and test!

I sink back shuddering from the quest.

Earth being so good, would Heaven seem best?

Now, Heaven and she are beyond this ride.'

Then over him comes a strange feeling; he does not know, it is all so blissful, so calm: 'She has not spoke so long'; suppose it be that it was Heaven now at this moment!

'What if we still ride on, we two,

With life for ever old yet new,

**Men and
Women**

Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity,
And Heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, for ever ride?’

‘In a Balcony’ is a strange poem, hard to make out at first; and for my part, I am not at all sure that I apprehend it rightly. It seems to me that Constance and Norbert, being cowardly, did at first intend merely to deceive the queen, then, that Constance, moved by the poor woman’s joy at her supposed lover, and by her unexpected declaration of affection for herself, really intended to sacrifice her love to the queen; but that Norbert’s sick fear, his wild passionate terror, overcomes her, and their love is declared, with who knows what fate in store for them; but it is all intricate and difficult, like human action.

‘Women and Roses’ I must mention, seeing that some reviewer thinks it impossible to solve the riddle of it. I will try, not thinking it so very difficult either. Some man thinking, dreaming of women, they fall into three bands: those that have been, those that are, those that will be; but with none of these bands can he feel entire sympathy. He cannot enter into the heart of them; their very vividness of face and form draws his heart away from their souls, and so they seem to him cold and unloving.

It certainly does not sound very well as I have

put it; in fact it does not often help poems much to solve them, because there are in poems so many exquisitely small and delicate turns of thought running through their music and along with it, that cannot be done into prose, any more than the infinite variety of form and shadow and colour in a great picture can be rendered by a coloured woodcut; which (in the case of the poem) is caused, I suppose, by its being concentrated thought. I quote some of this poem ('Women and Roses'):

'I dream of a red-rose tree.

And which of its roses three

Is the dearest rose to me?

Round and round, like a dance of snow

In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go

Floating the women faded for ages,

Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages.

Then follow the women fresh and gay,

Living and loving and loved to-day.

Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of maidens,

Beauties unborn. And all, to one cadence,

They circle their rose on my rose-tree.'

Very worthily are the love-poems crowned by the final dedication to E. B. B. I quote the last four lines:

'Oh their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,

Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,

Wrote one song... and in my brain I sing it;

Drew one angel... borne, see, on my bosom!'

Men and
Women

Pardon me, reader, that I have said little about many of the best poems; that I have said nothing at all about several; nothing about the ecstasy of prayer and love in 'Saul;' nothing about the sacrifice of life, and its enjoyments, to knowledge in the 'Grammarian's Funeral;' nothing about the passionate 'Lover's Quarrel,' about 'Mesmerism,' 'Any Wife to Any Husband,' and many others. My consolation is, that we shall have a good deal more to say of Robert Browning in this Magazine and then we can make amends.

Yet a few words, and I have done. For, as I wrote this, many times angry indignant words came to my lips, which stopped my writing till I could be quieter. For I suppose, reader, that you see whereabouts among the poets I place Robert Browning; high among the poets of all time, and I scarce know whether first, or second, in our own: and, it is a bitter thing to me to see the way in which he has been received by almost everybody; many having formed a certain theory of their own about him, from reading, I suppose, some of the least finished poems among the 'Dramatic Lyrics,' make all facts bend to this theory, after the fashion of theory-mongers: they think him, or say they think him, a careless man, writing down anyhow anything that comes into his head. Oh truly! 'The Statue and the Bust' shows this! or the soft solemn flow of that poem, 'By the Fireside!' 'Paracelsus!': that, with its wonderful rhythm, its tender sad-

ness, its noble thoughts, must have been very easy to write, surely!

Then they say, too, that Browning is so obscure as not to be understood by any one. Now, I know well enough what they mean by obscure, and I know also that they use the word wrongly; meaning difficult to understand fully at first reading, or, say at second reading, even: yet, taken so, in what a cloud of obscurity would 'Hamlet' be! Do they think this to be the case? they daren't say so at all events, though I suspect some of them of thinking so. Now, I don't say that Robert Browning is not sometimes really obscure. He would be a perfect poet (of some calibre or other) if he were not; but I assert, fearlessly, that this obscurity is seldom so prominent as to make his poems hard to understand on this ground: while, as to that which they call obscurity, it results from depth of thought and greatness of subject on the poet's part, and on his readers' part, from their shallower brains and more bounded knowledge; nay, often I fear from mere wanton ignorance and idleness. So I believe that though this obscurity, so called, would indeed be very objectionable if, as some seem to think, poetry is merely a department of 'light literature;' yet, if it is rather one of the very grandest of all God's gifts to men, we must not think it hard if we have sometimes to exercise thought over a great poem, nay, even sometimes the utmost straining of all our thoughts, an

Men and Women agony almost equal to that of the poet who created the poem.

However, this accusation against Browning of carelessness, & consequent roughness in rhythm, and obscurity in language and thought, has come to be pretty generally believed; and people, as a rule, do not read him; this evil spreading so, that many, almost unconsciously, are kept from reading him, who, if they did read, would sympathise with him thoroughly. But it was always so; it was so with Tennyson when he first published his poems; it was so last year with 'Maud'; it is so with Ruskin; they petted him indeed at first, his wonderful eloquence having some effect even upon the critics; but as his circle grew larger and larger, embracing more and more truth, they more and more fell off from him; his firm faith in right they call arrogance and conceit now; his eager fighting with falsehood and wrong they call unfairness. I wonder what they will say to his new volume.

The story of the Pre-Raphaelites, we all know that; only here, thank Heaven! the public has chosen to judge for itself somewhat, though to this day their noblest pictures are the least popular.

Yes, I wonder what the critics would have said to 'Hamlet Prince of Denmark,' if it had been first published by Messrs. Chapman and Hall in the year 1855!

THE CHURCHES OF NORTH FRANCE. SHADOWS OF AMIENS.

NOT long ago I saw for the first time some of the churches of North France; still more recently I saw them for the second time; and remembering the love I have for them and the longing that was in me to see them during the time that came between the first and second visit, I thought I should like to tell people of some of those things I felt when I was there, there among those mighty tombs of the long-dead ages. And I thought that even if I could say nothing else about these grand churches I could at least tell men how much I loved them; so that though they might laugh at me for my foolish and confused words, they might yet be moved to see what there was that made me speak my love, though I could give no reason for it.

For I will say here that I think those same churches of North France the grandest, the most beautiful, the kindest and most loving of all the buildings that the earth has ever borne; and thinking of their passed-away builders I can see through them very faintly, dimly, some little of the mediaeval times, else dead and gone from me for ever; voiceless for ever. And those same builders, still surely living, still real men and capable of receiving love, I love no less than the great men, poets & painters and such like, who are on earth now; no less than my breathing friends whom I can see looking

The
Churches
of North
France

kindly on me now. Ah, do I not love them with just cause who certainly loved me, thinking of me sometimes between the strokes of their chisels? And for this love of all men that they had, and moreover for the great love of God which they certainly had too; for this, and for this work of theirs, the upraising of the great cathedral front, with its beating heart of the thoughts of men wrought into the leaves and flowers of the fair earth, wrought into the faces of good men and true, fighters against the wrong, of angels who upheld them, of God who rules all things; wrought through the lapse of years and years and years by the dint of chisel and stroke of hammer into stories of life and death, the second life, the second death, stories of God's dealing in love and wrath with the nations of the earth, stories of the faith and love of man that dies not: for their love, and the deeds through which it worked, I think they will not lose their reward.

So I will say what I can of their works; and I have to speak of Amiens first, and how it seemed to me in the hot August weather. I know how wonderful it would look, if you were to mount one of the steeples of the town, or were even to mount up to the roof of one of the houses westward of the cathedral. For it rises up from the ground, grey from the paving of the street, the cavernous porches of the west front opening wide, and marvellous with the shadows of the carving you can

only guess at: and above stand the kings, and above that you would see the twined mystery of the great flamboyant rose window with its thousand openings, & the shadows of the flower-work carved round it; then the grey towers and gable, grey against the blue of the August sky; and behind them all, rising high into the quivering air, the tall spire over the crossing. But from the hot Place Royale here with its stunted pollard acacias, and statue of some one, I know not whom, but some citizen of Amiens I suppose, you can see nothing but the graceful spire. It is of wood covered over with lead, and was built quite at the end of the flamboyant times. Once it was gilt all over, and used to shine out there, getting duller and duller as the bad years grew worse and worse; but the gold is all gone now: when it finally disappeared I know not, but perhaps it was in 1771, when the chapter got them the inside of their cathedral whitewashed from vaulting to pavement. The spire has two octagonal stages above the roof, formed of trefoiled arches and slim buttresses capped by leaden figures: from these stages the sloping spire springs, with crocketed ribs at the angles, the lead being arranged in a quaint herring-bone pattern. At the base of the spire too is a crown of open-work and figures, making a third stage: finally, near the top of the spire the crockets swell till you come to the rose that holds the great spire-cross of metal-work; such metal-work as the

The
Churches
of North
France

French alone knew how to make. It is all beautiful, though so late.

From one of the streets leading out of the Place Royale you can see the cathedral; and as you come nearer you see that it is clear enough of houses or such like things. The great apse rises over you with its belt of eastern chapels; first the long slim windows of these chapels, which are each of them little apses, the Lady Chapel projecting a good way beyond the rest; and then, running under the cornice of the chapels and outer aisles all round the church, a cornice of great noble leaves; then the parapets in changing flamboyant patterns; then the conical roofs of the chapels hiding the exterior tracery of the triforium; then the great clerestory windows, very long, of four lights, and stilted, the tracery beginning a long way below the springing of their arches. And the buttresses are so thick, and their arms spread so here, that each of the clerestory windows looks down its own space between them as if between walls. Above the windows rise their canopies running through the parapet; & above all the great mountainous roof: and all below it and around the windows and walls of the choir and apse stands the mighty army of the buttresses, holding up the weight of the stone roof within with their strong arms for ever.

We go round under their shadows past the sacristies, past the southern transept, only glancing just

now at the sculpture there, past the chapels of the nave, and enter the church by the small door hard by the west front, with that figure of huge Saint Christopher quite close over our heads; thereby we enter the church, as I said, and are in its western bay. I think I felt inclined to shout when I first entered Amiens Cathedral. It is so free and vast and noble that I did not feel in the least awestruck or humbled by its size and grandeur; I have not often felt thus when looking on architecture, but have felt, at all events at first, intense exultation at the beauty of it. That, and a certain kind of satisfaction in looking on the geometrical tracery of the windows, on the sweep of the huge arches, were I think my first feelings in Amiens Cathedral.

We go down the nave, glancing the while at the traceried windows of the chapels, which are later than the windows above them. We come to the transepts, and from either side the stained glass in their huge windows burns out on us; and then first we begin to appreciate somewhat the scale of the church by looking up along the ropes hanging from the vaulting to the pavement for the tolling of the bells in the spire. There is a hideous renaissance screen of solid stone or marble between choir and nave, with more hideous iron gates to it, through which however we, walking up the choir steps, can look and see the gorgeous carving of the canopied stalls; and then, alas, the

**The
Churches
of North
France**

concretion of flattened sacks rising forty feet above the altar : but above that the belt of the apse windows, rich with sweet mellowed stained glass, under the dome-like roof. The stalls in the choir are very rich, as people know ; carved in wood in the early sixteenth century, with high twisted canopies, and histories, from the Old Testament mostly, wrought about them. The history of Joseph I remember best among these. Some of the scenes in it I thought very delightful, the story told in such a gloriously quaint straightforward manner. Pharaoh's dream, how splendid that was ! the king lying asleep on his elbow, and the kine coming up to him in two companies. I think the lean kine was about the best bit of wood-carving I have seen yet. There they were, a writhing heap, crushing and crowding one another ; drooping heads and starting eyes, and strange angular bodies ; altogether the most wonderful symbol of famine ever conceived. I never fairly understood Pharaoh's dream till I saw the stalls at Amiens. There is nothing else to see in the choir, all the rest of the fittings being as bad as possible. So we will go out again and walk round the choir aisles. The screen round the choir is solid, the upper part of it carved in the flamboyant times with the history of S. John the Baptist on the north side, with that of S. Firmin on the south. I remember very little of the sculptures relative to S. John, but I know that I did not like them much. Those about

S. Firmin, who evangelised Picardy, I remember much better, & some of them especially I thought very beautiful: they are painted too, and at any rate one cannot help looking at them. I do not remember in the least the order in which they come, but some of them are fixed well enough in my memory, and principally a bishop, S. Firmin, preaching, rising out of a pulpit from the midst of the crowd in his jewelled cope and mitre, and with a beautiful sweet face. Then another, the baptising of the king & his lords, was very quaint and lifelike. I remember too something about the finding of S. Firmin's relics and the translation of the same relics when found; the many bishops with their earnest faces in the first, and the priests bearing the reliquaries in the second, with their long vestments girded at the waist & falling over their feet, painted too in light colours with golden flowers on them. I wish I remembered these carvings better, I liked them so much.

Just about this place, in the lower part of the screen, I remember the tomb of a priest, very gorgeous with gold and colours. He lay in a deep niche under a broad segmental arch which is painted with angels; and outside this niche angels were drawing back painted curtains, I am sorry to say. But the priest lay there in cope and alb, and the gentle colour lay over him as his calm face gazed ever at the angels painted in his resting-place. I have dim recollection of seeing when I was at

The
Churches
of North
France

Amiens before, not this last time, a tomb which I liked much; a bishop I think it was, lying under a small round arch; but I forget the figure now. This was in a chapel on the other side of the choir. It is very hard to describe the interior of a great church like this, especially since the whitewash (applied, as I said, on this scale in 1771) lies on everything so. Before that time, some book says, the church was painted from end to end with patterns of flowers & stars, and histories. Think! I might have been able to say something about it then, with that solemn glow of colour all about me as I walked there from sunrise to sunset; and yet perhaps it would have filled my heart too full for speaking, all that beauty; I know not.

Up into the triforium and other galleries, sometimes in the church, sometimes in narrow passages of close-fitting stone, sometimes out in the open air: up into the forest of beams between the slates and the real stone roof. One can look down through a hole in the vaulting and see the people walking and praying on the pavement below, looking very small from that height and strangely foreshortened. A strange sense of oppression came over me at that time, when as we were in one of the galleries of the west front we looked into the church and found the vaulting but a foot or two (or it seemed so) above our heads. Also while I was in the galleries, now out of the church, now in it, the canons had begun to sing compline;

and the sound of their singing floated dimly up the winding staircases and half-shut doors. The sun was setting when we were in the roof; and a beam of it, striking through the small window up in the gable fell in blood-red spots on the beams of the great dim roof. We came out from the roof onto the parapet in the blaze of the sun, and then going to the crossing mounted as high as we could into the spire, & stood there awhile looking down on the beautiful country with its many water-meadows and feathering trees.

And here let me say something about the way in which I have taken this description upon me; for I did not write it at Amiens: moreover if I had described it from my bare reminiscences of the church, I should have been able to say little enough about the most interesting part of all, the sculptures, namely. So, though remembering well enough the general effect of the whole, and very distinctly statues and faces, nay, leaves and flower-knots here and there, yet the external sculpture I am describing as well as I can from such photographs as I have; and these, as everybody knows, though very distinct and faithful when they show anything at all, yet in some places where the shadows are deep show simply nothing. They tell me too nothing about the colour of the building, in fact their brown and yellow is as unlike as possible to the grey of Amiens. So for the facts of form I have to look at my photographs, for facts

The
Churches
of North
France

of colour I have to try and remember the day or two I spent at Amiens; and the reference to the former has considerably dulled my memory of the latter. I have something else to say too; it will seem considerably ridiculous no doubt to people who are well acquainted with the iconography of the French churches when I talk about the stories of some of the carvings, both from my want of knowledge as to their meaning, and also from my telling people things which everybody may be supposed to know. For which I pray forgiveness, and so go on to speak of the carvings about the south transept door.

It is divided in the midst by a pillar whereon stands the Virgin holding Our Lord. She is crowned, and has a smile upon her face now for ever; and in the canopy above her head are three angels bearing up the aureole there; and about these angels, and the aureole and head of the Virgin there is still some gold and vermillion left. The Holy Child, held in his mother's left arm, is draped from his throat to his feet, and between his hands he holds the orb of the world. About on a level with the Virgin, along the sides of the doorway, are four figures on each side, the innermost one on either side being an angel holding a censer; the others are ecclesiastics and (some book says) benefactors to the church. They have solemn faces, stern, with firm close-set lips, and eyes deep-set under their brows, almost frowning, and all but one or two

are beardless, though evidently not young. The square door-valves are carved with deep-twined leaf-mouldings, and the capitals of the door-shafts are carved with varying knots of leaves and flowers. Above the Virgin, up in the tympanum of the doorway, are carved the Twelve Apostles, divided into two bands of six by the canopy over the Virgin's head. They are standing in groups of two, but I do not know for certain which they are, except I think two, S. James and S. John; the two first in the eastern division. James has the pilgrim's hat and staff, and John is the only beardless one among them. His face is rather sad and exceedingly lovely, as indeed are all those faces, being somewhat alike, and all in some degree like the type of face received as the likeness of Christ himself. They have all long hair falling in rippled bands on each side of their faces on to their shoulders. Their drapery too is lovely; they are very beautiful and solemn.

Above their heads runs a cornice of trefoiled arches, one arch over the head of each apostle: from out of the deep shade of the trefoils flashes a grand leaf cornice, one leaf again to each apostle; and so we come to the next compartment, which contains three scenes from the life of S. Honoré, an early French bishop. The first scene is I think the election of a bishop; the monks and priests talking the matter over in chapter first, then going to tell the bishop-elect. Gloriously draped figures the

The
Churches
of North
France

monks are, with genial faces, full of good wisdom, drawn into quaint expressions by the joy of argument. This one is old and has seen much of the world: he is trying I think to get his objections answered by the young man there who is talking to him so earnestly: he is listening with a half-smile on his face, as if he had made up his mind after all. These other two, one very energetic indeed, with his head and shoulders swung back a little and his right arm forward; and the other listening to him, and but half-convinced yet. Then the two next, turning to go with him who is bearing to the new-chosen bishop the book of the Gospels and pastoral staff; they look satisfied and happy. Then comes he with the pastoral staff and Gospels; then finally the man who is announcing the news to the bishop himself; the most beautiful figure in the whole scene, perhaps in the whole doorway. He is stooping down lovingly to the man they have chosen, with his left hand laid on his arm; and his long robe falls to his feet from his shoulder all along his left side, moulded a little to the shape of his body, but falling heavily & with scarce a fold in it to the ground. The chosen one, sitting there with his book held between his two hands, looks up to him with his brave face; and he will be bishop, and rule well I think. So in the next scene he is bishop, I suppose, and is sitting there, ordering the building of a church; for he is sitting under a trefoiled canopy,

with his mitre on his head, his right hand on a reading-desk by his side. His book is lying open, his head turned toward what is going forwards. It is a splendid head and face. In the photograph I have of this subject the mitre, short and simple, is in full light but for a little touch of shade on one side; the face is shaded, but the crown of short crisp curls hanging over it is about half in light & half in shade. Beyond the trefoil canopy comes a wood of quaint conventional trees, full of stone, with a man working at it with a long pick; I cannot see his face, as it is altogether in shade; the light falls on his head however. He is dressed in a long robe, quite down to his feet, not a very convenient dress, one would think, for working in. I like the trees here very much; they are meant for hawthorns and oaks. There are a very few leaves on each tree, but at the top they are all twisted about, and are thicker, as if the wind were blowing them. The little capitals of the canopy under which the bishop is sitting are very delightful, and are common enough in larger work of this time (thirteenth century) in France. Four bunches of leaves spring from long stiff stalks and support the square abacus, one under each corner.

The next scene, in the division above, is some miracle or other which took place at mass, it seems. The bishop is saying mass before an altar; behind him are four assistants; and as the bishop stands there with his hand raised a hand coming from

The
Churches
of North
France

somewhere by the altar holds down to him the consecrated wafer. The thing is gloriously carved, whatever it is. The assistant immediately behind the bishop, holding in his hands a candlestick somewhat slantwise towards the altar is, especially in the drapery, one of the most beautiful in the upper part of this tympanum. His head is a little bent, and the line made from the back of it over the heavy hair down along the heavy-swinging robe is very beautiful.

The next scene is the shrine of some saint, this same bishop, I suppose; dead now after all his building and ruling, and hard fighting, possibly, with the powers that be, often to be fought with righteously in those times. Over the shrine sits the effigy of the bishop, with his hand raised to bless. On the western side are two worshippers; on the eastern a blind and a deaf man are being healed, or waiting to be healed by the touch of the dead bishop's robe. The deaf man is leaning forward, and the servant of the shrine holds to his ear the bishop's robe. The deaf man has a very deaface; not very anxious though, not even showing very much hope, but faithful only. The blind one is coming up behind him with a crutch in his right hand, and led by a dog; either the face was in its first estate very ugly and crabbed, or by the action of the weather or some such thing has been changed so.

So the bishop being dead, and miracles being

wrought at his tomb, in the division above comes the translation of his remains; a long procession taking up the whole of the division, which is shorter than the others, however, being higher up towards the top of the arch. An acolyte bearing a cross heads the procession, then come two choristers; then priests bearing relics and books. Long vestments they have, and stoles crossed underneath their girdles; then comes the reliquary, borne by one at each end, the two finest figures in this division. The first especially; his head is raised and his body leaning forward to the weight of the reliquary, as people nearly always do walk when they carry burdens and are going slowly, which this procession certainly is doing; for some of the figures are even turning round. Three men are kneeling or bending down beneath the shrine as it passes; cripples they are; all three have beautiful faces; the one who is apparently the worst cripple of the three (his legs and feet are horribly twisted) has especially a wonderfully delicate face, timid and shrinking though faithful. Behind the shrine come the people, walking slowly together with reverent faces: a woman with a little child holding her hand are the last figures in this history of Saint Honoré; they both have their faces turned full south. The woman has not a beautiful face, but a happy good-natured genial one.

The cornice below this division is of plain round-

The
Churches
of North
France

headed trefoils, very wide; and the spandril of each arch is pierced with a small round trefoil, very sharply cut, looking in fact as if it were cut with a punch. This cornice, simple though it is, I think very beautiful; and in my photograph the broad trefoils of it throw sharp black shadows on the stone behind the worshipping figures and square-cut altars.

In the triangular space at the top of the arch is a representation of Our Lord on the cross, S. Mary and S. John standing, one on either side of him, and kneeling on one knee under the sloping sides of the arch two angels, one on each side. I very much wish I could say something more about this piece of carving than I can do; because it seems to me that the French thirteenth century sculptors failed less in their representations of the Crucifixion than almost any set of artists, though it was certainly an easier thing to do in stone than on canvas, especially in such a case as this, where the representation is so highly abstract. Nevertheless, I wish I could say something more about it; failing which I will say something about my photograph of it. I cannot see the Virgin's face at all, it is in the shade so much: S. John's I cannot see very well; I do not think it is a remarkable face though there is sweet expression in it. Our Lord's face is very grand and solemn, as fine as I remember seeing it anywhere in sculpture. The shadow of the body hanging on the cross there

falls strangely and weirdly on the stone behind. Both the kneeling angels, who by the way are holding censers, are beautiful. Did I say above that the face of one of the Twelve Apostles was the most beautiful in the tympanum? If I did, I retract that saying, certainly, looking on the westernmost of these two angels. I keep using the word beautiful so often that I feel half inclined to apologise for it; but I cannot help it, though it is often quite inadequate to express the loveliness of some of the figures carved here; and so it happens surely with the face of this angel. The face is not that of a man, I should think; it is rather like a very fair woman's face, but fairer than any woman's face I ever saw or thought of: it is in profile and easy to be seen in the photograph, though somewhat in the shade. I am utterly at a loss how to describe it, or to give any idea of the exquisite lines of the cheek and the rippled hair sweeping back from it, just faintly touched by the light from the south-east. I cannot say more about it.

So I have gone through the carvings in the lower part of this doorway, and those of the tympanum. Now besides these all the arching-over of the door is filled with figures under canopies about which I can say little, partly from want of adequate photographs, partly from ignorance of their import. But the first of the cavettos wherein these figures are is at any rate filled with figures of angels, some swinging censers, some bearing crowns and

**The
Churches
of North
France**

other things which I cannot distinguish. Most of the niches in the next cavetto seem to hold subjects; but the square camera of the photographer clips some, many others are in shadow; in fact the niches throw heavy shadows on the faces of nearly all, and without the photograph I remember nothing but much fretted grey stone above the line of the capitals of the doorway shafts; grey stone with something carved in it, and the swallows flying in and out of it. Yet now there are two or three niches I can say something about at all events.

A stately figure with a king's crown on his head, and hair falling in three waves over his shoulders; a very kingly face looking straight onward; a great jewelled collar falling heavily to his elbows; his right hand holding a heavy sceptre formed of many budding flowers, and his left just touching in front the folds of his raiment, that falls heavily, very heavily to the ground over his feet: Saul king of Israel. A bending figure with covered head pouring with his right hand oil on the head of a youth, plainly not a child, but dwarfed to a young child's stature before the bending of the solemn figure with the covered head: Samuel anointing David. A king again with face hidden in deep shade, holding a naked sword in his right hand and a living infant in the other; and two women before him, one with a mocking smile on her face, the other with her head turned up in passionate

entreaty; grown women they are plainly, but dwarfed to the stature of young girls before the hidden face of the king: the judgment of Solomon. An old man with drawn sword in the right hand, his left hand on a fair youth dwarfed, though no child, to the stature of a child. The old man's head is turned somewhat towards the presence of an angel behind him, who points downward to something unseen: Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. Noah too, working diligently, that the ark may be finished before the flood comes. Adam tilling the ground and clad in the skins of beasts. There is Jacob's stolen blessing, that was yet in some sort to be a blessing though it was stolen. There is old Jacob, whose pilgrimage is just finished now after all his doings and sufferings, all those deceits inflicted upon him, that made him remember perforce the lie he said and acted long ago: old Jacob blessing the sons of Joseph. And many more which I remember not, know not; mingled too with other things which I dimly see have to do with the daily occupations of the men who lived in the dim far-off thirteenth century.

I remember as I came out by the north door of the west front how tremendous the porches seemed to me; which impression of greatness and solemnity the photographs, square cut and brown coloured, do not keep at all. Still however I can recall whenever I please the wonder I felt before that great triple porch: I remember best in this way

The
Churches
of North
France

the porch into which I first entered, namely the northernmost, probably because I saw most of it, coming in and out often by it; yet perhaps the fact that I have seen no photograph of this doorway somewhat assists this impression. Yet I do not remember even of this anything more than the fact that the tympanum represented the life and death of some early French bishop; it seemed very interesting. I remember too that in the door-jambs were standing figures of bishops in two long rows, their mitred heads bowed forward solemnly; and I remember nothing further.

Concerning the southernmost porch of the west front. The doorway of this porch also has on the centre pillar of it a statue of the Virgin standing, holding the Divine Child in her arms. Both the faces of the Virgin Mother and of her Son are very beautiful; I like them much better than those in the south transept, already spoken of; indeed I think them the grandest of all the faces of the Madonna and Child that I have seen carved by the French architects. I have seen many the faces of which I do not like, though the drapery is always beautiful; their faces I do not like at all events as faces of the Virgin and Child, though as faces of other people, even if not beautiful, they would be interesting. The Child is, as in the transept, draped down to the feet; draped too how exquisitely I know not how to say. His right arm and hand is stretched out across his mother's breast,

his left hangs down so that his wrist, as his hand is a little curved upwards, rests upon his knee: his mother holds him slightly with her left arm, while with her right she holds a fold of her robe on which his feet rest. His figure is not by any means that of an infant, for it is slim and slender; too slender for even a young boy, yet too soft, too much rounded for a youth; and the head also is too large. I suppose some people would object to this way of carving one who is supposed to be an infant; yet I have no doubt that the old sculptors were right in doing so, and to my help in this matter comes the remembrance of Ruskin's answer to what Lord Lindsay says concerning the inability of Giotto and his school to paint young children. For he says that it might very well happen that Giotto could paint children, but yet did not choose to in this instance (the Presentation of the Virgin) for the sake of the much greater dignity to be obtained by using the more fully developed figure and face: and surely, whatever could be said about Giotto's paintings, no one who was at all acquainted with Early French sculpture could doubt that the carvers of this figure here

∴ In the explanatory remarks accompanying the engravings from Giotto's frescoes in the Arena Chapel published by the Arundel Society. I regret not being able to give the reference to the passage, not having the work by me.

**The
Churches
of North
France**

could have carved an infant if they had thought fit to do so; men who again and again grasped eagerly common everyday things when in any way they would tell their story.

To return to the statues themselves. The face of the young Christ is of the same character as his figure, such a face as Elizabeth Browning tells of, the face of one who never sinned or smiled: at least if the sculptor fell below his ideal somewhat, yet for all that, through that face which he failed in a little we can see when we look that his ideal was such an one. The Virgin's face is calm and very sweet, full of rest; indeed the two figures are very full of rest; everything about them expresses it, from the broad forehead of the Virgin to the resting of the feet of the Child (who is almost self-balanced) in the fold of the robe that she holds gently, to the falling of the quiet lines of her robe over her feet, to the resting of its folds between them.

The square heads of the door-valves, and a flat moulding above them, which runs up also into the first division of the tympanum, are covered with faintly cut diaper-work of four-leaved flowers. Along the jambs of the doorway on the north side stand six kings, all bearded men but one, who is young apparently. I do not know who these are, but think they must be French kings; one, the farthest toward the outside of the porch, has taken his crown off, and holds it in his hand.

The figures on the other side of the door-jambs are invisible in the photograph, except one, the nearest to the front, young, sad, and earnest to look at; I know not who he is. Five figures outside the porch and on the angles of the door-jambs are I suppose prophets; perhaps those who have prophesied of the birth of Our Lord, as this door is apportioned to the Virgin.

The first division of the tympanum has six sitting figures in it: on each side of the canopy over the Virgin's head Moses and Aaron; Moses with the tables of the law, and Aaron with great blossomed staff. With them again, two on either side, sit the four greater prophets, their heads veiled, and a small scroll lying along between them over their knees; old they look, very old; old and passionate and fierce, sitting there for so long. The next division has in it the death and burial of the Virgin; the twelve apostles clustering round the deathbed of the Virgin. I wish my photograph were on a larger scale, for this indeed seems to me one of the most beautiful pieces of carving about this church; those earnest faces expressing so many things mingled with their regret that she will be no longer with them, and she, the Virgin-mother in whom all those prophecies were fulfilled, lying so quiet there with her hands crossed downwards, dead at last. Ah, and where will she go now? Whose face will she see always? O that we might be there too! O those faces so full of all

The
Churches
of North
France

tender regret, which even they must feel for her; full of all yearning and longing that they too might finish the long fight, that they might be with the happy dead! There is a wonder on their faces too, when they see what the mighty power of death is. The foremost is bending down with his left hand laid upon her breast, and he is gazing so long, so very long; one looking there too over his shoulder rests his hand on him; there is one at the head, one at the foot of the bed, and he at the head is turning round his head that he may see her face, while he holds in his hands the long vestment on which her head rests. In my photograph the shadow is so thick that I cannot see much of the burial of the Virgin; can see scarce anything of the faces, only just the forms of the Virgin lying quiet and still there, of the bending angels and their great wings that shadow everything there. So also of the third and last division, filling the top of the arch; I only know that it represents the Virgin sitting glorified with Christ, crowned by angels, and with angels all about her.

The first row in the vaulting of the porch has angels in it holding censers and candlesticks; the next has in it the kings who sprang from Jesse, with a flowing bough twisted all among them; the third and last is hidden by a projecting moulding. All the three porches of the west front have a fringe of cusps ending in flowers hanging to their outermost arch; and above this a band of

flower-work consisting of a rose and three rose-leaves alternating with each other.

Concerning the central porch of the west front.

The pillar which divides the valves of the central porch carries a statue of Our Lord, his right hand raised to bless, his left hand holding the book.

Along the jambs of the porch are the apostles, but not the apostles alone, I should think; those that are in the side that I can see have their distinctive emblems with them, some of them at least. Their faces vary very much here, as also their figures and dress; the one I like best among them is one who I think is meant for S. James the Less, with a long club in his hands: but they are all grand faces, stern and indignant, for they have come to judgment. For there above in the tympanum, in the midst, over the head of Christ, stand three angels; and the midmost of them bears scales in his hands, wherein are the souls being weighed against the accusations of the Accuser: and on either side of him stands another angel blowing a long trumpet held downwards, and their long, long raiment, tight across the breast, falls down over their feet, heavy, vast, ungirt. And at the corners of this same division stand two other angels, and they also are blowing long trumpets held downwards, so that their blast goes round the world and through it; and the dead are rising between the robes of the angels with their hands, many of them, lifted to heaven. And above

The
Churches
of North
France

The
Churches
of North
France

them and below them are deep bands of wrought flowers, and in the vaulting of the porch are eight bands of niches, with many, many figures carved therein. In the first row, in the lowest niche Abraham stands, with the saved souls in the folds of his raiment; in the next row and in the rest of the niches are angels with their hands folded in prayer, and in the next row angels again, bearing the souls over of which they had charge in life; and this is I think the most gloriously carved of all those in the vaulting. Then martyrs come, bearing their palm-boughs; then priests with the chalice, each of them; and others there are which I know not of. But above the resurrection from the dead in the tympanum is the reward of the good and the punishment of the bad. Peter is standing there at the gate, and the long line of the blessed entering one by one, each one crowned as he enters by an angel waiting there; and above their heads a cornice takes the shape of many angels stooping down to crown them. But on the inferno side the devil drives before him the wicked all naked, presses them on toward hell-mouth that gapes for them, and above their heads the devil-cornice hangs and weighs on them. And above these the Judge, showing the wounds that were made for the salvation of the world, and S. Mary and S. John kneeling on either side of him, they who stood so once at the Crucifixion; two angels carrying cross and spear and nails, two

others kneeling, and above, other angels with their wings spread, and singing. Something like this is carved in the central porch at Amiens. Once more forgive me I pray for the poor way in which I have done even that which I have attempted to do, and forgive me also for that which I have left undone. And now farewell to the church that I love; to the carved temple-mountain that rises so high above the water-meadows of the Somme, above the grey roofs of the good town. Farewell to the sweep of the arches up from the bronze bishops lying at the west end, up to the belt of solemn windows, where through the painted glass the light comes solemnly. Farewell to the cavernous porches of the west front, so grey under the fading August sun; grey with the wind-storms, grey with the rain-storms, grey with the beat of many days' sun from sunrise to sunset; showing white sometimes too, when the sun strikes it strongly, snowy-white sometimes when the moon is on it and the shadows growing blacker; but grey now, fretted into deeper grey, fretted into black by the mitres of the bishops, by the solemn covered heads of the prophets, by the company of the risen and the long robes of the judgment-angels; by hell-mouth and its flames gaping there, and the devils that feed it; by the saved souls and the crowning angels; by the presence of the Judge, and the roses growing above them all for ever. Farewell to the spire, gilt all over with

**The
Churches
of North
France**

gold once, and shining out there very gloriously; dull and grey now, alas! But still it catches through its interlacement of arches the intensest blue of the blue summer sky; and sometimes at night you may see the stars shining through it. It is fair still though the gold is gone, the spire that seems to rock when across it in the wild February nights the clouds go westward.

DEATH THE AVENGER & DEATH THE FRIEND.

THE names of two wonderful wood engravings by Alfred Rethel, a German, and one to be remembered in the aftertime. Now Death the Avenger commemorates the first appearance of the cholera in 1831, which happened in Paris at a masked ball. It is there in that room, the Cholera, and Death: a strangely chosen room, one thinks, in its architecture, for a ball-room; liker to a tomb than that. It might have served well in those old times for the followers of John and Paul to meet in, to feel new life come upon them, new thoughts, new love, new longings, new hope. Thick walls and heavy roof and deep splayed windows it has, but withal gorgeous patterned hangings from gallery and pillar and dais; gorgeous but ugly; the patterns crawl like evil poisonous spiders, like the blotches of damp on foul walls. And in this ball-room only one dances now, Death, arrayed in hood and the long robes of a pilgrim, girt about the middle with a rope; one leg showing from the long drapery is thrown forward in mockery of dancing; and the dancers... there are two of them lying there, a man and a woman, both dead and stiff. The man's mask has fallen down, covers all his face except the eyes and forehead; & very strangely contrasted are the calm, self-satisfied, inane features of the mask with the wrinkled forehead and brows contracted in pain of the face that was

Death the
Avenger
and Death
the Friend

alive once. The woman's mask, fastened to her hat, has fallen back, and her open mouth shows free from it; her arms are hidden by her dress; a long flower-garland trails round about her. And the rest of the maskers are rushing in mad race out of the room, the last wearing a fantastic dress with a fool's hump on the back of it, his arms muffled in his mumming-dress. Others are there who rush out also, the musicians, huddled all together, their instruments blocking up the way; no man looking at his neighbour to see how he fares, or caring for him. For the grinning skeleton, Death, standing there with his head thrown on one side, has two bones in his hands which he uses as fiddle and fiddle-bow, playing so wonderfully that as you look at the drawing you almost seem to hear the wild terrible skirling of some mad reel. Most terrible figure of all, in the background sits the Cholera, waiting; in her right hand a triple scourge armed at the end with goads (such a firm grip of that scourge!), and her left hand clasps her right arm just below the wrist; fearful strong arms and hands. She is wrapped in long raiment that trails on the ground, and has flames all about it; her face is black, her mouth stern, indignant, with lips drawn up tight together; fixed eyes glaring straight forward and lidless, no drooping eyelids to her; beneath any rebuke, any defiance. Is it not strange that with all this the face is not a cruel one? such a sense the thing seems to have that it

too is God's creature, called up in his quarrel: strange that there should be even pity in it. This is Death the Avenger.

Death the
Avenger
and Death
the Friend

Then Death the Friend. In an old tower, just below the belfry in the place where they ring the bells, there is Death again in his pilgrim's dress tolling for one who is just dead, the sacristan of that church. This Death is draped tenderly down to the feet; there is no maddening horror about him, awe only. He is not grinning as in the other picture, but gazes downward thoughtfully, almost sadly, thinking of the old man's life that has been. And he, with his hands laid together and his eyes closed, is leaning back in his chair; many a time these latter years has he leant back so, then needs must that he rise stiffly and wearily to go about his duties. But now he need never rise again; his lips, parted a little now, need never again be drawn together close at sight of weary injustice and wrong; he will soon understand why all these things were. The dragons on the spire-eaves lean forward open-mouthed, disappointed because he has got quit of all that now; near the head of him, against the wall is a figure of Christ on the cross; a Bible is open by the side of him; near the stairs is a horn hanging, a huntsman's horn, & through the window, on the sill of which a bird is singing, you can see the fair sunset-country stretching away for leagues and leagues, for we are high up here, just under the spire. They say he was a

**Death the
Avenger
and Death
the Friend**

hunter in the old time, this man; that he heard the north wind sing about his ears as he dashed over the open spaces; that the young beech-leaves in the early summer quivered at the blasts of his horn; that many a time he rode into that village you can see down there, wherein he was born, where his father & his father's father lived, weary with riding; that someone used to look out for him when he rode in in the evenings. But that too is all gone by; only in memories perhaps... Yet he had other hopes then perhaps than this, a mere old sacristan dying lonely in the old belfry. What matter? For the setting sun is bright over all that country, and the bird sings still in the window-sill, not afraid of Death. This is Death the Friend.

WINTER WEATHER.

WE rode together
In the winter weather
To the broad mead under the hill;
Though the skies did shiver
With the cold, the river
Ran, and was never still.

No cloud did darken
The night; we did hearken
The hound's bark far away.
It was solemn midnight
In that dread dread night
In the years that have passed for aye.

Two rode beside me,
My banner did hide me
As it drooped adown from my lance;
With its deep blue trapping
The mail overlapping,
My gallant horse did prance.

So ever together
In the sparkling weather
Moved my banner and lance;
And its laurel trapping
The steel overlapping,
The stars saw quiver and dance.

We met together
In the winter weather

Winter By the town walls under the hill;
Weather His mail-rings came clinking,
They broke on my thinking,
For the night was hushed and still.

Two rode beside him,
His banner did hide him
As it drooped down straight from his lance;
With its blood-red trapping
The mail overlapping,
His mighty horse did prance.

And ever together
In the solemn weather
Moved his banner and lance;
And the holly trapping
The steel overlapping,
Did shimmer and shiver and dance.

Back reined the squires
Till they saw the spires
Over the city wall;
Ten fathoms between us,
No dames could have seen us
Tilt from the city wall.

There we sat upright
Till the full midnight
Should be told from the city chimes;
Sharp from the towers
Leapt forth the showers
Of the many clanging rhymes.

'Twas the midnight hour,
Deep from the tower
Boomed the following bell;
Down go our lances!
Shout for the lances!
The last toll was his knell.

There he lay dying;
He had for his lying
A spear in his traitorous mouth;
A false tale made he
Of my true true lady,
But the spear went through his mouth.

In the winter weather
We rode back together
From the broad mead under the hill;
And the cock sang his warning
As it grew toward morning,
But the far-off hound was still.

Black grew his tower
As we rode down lower,
Black from the barren hill;
And our horses strode
Up the winding road
To the gateway dim and still.

At the gate of his tower
In the quiet hour
We laid his body there;
But his helmet broken

**Winter
Weather** We took as a token;
Shout for my lady fair!

We rode back together
In the winter weather
From the broad mead under the hill;
No cloud did darken
The night; we did hearken
How the hound bayed from the hill.

RIDING TOGETHER.

FOR many, many days together
The wind blew steady from the east;
For many days hot grew the weather,
About the time of Our Lady's feast.

For many days we rode together,
Yet met we neither friend nor foe;
Hotter and clearer grew the weather,
Steadily did the east wind blow.

We saw the trees in the hot bright weather
Clear-cut, with shadows very black,
As freely we rode on together
With helms unlaced and bridles slack.

And often as we rode together
We, looking down the green-banked stream,
Saw flowers in the sunny weather,
And saw the bubble-making bream;

And in the night lay down together,
And hung above our heads the rood,
Or watched night-long in the dewy weather
The while the moon did watch the wood.

Our spears stood bright and thick together,
Straight out the banners streamed behind,
As we galloped on in the sunny weather
With faces turned towards the wind.

Down sank our threescore spears together
As thick we saw the pagans ride;

Riding His eager face in the clear fresh weather
Together Shone out that last time by my side.

Up the sweep of the bridge we dashed together,
It rocked to the crash of the meeting spears;
Down rained the buds of the dear spring weather,
The elm-tree flowers fell like tears.

There, as we rolled and writhed together,
I threw my arms above my head;
For close by my side, in the lovely weather,
I saw him reel and fall back dead.

I and the slayer met together,
He waited the death-stroke there in his place;
With thoughts of death, in the lovely weather,
Gapingly mazed at my maddened face.

Madly I fought as we fought together;
In vain; the little Christian band
The pagans drowned, as in stormy weather
The river drowns low-lying land.

They bound my blood-stained hands together,
They bound his corpse to nod by my side;
Then on we rode in the bright March weather,
With clash of cymbals did we ride.

We ride no more, no more together;
My prison-bars are thick and strong;
I take no heed of any weather,
The sweet Saints grant I live not long.

HANDS.

'TWIXT the sunlight and the shade
Float up memories of my maid:
God, remember Guendolen!

Gold or gems she did not wear,
But her yellow rippled hair
Like a veil hid Guendolen.

My rough hands so strangely made
'Twixt the sunlight and the shade
Folded golden Guendolen.

Hands used to grip the sword-hilt hard
Framed her face, while on the sward
Tears fell down from Guendolen.

Guendolen now speaks no word;
Hands fold round about the sword:
Now no more of Guendolen;

Only 'twixt the light and shade
Floating memories of my maid
Make me pray for Guendolen.

THE CHAPEL IN LYONNESS.

Sir Ozana Le Cure Hardy. Sir Galahad. Sir
Bors De Ganys.

Sir Ozana.

ALL day long and every day
From Christmas Eve to Whitsunday
Within that chapel aisle I lay
And no man came anear.

Naked to the waist was I,
And deep within my breast did lie,
Though no man any blood could spy,
The truncheon of a spear.

No meat did ever pass my lips
Those days. Alas! the sunlight slips
From off the gilded parclose, dips,
And night comes on apace.

My arms lay back behind my head;
Over my raised-up knees was spread
A samite cloth of white and red;
A rose lay on my face.

Many a time I tried to shout,
But as in dream of battle-rout
My frozen speech would not well out;
I could not even weep.

With inward sigh I see the sun
Fade off the pillars one by one;
My heart faints when the day is done
Because I cannot sleep.

Sometimes strange thoughts pass through my
head;

Not like a tomb is this my bed,
Yet oft I think that I am dead,
That round my tomb is writ:

'Ozana of the hardy heart,
Knight of the Table Round;
Pray for his soul, lords, of your part;
A true knight he was found.'

Ah me! I cannot fathom it.

He sleeps.

Sir Galahad.

All day long and every day
Till his madness passed away,
I watched Ozana as he lay
Within the gilded screen.

All my singing moved him not;
As I sang my heart grew hot
With the thought of Lancelot
Far away, I ween.

So I went a little space
From out the chapel, bathed my face
In the stream that runs apace
By the churchyard wall.

There I plucked a faint wild rose
Hard by where the linden grows,
Sighing over silver rows
Of the lilies tall.

**The Chapel
in Lyonesse**

I laid the flower across his mouth;
The sparkling drops seemed good for drouth;
He smiled, turned round toward the south,
Held up a golden tress.

The light smote on it from the west;
He drew the covering from his breast,
Against his heart that hair he prest;
Death him soon will bless.

Sir Bors.

I entered by the western door,
I saw a knight's helm lying there;
I raised my eyes from off the floor,
And caught the gleaming of his hair.

I stept full softly up to him,
I laid my chin upon his head;
I felt him smile, my eyes did swim
I was so glad he was not dead.

I heard Ozana murmur low:
'There comes no sleep nor any love.'
But Galahad stooped and kissed his brow:
He shivered; I saw his pale lips move.

Sir Ozana.

There comes no sleep nor any love.
Ah me, I shiver with delight!
I am so weak I cannot move;
God move me to thee, dear, to-night!
Christ help! I have but little wit,
My life went wrong; I see it writ:

The Chapel
in Lyonesse

'Ozana of the hardy heart,
Knight of the Table Round;
Pray for his soul, lords, on your part;
A good knight he was found.'
Now I begin to fathom it.

He dies.

Sir Bors.

Galahad sits dreamily:
What strange things may his eyes see,
Great blue eyes fixed full on me?
On his soul, Lord, have mercy!

Sir Galahad.

Ozana, shall I pray for thee?
Her cheek is laid to thine;
Her hair against the jasper sea
Wondrously doth shine.

PRAY BUT ONE PRAYER FOR US.

PRAY but one prayer for me 'twixt thy closed lips,
Think but one thought of me up in the stars!
The summer night waneth, the morning light slips
Faint and grey 'twixt the leaves of the aspens, be-
twixt the cloud bars
That are patiently waiting there for the dawn;
Patient and colourless, though Heaven's gold
Waits to float through them along with the sun.
Far out in the meadows, above the young corn
The heavy elms wait; and restless and cold
The uneasy wind rises; the roses are dun;
Through the long twilight they pray for the dawn
Round the lone house in the midst of the corn.
Speak but one word to me over the corn,
Over the tender bowed locks of the corn!

These first writings of William Morris were printed in the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine in 1856, when the author was twenty-two years old, and are now reprinted at the Chiswick Press with the Golden type designed by William Morris for the Kelmscott Press, and finished on the tenth day of July, 1903. Published by Longmans, Green & Co., 39, Paternoster Row, London.

72392
C47
1903m

