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A MONK OF FIFE

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A Monk of Fife Being the Chronicle Written by Norman Leslie of Pitcullo, Concerning Marvellous Deeds That Befell in the Realm of France, in the Years of Our Redemption, MCCCCXXIX-XXXI:

Содержание

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PREFACE

Norman Leslie of Pitcullo, whose narrative the reader has in his hands, refers more than once to his unfinished Latin Chronicle. That work, usually known as "The Book of Pluscarden," has been edited by Mr. Felix Skene, in the series of "Historians of Scotland" (vol. vii.). To Mr. Skene's introduction and notes the curious are referred. Here it may suffice to say that the original MS. of the Latin Chronicle is lost; that of six

known manuscript copies none is older than 1480; that two of these copies contain a Prologue; and that the Prologue tells us all that has hitherto been known about the author.

The date of the lost Latin original is 1461, as the author himself avers. He also, in his Prologue, states the purpose of his work. At the bidding of an unnamed Abbot of Dunfermline, who must have been Richard Bothwell, he is to abbreviate "The Great Chronicle," and "bring it up to date," as we now say. He is to recount the events of his own time, "with certain other miraculous deeds, which I who write have had cognisance of, seen, and heard, beyond the bounds of this realm. Also, lastly, concerning a certain marvellous Maiden, who recovered the kingdom of France out of the hands of the tyrant, Henry, King of England. The aforesaid Maiden I saw, was conversant with, and was in her company in her said recovery of France, and till her life's end I was ever present." After "I was ever present" the copies add "etc.," perhaps a sign of omission. The monkish author probably said more about the heroine of his youth, and this the copyists have chosen to leave out.

The author never fulfilled this promise of telling, in Latin, the history of the Maid as her career was seen by a Scottish ally and friend. Nor did he ever explain how a Scot, and a foe of England, succeeded in being present at the Maiden's martyrdom in Rouen. At least he never fulfilled his promise, as far as any of the six Latin MSS. of his Chronicle are concerned. Every one of these MSS. – doubtless following their incomplete original – breaks

off short in the middle of the second sentence of Chapter xxxii. Book xii. Here is the brief fragment which that chapter contains: —

"In those days the Lord stirred up the spirit of a certain marvellous Maiden, born on the borders of France, in the duchy of Lorraine, and the see of Toul, towards the Imperial territories. This Maiden her father and mother employed in tending sheep; daily, too, did she handle the distaff; man's love she knew not; no sin, as it is said, was found in her, to her innocence the neighbours bore witness.. "

Here the Latin narrative of the one man who followed Jeanne d'Arc through good and evil to her life's end breaks off abruptly. The author does not give his name; even the name of the Abbot at whose command he wrote "is left blank, as if it had been erased in the original" (Mr. Felix Skene, "Liber Pluscardensis," in the "Historians of Scotland," vii. p. 18). It might be guessed that the original fell into English hands between 1461 and 1489, and that they blotted out the name of the author, and destroyed a most valuable record of their conqueror and their victim, Jeanne d'Arc.

Against this theory we have to set the explanation here offered by Norman Leslie, our author, in the Ratisbon Scots College's French MS., of which this work is a translation. Leslie never finished his Latin Chronicle, but he wrote, in French, the narrative which follows, decorating it with the designs which Mr. Selwyn Image has carefully copied in black and white.

Possessing this information, we need not examine Mr. W. F. Skene's learned but unconvincing theory that the author of the fragmentary Latin work was one Maurice Drummond, out of the Lennox. The hypothesis is that of Mr. W. F. Skene, and Mr. Felix Skene points out the difficulties which beset the opinion of his distinguished kinsman. Our Monk is a man of Fife.

As to the veracity of the following narrative, the translator finds it minutely corroborated, wherever corroboration could be expected, in the large mass of documents which fill the five volumes of M. Quicherat's "Procès de Jeanne d'Arc," in contemporary chronicles, and in MSS. more recently discovered in French local or national archives. Thus Charlotte Boucher, Barthélemy Barrette, Noiroufle, the Scottish painter, and his daughter Elliot, Capdorat, ay, even Thomas Scott, the King's Messenger, were all real living people, traces of whose existence, with some of their adventures, survive faintly in brown old manuscripts. Louis de Coutes, the pretty page of the Maid, a boy of fourteen, may have been hardly judged by Norman Leslie, but he certainly abandoned Jeanne d'Arc at her first failure.

So, after explaining the true position and character of our monkish author and artist, we leave his book to the judgment which it has tarried for so long.

CHAPTER I – HOW THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN, AND HOW NORMAN LESLIE FLED OUT OF FIFE

It is not of my own will, nor for my own glory, that I, Norman Leslie, sometime of Pitcullo, and in religion called Brother Norman, of the Order of Benedictines, of Dunfermline, indite this book. But on my coming out of France, in the year of our Lord One thousand four hundred and fifty-nine, it was laid on me by my Superior, Richard, Abbot in Dunfermline, that I should abbreviate the Great Chronicle of Scotland, and continue the same down to our own time. [1] He bade me tell, moreover, all that I knew of the glorious Maid of France, called Jeanne la Pucelle, in whose company I was, from her beginning even till her end.

Obedient, therefore, to my Superior, I wrote, in this our cell of Pluscarden, a Latin book containing the histories of times past, but when I came to tell of matters wherein, as Maro says, "pars magna fui," I grew weary of such rude, barbarous Latin as alone I am skilled to indite, for of the manner Ciceronian, as it is now practised by clerks of Italy, I am not master: my

[1] Several copies of this book, the Liber Pluscardensis, are extant, but the author's original MS. is lost.

book, therefore, I left unfinished, breaking off in the middle of a sentence. Yet, considering the command laid on me, in the end I am come to this resolve, namely, to write the history of the wars in France, and the history of the blessed Maid (so far at least as I was an eyewitness and partaker thereof), in the French language, being the most commonly understood of all men, and the most delectable. It is not my intent to tell all the story of the Maid, and all her deeds and sayings, for the world would scarcely contain the books that should be written. But what I myself beheld, that I shall relate, especially concerning certain accidents not known to the general, by reason of which ignorance the whole truth can scarce be understood. For, if Heaven visibly sided with France and the Maid, no less did Hell most manifestly take part with our old enemy of England. And often in this life, if we look not the more closely, and with the eyes of faith, Sathanas shall seem to have the upper hand in the battle, with whose very imp and minion I myself was conversant, to my sorrow, as shall be shown.

First, concerning myself I must say some few words, to the end that what follows may be the more readily understood.

I was born in the kingdom of Fife, being, by some five years, the younger of two sons of Archibald Leslie, of Pitcullo, near St. Andrews, a cadet of the great House of Rothes. My mother was an Englishwoman of the Debatable Land, a Storey of Netherby, and of me, in our country speech, it used to be said that I was "a mother's bairn." For I had ever my greatest joy in her, whom I lost ere I was sixteen years of age, and she in me: not that

she favoured me unduly, for she was very just, but that, within ourselves, we each knew who was nearest to her heart. She was, indeed, a saintly woman, yet of a merry wit, and she had great pleasure in reading of books, and in romances. Being always, when I might, in her company, I became a clerk insensibly, and without labour I could early read and write, wherefore my father was minded to bring me up for a churchman. For this cause, I was some deal despised by others of my age, and, yet more, because from my mother I had caught the Southron trick of the tongue. They called me "English Norman," and many a battle I have fought on that quarrel, for I am as true a Scot as any, and I hated the English (my own mother's people though they were) for taking and holding captive our King, James I. of worthy memory. My fancy, like that of most boys, was all for the wars, and full of dreams concerning knights and ladies, dragons and enchanters, about which the other lads were fain enough to hear me tell what I had read in romances, though they mocked at me for reading. Yet they oft came ill speed with their jests, for my brother had taught me to use my hands: and to hold a sword I was instructed by our smith, who had been prentice to Harry Gow, the Burn-the-Wind of Perth, and the best man at his weapon in broad Scotland. From him I got many a trick of fence that served my turn later.

But now the evil time came when my dear mother sickened and died, leaving to me her memory and her great chain of gold. A bitter sorrow is her death to me still; but anon my father took to him another wife of the Bethunes of Blebo. I blame myself,

rather than this lady, that we dwelt not happily in the same house. My father therefore, still minded to make me a churchman, sent me to Robert of Montrose's new college that stands in the South Street of St. Andrews, a city not far from our house of Pitcullo. But there, like a wayward boy, I took more pleasure in the battles of the "nations" – as of Fife against Galloway and the Lennox; or in games of catch-pull, football, wrestling, hurling the bar, archery, and golf – than in divine learning – as of logic, and Aristotle his analytics.

Yet I loved to be in the scriptorium of the Abbey, and to see the good Father Peter limning the blessed saints in blue, and red, and gold, of which art he taught me a little. Often I would help him to grind his colours, and he instructed me in the laying of them on paper or vellum, with white of egg, and in fixing and burnishing the gold, and in drawing flowers, and figures, and strange beasts and devils, such as we see grinning from the walls of the cathedral. In the French language, too, he learned me, for he had been taught at the great University of Paris; and in Avignon had seen the Pope himself, Benedict XIII., of uncertain memory.

Much I loved to be with Father Peter, whose lessons did not irk me, but jumped with my own desire to read romances in the French tongue, whereof there are many. But never could I have dreamed that, in days to come, this art of painting would win me my bread for a while, and that a Leslie of Pitcullo should be driven by hunger to so base and contemned a handiwork,

unworthy, when practised for gain, of my blood.

Yet it would have been well for me to follow even this craft more, and my sports and pastimes less: Dickon Melville had then escaped a broken head, and I, perchance, a broken heart. But youth is given over to vanities that war against the soul, and, among others, to that wicked game of the Golf, now justly cried down by our laws, [2] as the mother of cursing and idleness, mischief and wastery, of which game, as I verily believe, the devil himself is the father.

It chanced, on an October day of the year of grace Fourteen hundred and twenty-eight, that I was playing myself at this accursed sport with one Richard Melville, a student of like age with myself. We were evenly matched, though Dickon was tall and weighty, being great of growth for his age, whereas I was of but scant inches, slim, and, as men said, of a girlish countenance. Yet I was well skilled in the game of the Golf, and have driven a Holland ball the length of an arrow-flight, there or thereby. But wherefore should my sinful soul be now in mind of these old vanities, repented of, I trust, long ago?

As we twain, Dickon and I, were known for fell champions at this unholy sport, many of the other scholars followed us, laying wagers on our heads. They were but a wild set of lads, for, as then, there was not, as now there is, a house appointed for scholars to dwell in together under authority. We wore coloured clothes,

[2] This was written after the Act of the Scots Parliament of 1457.

and our hair long; gold chains, and whingers [3] in our belts, all of which things are now most righteously forbidden. But I carried no whinger on the links, as considering that it hampered a man in his play. So the game went on, now Dickon leading "by a hole," as they say, and now myself, and great wagers were laid on us.

Now, at the hole that is set high above the Eden, whence you see far over the country, and the river-mouth, and the shipping, it chanced that my ball lay between Dickon's and the hole, so that he could in no manner win past it.

"You laid me that stimy of set purpose," cried Dickon, throwing down his club in a rage; "and this is the third time you have done it in this game."

"It is clean against common luck," quoth one of his party, "and the game and the money laid on it should be ours."

"By the blessed bones of the Apostle," I said, "no luck is more common. To-day to me, to-morrow to thee! Lay it of purpose, I could not if I would."

"You lie!" he shouted in a rage, and gripped to his whinger.

It was ever my father's counsel that I must take the lie from none. Therefore, as his steel was out, and I carried none, I made no more ado, and the word of shame had scarce left his lips when I felled him with the iron club that we use in sand.

"He is dead!" cried they of his party, while the lads of my own looked askance on me, and had manifestly no mind to be partakers in my deed.

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[3] Daggers.

Now, Melville came of a great house, and, partly in fear of their feud, partly like one amazed and without any counsel, I ran and leaped into a boat that chanced to lie convenient on the sand, and pulled out into the Eden. Thence I saw them raise up Melville, and bear him towards the town, his friends lifting their hands against me, with threats and malisons. His legs trailed and his head wagged like the legs and the head of a dead man, and I was without hope in the world.

At first it was my thought to row up the river-mouth, land, and make across the marshes and fields to our house at Pitcullo. But I bethought me that my father was an austere man, whom I had vexed beyond bearing with my late wicked follies, into which, since the death of my mother, I had fallen. And now I was bringing him no college prize, but a blood-feud, which he was like to find an ill heritage enough, even without an evil and thankless son. My stepmother, too, who loved me little, would inflame his anger against me. Many daughters he had, and of gear and goods no more than enough. Robin, my elder brother, he had let pass to France, where he served among the men of John Kirkmichael, Bishop of Orleans – he that smote the Duke of Clarence in fair fight at Baugé.

Thinking of my father, and of my stepmother's ill welcome, and of Robin, abroad in the wars against our old enemy of England, it may be that I fell into a kind of half dream, the boat lulling me by its movement on the waters. Suddenly I felt a crashing blow on my head. It was as if the powder used for

artillery had exploded in my mouth, with flash of light and fiery taste, and I knew nothing. Then, how long after I could not tell, there was water on my face, the blue sky and the blue tide were spinning round – they spun swiftly, then slowly, then stood still. There was a fierce pain stounding in my head, and a voice said —

"That good oar-stroke will learn you to steal boats!"

I knew the voice; it was that of a merchant sailor-man with whom, on the day before, I had quarrelled in the market-place. Now I was lying at the bottom of a boat which four seamen, who had rowed up to me and had broken my head as I meditated, were pulling towards a merchant-vessel, or carrick, in the Eden-mouth. Her sails were being set; the boat wherein I lay was towing that into which I had leaped after striking down Melville. For two of the ship's men, being on shore, had hailed their fellows in the carrick, and they had taken vengeance upon me.

"You scholar lads must be taught better than your masters learn you," said my enemy.

And therewith they carried me on board the vessel, the "St. Margaret," of Berwick, laden with a cargo of dried salmon from Eden-mouth. They meant me no kindness, for there was an old feud between the scholars and the sailors; but it seemed to me, in my foolishness, that now I was in luck's way. I need not go back, with blood on my hands, to Pitcullo and my father. I had money in my pouch, my mother's gold chain about my neck, a ship's deck under my foot, and the seas before me. It was not hard for me to bargain with the shipmaster for a passage to Berwick, whence

I might put myself aboard a vessel that traded to Bordeaux for wine from that country. The sailors I made my friends at no great cost, for indeed they were the conquerors, and could afford to show clemency, and hold me to slight ransom as a prisoner of war.

So we lifted anchor, and sailed out of Eden-mouth, none of those on shore knowing how I was aboard the carrick that slipped by the bishop's castle, and so under the great towers of the minster and St. Rule's, forth to the Northern Sea. Despite my broken head – which put it comfortably into my mind that maybe Dickon's was no worse – I could have laughed to think how clean I had vanished away from St. Andrews, as if the fairies had taken me. Now having time to reason of it quietly, I picked up hope for Dickon's life, remembering his head to be of the thickest. Then came into my mind the many romances of chivalry which I had read, wherein the young squire has to flee his country for a chance blow, as did Messire Patroclus, in the Romance of Troy, who slew a man in anger over the game of the chess, and many another knight, in the tales of Charlemagne and his paladins. For ever it is thus the story opens, and my story, methought, was beginning to-day like the rest.

Now, not to prove more wearisome than need be, and so vex those who read this chronicle with much talk about myself, and such accidents of travel as beset all voyagers, and chiefly in time of war, I found a trading ship at Berwick, and reached Bordeaux safe, after much sickness on the sea. And in Bordeaux, with a

very sore heart, I changed the links of my mother's chain that were left to me – all but four, that still I keep – for money of that country; and so, with a lighter pack than spirit, I set forth towards Orleans and to my brother Robin.

On this journey I had good cause to bless Father Peter of the Abbey for his teaching me the French tongue, that was of more service to me than all my Latin. Yet my Latin, too, the little I knew, stood me in good stead at the monasteries, where often I found bed and board, and no small kindness; I little deeming that, in time to come, I also should be in religion, an old man and weary, glad to speak with travellers concerning the news of the world, from which I am now these ten years retired. Yet I love even better to call back memories of these days, when I took my part in the fray. If this be a sin, may God and the Saints forgive me, for if I have fought, it was in a rightful cause, which Heaven at last has prospered, and in no private quarrel. And methinks I have one among the Saints to pray for me, as a friend for a friend not unfaithful. But on this matter I submit me to the judgment of the Church, as in all questions of the faith.

CHAPTER II – HOW NORMAN LESLIE MET NOIROUFLE THE CORDELIER, CALLED BROTHER THOMAS IN RELIGION: AND OF MIRACLES WROUGHT BY BROTHER THOMAS

The ways were rude and long from Bordeaux town to Orleans, whither I had set my face, not knowing, when I left my own country, that the city was beleaguered by the English. For who could guess that lords and knights of the Christian faith, holding captive the gentle Duke of Orleans, would besiege his own city? – a thing unheard of among the very Saracens, and a deed that God punished. Yet the news of this great villainy, namely, the leaguer of Orleans, then newly begun, reached my ears on my landing at Bordeaux, and made me greatly fear that I might never meet my brother Robin alive. And this my doubt proved but too true, for he soon after this time fell, with many other Scottish gentlemen and archers, deserted shamefully by the French and by Charles de Bourbon, Comte de Clermont, at the Battle of the Herrings. But of this I knew nothing – as, indeed, the battle was not yet fought – and only pushed on for France, thinking to take service

with the Dauphin against the English. My journey was through a country ruinous enough, for, though the English were on the further bank of the Loire, the partisans of the Dauphin had made a ruin round themselves and their holds, and, not being paid, they lived upon the country.

The further north I held, by ways broken and ruined with rains and suns, the more bare and rugged grew the whole land. Once, stopping hard by a hamlet, I had sat down to munch such food as I carried, and was sharing my meal with a little brown herd-boy, who told me that he was dinnerless. A few sheep and lean kine plucked at such scant grasses as grew among rocks, and herbs useless but sweet-scented, when suddenly a horn was blown from the tower of the little church. The first note of that blast had not died away, when every cow and sheep was scampering towards the hamlet and a kind of "barmkyn" [4] they had builded there for protection, and the boy after them, running with his bare legs for dear life. For me, I was too amazed to run in time, so lay skulking in the thick sweet-smelling herbs, whence I saw certain men-at-arms gallop to the crest of a cliff hard by, and ride on with curses, for they were not of strength to take the barmkyn.

Such was the face of France in many counties. The fields lay weedy and untilled; the starving peasant-folk took to the highway, every man preying on his neighbour. Woods had grown up, and broken in upon the roads. Howbeit, though robbers harboured therein, none of them held to ransom a wandering

[4] Rude wall surrounding a keep.

poor Scots scholar.

Slowly I trudged, being often delayed, and I was now nearing Poictiers, and thought myself well on my road to Chinon, where, as I heard, the Dauphin lay, when I came to a place where the road should have crossed a stream – not wide, but strong, smooth, and very deep. The stream ran through a glen; and above the road I had long noted the towers of a castle. But as I drew closer, I saw first that the walls were black with fire and roofless, and that carrion birds were hovering over them, some enemy having fallen upon the place: and next, behold, the bridge was broken, and there was neither ford nor ferry! All the ruin was fresh, the castle still smouldering, the kites flocking and yelling above the trees, the planks of the bridge showing that the destruction was but of yesterday.

This matter of the broken bridge cost me little thought, for I could swim like an otter. But there was another traveller down by the stream who seemed more nearly concerned. When I came close to him, I found him standing up to his waist in the water, taking soundings with a long and heavy staff. His cordelier's frock was tucked up into his belt, his long brown legs, with black hairs thick on them, were naked. He was a huge, dark man, and when he turned and stared at me, I thought that, among all men of the Church and in religion whom I had ever beheld, he was the foulest and most fierce to look upon. He had an ugly, murderous visage, fell eyes and keen, and a right long nose, hooked like a falcon's. The eyes in his head shone like swords, and of all eyes

of man I ever saw, his were the most piercing and most terrible. On his back he carried, as I noticed at the first, what I never saw on a cordelier's back before, or on any but his since – an arbalest, and he had bolts enough in his bag, the feathers showing above.

"Pax vobiscum," he cried, in a loud, grating voice, as he saw me, and scrambled out to shore.

"Et cum anima tua," I answered.

"Nom de Dieu!" he said, "you have bottomed my Latin already, that is scarce so deep as the river here. My malison on them that broke the bridge!" Then he looked me over fiercely.

"Burgundy or Armagnac?" he asked.

I thought the question strange, as a traveller would scarce care to pronounce for Burgundy in that country. But this was a man who would dare anything, so I deemed it better to answer that I was a Scot, and, so far, of neither party.

"Tug-mutton, wine-sack!" he said, these being two of many ill names which the French gave our countrymen; for, of all men, the French are least grateful to us, who, under Heaven and the Maid, have set their King on his throne again.

The English knew this, if the French did not; and their great King, Harry the Fifth, when he fell ill of St. Fiacre's sickness, after plundering that Scots saint's shrine of certain horse-shoes, silver-gilt, said well that, "go where he would, he was bearded by Scots, dead or alive." But the French are not a thankful people.

I had no answer very ready to my tongue, so stepped down silent to the water-edge, and was about taking off my doublet and

hose, meaning to carry them on my head and swim across. But he barred the way with his staff, and, for me, I gripped to my whinger, and watched my chance to run in under his guard. For this cordelier was not to be respected, I deemed, like others of the Order of St. Francis, and all men of Holy Church.

"Answer a civil question," he said, "before it comes to worse: Armagnac or Burgundy?"

"Armagnac," I answered, "or anything else that is not English. Clear the causeway, mad friar!"

At that he threw down his staff.

"I go north also," he said, "to Orleans, if I may, for the foul 'manants' and peasant dogs of this country have burned the castle of Alfonse Rodigo, a good knight that held them in right good order this year past. He was worthy, indeed, to ride with that excellent captain, Don Rodrigo de Villandradas. King's captain or village labourer, all was fish that came to his net, and but two days ago I was his honourable chaplain. But he made the people mad, and a great carouse that we kept gave them their opportunity. They have roasted the good knight Alfonse, and would have done as much for me, his almoner, frock and all, if wine had any mastery over me. But I gave them the slip. Heaven helps its own! Natheless, I would that this river were between me and their vengeance, and, for once, I dread the smell of roast meat that is still in my nostrils – pah!"

And here he spat on the ground.

"But one door closes," he went on, "and another opens, and to

Orleans am I now bound, in the service of my holy calling."

"There is, indeed, cause enough for the shriving of souls of sinners, Father, in that country, as I hear, and a holy man like you will be right welcome to many."

"They need little shriving that are opposite my culverin," said this strange priest. "Though now I carry but an arbalest, the gun is my mistress, and my patron is the gunner's saint, St. Barbara. And even with this toy, methinks I have the lives of a score of goddams in my bolt-pouch."

I knew that in these wild days many clerics were careless as to that which the Church enjoins concerning the effusion of blood – nay, I have named John Kirkmichael, Bishop of Orleans, as having himself broken a spear on the body of the Duke of Clarence. The Abbé of Cerquenceaux, also, was a valiant man in religion, and a good captain, and, all over France, clerics were gripping to sword and spear. But such a priest as this I did not expect to see.

"Your name?" he asked suddenly, the words coming out with a sound like the first grating of a saw on stone.

"They call me Norman Leslie de Pitcullo," I answered. "And yours?"

"My name," he said, "is Noiroufle" – and I thought that never had I seen a man so well fitted with a name; – "in religion, Brother Thomas, a poor brother of the Order of the mad St. Francis of Assisi."

"Then, Brother Thomas, how do you mean to cross this water

which lies between you and the exercise of your holy calling? Do you swim?"

"Like a stone cannon-ball, and, for all that I can find, the cursed water has no bottom. Cross!" he snarled. "Let me see you swim."

I was glad enough to be quit of him so soon, but I noticed that, as I stripped and packed my clothes to carry in a bundle on my head, the holy man set his foot in the stirrup of his weapon, and was winding up his arbalest with a windlass, a bolt in his mouth, watching at the same time a heron that rose from a marsh on the further side of the stream. On this bird, I deemed, he meant to try his skill with the arbalest.

"Adieu, Brother Thomas," I said, as I took the water; and in a few strokes I was across and running up and down on the bank to get myself dry. "Back!" came his grating voice – "back! and without your clothes, you wine-sack of Scotland, or I shoot!" and his arbalest was levelled on me.

I have often asked myself since what I should have done, and what was the part of a brave man. Perchance I might have dived, and swum down-stream under water, but then I had bestowed my bundle of clothes some little way off, and Brother Thomas commanded it from his side of the stream. He would have waited there in ambush till I came shivering back for hose and doublet, and I should be in no better case than I was now. Meanwhile his weapon was levelled at me, and I could see the bolt-point set straight for my breast, and glittering in a pale blink of the

sun. The bravest course is ever the best. I should have thrown myself on the earth, no doubt, and so crawled to cover, taking my chance of death rather than the shame of obeying under threat and force. But I was young, and had never looked death in the face, so, being afraid and astonished, I made what seemed the best of an ill business, and, though my face reddens yet at the thought of it, I leaped in and swam back like a dog to heel.

"Behold me," I said, making as brave a countenance as I might in face of necessity.

"Well done, Norman Leslie de Pitcullo," he snarled, baring his yellow teeth. "This is the obedience which the young owe to the Church. Now, ferry me over; you are my boat."

"You will drown, man," I said. "Not while you swim."

Then, unbuckling his frock, he packed it as he had seen me do, bade me put it on my head, and so stepped out into the water, holding forth his arm to put about my neck. I was for teaching him how to lay it on my shoulder, and was bidding him keep still as a plank of wood, but he snarled —

"I have sailed on a boat of flesh before to-day."

To do him justice, he kept still as a log of wood, and so, yielding partly to the stream, I landed him somewhat further down than the place where my own clothes were lying. To them he walked, and very quietly picking up my whinger and my raiment that he gathered under his arm, he concealed himself in a thick bush, albeit it was leafless, where no man could have been aware of him. This amazed me not a little, for modesty did not

seem any part of his nature.

"Now," says he, "fetch over my arbalest. Lying where I am you have no advantage to shoot me, as, nom de Dieu! I would have shot you had you not obeyed. And hark ye, by the way, unwind the arbalest before you cross; it is ever well to be on the safe side. And be sure you wet not the string." He pushed his face through the bush, and held in his mouth my naked whinger, that shone between his shining eyes.

Now again I say it, I have thought over this matter many a time, and have even laughed aloud and bitterly, when I was alone, at the figure of me shivering there, on a cold February day, and at my helpless estate. For a naked man is no match for a man with a whinger, and he was sitting on my clothes. So this friar, unworthy as he was of his holy calling, had me at an avail on every side, nor do I yet see what I could do but obey him, as I did. And when I landed from this fifth voyage, he laughed and gave me his blessing, and, what I needed more, some fiery spirits from a water-gourd, in which Father Thomas carried no water.

"Well done, my son," he said, "and now we are comrades. My life was not over safe on yonder side, seeing that the 'manants' hate me, and respect not my hood, and two are better company than one, where we are going."

This encounter was the beginning of many evils, and often now the picture shines upon my eyes, and I see the grey water, and hear the cold wind whistle in the dry reeds of the river-bank whereon we sat.

The man was my master, Heaven help me! as surely as Sathanas was his. And though, at last, I slipped his clutches, as you shall hear (more readily than, I trow, he will scape his lord in the end, for he still lives), yet it was an ill day that we met – an ill day for me and for France. Howbeit we jogged on, he merrily enough singing a sculdudery song, I something surly, under a grey February sky, with a keen wind searching out the threadbare places in our raiment. My comrade, as he called himself, told me what passages he chose in the history of his life: how he came to be frocked (but 'cucullus non facit monachum'), and how, in the troubles of these times, he had discovered in himself a great aptitude for the gunner's trade, of which he boasted not a little. He had been in one and another of these armed companies that took service with either side, for hire, being better warriors and more skilled than the noblesse, but a curse to France: for, in peace or war, friend or foe, they plundered all, and held all to ransom. With Rodrigo de Villandradas, that blood-hound of Spain, he had been high in favour, but when Rodrigo went to harry south and east, he had tarried at Ruffec, with another thief of that nation, Alfonse Rodigo. All his talk, as we went, was of slaying men in fight; whom he slew he cared not much, but chiefly he hated the English and them of Burgundy. To him, war was what hunting and shooting game is to others; a cruel and bloody pastime, when Christians are the quarry!

"John the Lorrainer, and I, there are no others to be named with us at the culverin," he would brag. "We two against an army,

give us good cover, and powder and leaden balls enough. Hey! Master John and I must shoot a match yet, against English targets, and of them there are plenty under Orleans. But if I make not the better speed, the town will have fallen, or yielded, rescue or no rescue, and of rescue there is no hope at all. The devil fights for the English, who will soon be swarming over the Loire, and that King of Bourges of ours will have to flee, and gnaw horse's fodder, oats and barley, with your friends in Scotland."

This was one of the many ungenerous taunts which the French made often against us Scots, that have been their ancient and leal brethren in arms since the days of King Achaius and Charlemagne.

"The Dauphin," he went on, "for King he is none, and crowned he will never be, should be in Orleans, leading his men; and lo! he is tied to the belt of fat La Trémouille, and is dancing of ballets at Chinon – a murrain on him, and on them that make his music!" Then he fell to cursing his King, a thing terrible to hear, and so to asking me questions about myself. I told him that I had fled my own country for a man-slaying, hoping, may Heaven forgive me! to make him think the higher of me for the deed.

"So we all begin," said he; "a shrewd blow, or a fair wench; a death, or a birth unlawful, 'tis all one forth we are driven to the world and the wars. Yet you have started well, – well enough, and better than I gave your girl's face credit for. Bar steel and rope, you may carry some French gold back to stinking Scotland yet."

He gave me so much credit as this for a deed that deserved

none, but rather called for rebuke from him, who, however unworthy, was in religion, and wore the garb of the Blessed Francis. But very far from fortifying me in virtuous courses, as was his bounden duty, there was no wickedness that he did not try to teach me, till partly I hated him, and partly, I fear, I admired one so skilled in evil. The truth is, as I said, that this man, for that time, was my master. He was learned in all the arts by which poor and wandering folk can keep their bellies full wandering by the way. With women, ugly and terrible of aspect as he was, he had a great power: a pious saying for the old; a way with the young which has ever been a mystery to me, unless, as some of the learned think, all women are naturally lovers of wickedness, if strength and courage go with it. What by wheedling, what by bullying, what by tales of pilgrimages to holy shrines (he was coming from Jerusalem by way of Rome, so he told all we met), he ever won a welcome.

Other more devilish cantrips he played, one of them at the peasant's house where we rested on the first night of our common travel. The Lenten supper which they gave us, with no little kindness, was ended, and we were sitting in the firelight, Brother Thomas discoursing largely of his pilgrimages, and of his favour among the high clergy. Thus, at I know not what convent of the Clarisses, [5] in Italy, the holy Sisters had pressed on him a relic of Monsieur St. Aignan, the patron of the good town of Orleans. To see this relic, the farmer, his wife, and his sons and daughters

[5] Sisters in the rule of St. Francis.

crowded eagerly; it was but a little blackened finger bone, yet they were fain to touch it, as is the custom. But this he would not yet allow.

"Perchance some of you," he said, "are already corrupt, not knowing it, with the poisonous breath of that damnable Hussite heresy, which is blowing from the east like wind of the pestilence, and ye may have doubts concerning the verity of this most holy and miraculous relic?"

They all crossed themselves, protesting that no such wicked whisper of Sathanas had ever come into their minds, nor had they so much as heard of Huss and his blasphemies.

"Nay," said Brother Thomas, "I could scarcely blame you if it were partly as I said. For in this latter time of the world, when I have myself met Jews flocking to Babylon expecting the birth of Antichrist, there be many false brethren, who carry about feigned relics, to deceive the simple. We should believe no man, if he be, as I am, a stranger, unless he shows us a sign, such as now I will show you. Give me, of your grace, a kerchief, or a napkin." The goodwife gave him a clean white napkin from her aumbry, and he tore it up before their eyes, she not daring to stay his hand.

"Now note this holy relic and its wonderful power," he said, holding the blackened bone high in his left hand, and all our eyes were fixed on it. "Now mark," he said again, passing it over the napkin; and lo! there was a clean white napkin in his hands, and of the torn shreds not a trace!

We were still gaping, and crossing ourselves with blessings

on this happy day and our unworthy eyes that beheld a miracle, when he did a thing yet more marvellous, if that might be, which I scarce expect any man will believe. Going to the table, and catching up a glass vessel on which the goodwife set great store, he threw it against the wall, and we all plainly heard it shiver into tinkling pieces. Then, crossing the room into the corner, that was dusky enough, he faced us, again holding the blessed relic, whereon we stared, in holy fear. Then he rose, and in his hand was the goodwife's glass vessel, without crack or flaw! [6]

"Such," he said, "are the properties of this miraculous relic; there is nothing broken but it will mend, ay, a broken limb, as I can prove on my own sinful body," – thrusting out his great brown leg, whereon, assuredly, were signs of a fracture; "ay, a broken leg, or, my dear daughters, a broken heart." At this, of course, they were all eager to touch the blessed relic with their poor rings of base metal, such as they wear who are not rich. Nay, but first, he said, they must give their mites for a convent of the Clarisses, that was building at Castres, by the care of the holy Colette, whom he might call his patroness, unworthy as he was.

Then he showed us a safe-conduct, signed with that blessed woman's own hand, such as she was wont to give to the religious of the Order of St. Francis. By virtue of this, he said (and, by miracle, for once he said truly, as I had but too good cause to learn), he could go freely in and out among the camps of French,

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[6] These tricks of sleight-of-hand are attributed by Jean Nider, in his "Formicarium," to the false Jeanne d'Arc. – A. L.

English, and Burgundians.

You may conceive how joyous they were in that poor cottage, on a night so blessed, and how Brother Thomas told us of the holy Colette, that famous nun and Mother in Christ, as he that had often been in her company. He had seen her body lifted in the air while she remained in a pious ecstasy, her mind soaring aloft and her fleshly body following it some way.

He had often watched that snow-white beast which followed her, such a creature as is known in no country of the sinful world, but is a thing of Paradise. And he had tried to caress this wondrous creature of God, but vainly, for none but the holy sister Colette may handle it. Concerning her miracles of healing, too, he told us, all of which we already knew for very truth, and still know on better warranty than his.

Ye may believe that, late and at last, Brother Thomas had his choice of the warmest place to sleep in – by the "four," as is the wont of pilgrims, for in his humility this holy man would not suffer the farmer's wife and the farmer to give him their bed, as they desired. I, too, was very kindly entreated by the young lads, but I could scarcely sleep for marvelling at these miracles done by one so unworthy; and great, indeed, I deemed, must be the virtue of that relic which wrought such signs in the hands of an evil man. But I have since held that he feigned all by art magic and very sorcery, for, as we wended next morning on our road, he plainly told me, truly or falsely, that he had picked up the blackened finger-bone out of the loathly ashes of the dead in

the burned castle near Ruffec.

Wherefore I consider that when Brother Thomas sold the grace of his relic, by the touching of rings, he dealt in a devilish black simony, vending to simple Christians no grace but that of his master, Sathanas. Thus he was not only evil (if I guess aright, which I submit to the judgment of my ecclesiastical superiors, and of the Church), but he had even found out a new kind of wickedness, such as I never read of in any books of theology wherein is much to be learned. I have spoken with some, however, knights and men of this world, who deemed that he did but beguile our eyes by craft and sleight-of-hand.

This other hellish art he had, by direct inspiration, as I hold, of his master Behemoth, that he could throw his voice whither he would, so that, in all seeming, it came from above, or from below, or from a corner of a room, fashioning it to resemble the voice of whom he would, yet none might see his lips move. With this craft he would affray the peasants about the fire in the little inns where we sometimes rested, when he would be telling tales of bogles and eldritch fantasies, and of fiends that rout and rap, and make the tables and firkins dance. Such art of speech, I am advised, is spoken of by St. Jerome, in his comment on the holy prophet the saint Isaiah, and they that use it he calls "ventriloqui," in the Latin, or "belly-speakers," and he takes an unfavourable sense of them and their doings. So much I have from the learned William de Boyis, Prior of Pluscarden, where now I write; with whom I have conversed of these matters privately, and he thinks

this art a thing that men may learn by practice, without dealing in nigromancy and the black magic. This question I am content to leave, as is fitting, to the judgment of my superiors. And indeed, as at that time, Brother Thomas spake not in his belly except to make sport and affray the simple people, soon turning their fears to mirth. Certainly the country folk never misdoubted him, the women for a holy man, the men for a good fellow; though all they of his own cloth shrank from him, and I have seen them cross themselves in his presence, but to no avail. He would say a word or two in their ears, and they straightway left the place where he might be. None the less, with his tales and arts, Brother Thomas commonly so wrought that we seldom slept "à la belle étoile" in that bitter spring weather, but we ordinarily had leave to lie by the hearth, and got a supper and a breakfast. The good peasants would find their hen-roosts the poorer often, for all that he could snap up was to him fortune of war.

I loved these manners little, but leave him I could not. His eye was ever on me; if I stirred in the night he was awake and watching me, and by day he never let me out of a bolt's flight. To cut the string of his wicked weapon was a thought often in my mind, but he was too vigilant. My face was his passport, he said; my face, indeed, being innocent enough, as was no shame to me, but an endless cause of mirth and mockery to him. Yet, by reason of the serviceableness of the man in that perilous country, and my constant surprise and wonder at what he did and said, and might do next (which no man could guess beforehand), and

a kind of foolish pride in his very wickedness, so much beyond what I had ever dreamed of, and for pure fear of him also, I found myself following with him day by day, ever thinking to escape, and never escaping.

I have since deemed that, just as his wickedness was to a boy (for I was little more), a kind of charm, made up of a sort of admiring hate and fear, so my guilelessness (as it seemed to him) also wrought on him strangely. For in part it made sport for him to see my open mouth and staring eyes at the spectacle of his devilries, and in part he really hated me, and hated my very virtue of simplicity, which it was his desire and delight to surprise and corrupt.

On these strange terms, then, now drawn each to other, and now forced apart, we wended by Poictiers towards Chinon, where the Dauphin and his Court then lay. So we fared northwards, through Poitou, where we found evil news enough. For, walking into a village, we saw men, women, and children, all gathered, gaping about one that stood beside a horse nearly foundered, its legs thrust wide, its nostrils all foam and blood. The man, who seemed as weary as his horse, held a paper in his hands, which the priest of that parish took from him and read aloud to us. The rider was a royal messenger, one Thomas Scott of Easter Buccleuch, in Rankel Burn, whom I knew later, and his tidings were evil. The Dauphin bade his good towns know that, on the 12th of February, Sir John Stewart, constable of the Scottish forces in France, had fallen in battle at Rouvray, with very many of his

company, and some Frenchmen. They had beset a convoy under Sir John Fastolf, that was bringing meat to the English leaguered about Orleans. But Fastolf had wholly routed them (by treachery, as we later learned of the Comte de Clermont), and Sir John Stewart, with his brother Sir William, were slain. Wherefore the Dauphin bade the good towns send him money and men, or all was lost.

Such were the evil tidings, which put me in sore fear for my brother Robin, one that, in such an onfall, would go far, as beseemed his blood. But as touching his fortunes, Thomas Scott could tell me neither good nor bad, though he knew Robin, and gave him a good name for a stout man-at-arms. It was of some comfort to me to hear a Scots tongue; but, for the rest, I travelled on with a heavier heart, deeming that Orleans must indeed fall ere I could seek my brother in that town.

CHAPTER III – WHAT BEFELL OUTSIDE OF CHINON TOWN

My old nurse, when I was a child, used to tell me a long story of a prince who, wandering through the world, made friends with many strange companions. One she called Lynx-eye, that could see through a mountain; one was Swift-foot, that could outrun the wind; one was Fine-ear, that could hear the grass growing; and there was Greedy-gut, that could swallow a river. All these were very serviceable to this gracious prince, of I know not what country, in his adventures; and they were often brought into my mind by the companions whom we picked up on the grass-grown roads.

These wanderers were as strange as the friends of the prince, and were as variously, but scarce as honourably, gifted. There was the one-armed soldier, who showed his stump very piteously when it was a question of begging from a burgess, but was as well furnished with limbs as other men when no burgess was in sight. There was a wretched woman violer, with her jackanapes, and with her husband, a hang-dog ruffian, she bearing the mark of his fist on her eye, and commonly trailing far behind him with her brat on her back. There was a blind man, with his staff, who might well enough answer to Keen-eye, that is, when no strangers were in sight. There was a layman, wearing cope and

stole and selling indulgences, but our captain, Brother Thomas, soon banished him from our company, for that he divided the trade. Others there were, each one of them a Greedy-gut, a crew of broken men, who marched with us on the roads; but we never entered a town or a house with these discreditable attendants.

Now, it may seem strange, but the nearer we drew to Chinon and the Court, the poorer grew the country, for the Court and the men-at-arms had stripped it bare, like a flight of locusts. For this reason the Dauphin could seldom abide long at one place, for he was so much better known than trusted that the very cordwainer would not let him march off in a new pair of boots without seeing his money, and, as the song said, he even greased his old clouted shoon, and made them last as long as he might. For head-gear he was as ill provided, seeing that he had pawned the fleurons of his crown. There were days when his treasurer at Tours (as I myself have heard him say) did not reckon three ducats in his coffers, and the heir of France borrowed money from his very cook. So the people told us, and I have often marvelled how, despite this poverty, kings and nobles, when I have seen them, go always in cloth of gold, with rich jewels. But, as you may guess, near the Court of a beggar Dauphin the country-folk too were sour and beggarly.

We had to tighten our belts before we came to the wood wherein cross-roads meet, from north, south, and east, within five miles of the town of Chinon. There was not a white coin among us; night was falling, and it seemed as if we must lie out

under the stars, and be fed, like the wolves we heard howling, on wind. By the roadside, at the crossways, but not in view of the road, a council of our ragged regiment was held in a deep ditch. It would be late ere we reached the town, gates would scarce open for us, we could not fee the warders, houses would be shut and dark; the King's archers were apt to bear them unfriendly to wandering men with the devil dancing in their pouches. Resource we saw none; if there was a cottage, dogs, like wolves for hunger and fierceness, were baying round it. As for Brother Thomas, an evil bruit had gone before us concerning a cordelier that the fowls and geese were fain to follow, as wilder things, they say, follow the blessed St. Francis. So there sat Brother Thomas at the cross-roads, footsore, hungry, and sullen, in the midst of us, who dared not speak, he twanging at the string of his arbalest. He called himself our Moses, in his blasphemous way, and the blind man having girded at him for not leading us into the land of plenty, he had struck the man till he bled, and now stood stanching his wound.

Suddenly Brother Thomas ceased from his twanging, and holding up his hand for silence, leaned his ear to the ground. The night was still, though a cold wind came very stealthily from the east.

"Horses!" he said.

"It is but the noise of the brook by the way," said the blind man, sullenly.

Brother Thomas listened again.

"No, it is horses," he whispered. "My men, they that ride horses can spare somewhat out of their abundance to feed the poor." And with that he began winding up his arbalest hastily. "Aymeric," he said to one of our afflicted company, "you draw a good bow for a blind man; hide yourself in the opposite ditch, and be ready when I give the word 'Pax vobiscum.' You, Giles," he spoke to the one-armed soldier, "go with him, and, do you hear, aim low, at the third man's horse. From the sound there are not more than five or six of them. We can but fail, at worst, and the wood is thick behind us, where none may pursue. You, Norman de Pitcullo, have your whinger ready, and fasten this rope tightly to yonder birch-tree stem, and then cross and give it a turn or two about that oak sapling on the other side of the way. That trap will bring down a horse or twain. Be quick, you Scotch wine-bag!"

I had seen many ill things done, and, to my shame, had held my peace. But a Leslie of Pitcullo does not take purses on the high-road. Therefore my heart rose in sudden anger, I having all day hated him more and more for his bitter tongue, and I was opening my mouth to cry "À secours!" – a warning to them who were approaching, when, quick as lightning, Brother Thomas caught me behind the knee-joints, and I was on the ground with his weight above me. One cry I had uttered, when his hand was on my mouth.

"Give him the steel in his guts!" whispered the blind man.

"Slit his weasand, the Scotch pig!" said the one-armed soldier.

They were all on me now.

"No, I keep him for better sport," snarled Brother Thomas. "He shall learn the Scots for 'écorcheurs' (flayers of men) "when we have filled our pouches."

With that he crammed a great napkin in my mouth, so that I could not cry, made it fast with a piece of cord, trussed me with the rope which he had bidden me tie across the path to trip the horses, and with a kick sent me flying to the bottom of the ditch, my face being turned from the road.

I could hear Giles and Aymeric steal across the way, and the rustling of boughs as they settled on the opposite side. I could hear the trampling hoofs of horses coming slowly and wearily from the east. At this moment chanced a thing that has ever seemed strange to me: I felt the hand of the violer woman laid lightly and kindly on my hair. I had ever pitied her, and, as I might, had been kind to her and her bairn; and now, as it appears, she pitied me. But there could be no help in her, nor did she dare to raise her voice and give an alarm. So I could but gnaw at my gag, trying to find scope for my tongue to cry, for now it was not only the travellers that I would save, but my own life, and my escape from a death of torment lay on my success. But my mouth was as dry as a kiln, my tongue was doubled back till I thought that I should have choked. The night was now deadly still, and the ring of the weary hoofs drew nearer and nearer. I heard a stumble, and the scramble of a tired horse as he recovered himself; for the rest, all was silent, though the beating of my own heart sounded heavy and husky in my ears.

Closer and closer the travellers drew, and soon it was plain that they rode not carelessly, nor as men who deemed themselves secure, for the tramp of one horse singled itself out in front of the others, and this, doubtless, was ridden by an "éclaireur," sent forward to see that the way ahead was safe. Now I heard a low growl of a curse from Brother Thomas, and my heart took some comfort. They might be warned, if the Brother shot at the foremost man; or, at worst, if he was permitted to pass, the man would bear swift tidings to Chinon, and we might be avenged, the travellers and I, for I now felt that they and I were in the same peril.

The single rider drew near, and passed, and there came no cry of "Pax vobiscum" from the friar. But the foremost rider had, perchance, the best horse, and the least wearied, for there was even too great a gap between him and the rest of his company.

And now their voices might be heard, as they talked by the way, yet not so loud that, straining my ears as I did, I could hear any words. But the sounds waxed louder, with words spoken, ring of hoofs, and rattle of scabbard on stirrup, and so I knew, at least, that they who rode so late were men armed. Brother Thomas, too, knew it, and cursed again very low.

Nearer, nearer they came, then almost opposite, and now, as I listened to hear the traitorous signal of murder – "Pax vobiscum" – and the twang of bow-strings, on the night there rang a voice, a woman's voice, soft but wondrous clear, such as never I knew from any lips but hers who then spoke; that voice I heard in its

last word, “Jesus!” and still it is sounding in my ears.

That voice said —

“Nous voilà presqu’arrivés, grâce à mes Frères de Paradis.”

Instantly, I knew not how, at the sound of that blessed voice, and the courage in it, I felt my fear slip from me, as when we awaken from a dreadful dream, and in its place came happiness and peace. Scarce otherwise might he feel who dies in fear and wakes in Paradise.

On the forest boughs above me, my face being turned from the road, somewhat passed, or seemed to pass, like a soft golden light, such as in the Scots tongue we call a “boyn,” that ofttimes, men say, travels with the blessed saints. Yet some may deem it but a glancing in my own eyes, from the blood flying to my head; howsoever it be, I had never seen the like before, nor have I seen it since, and, assuredly, the black branches and wild weeds were lit up bare and clear.

The tramp of the horses passed, there was no cry of “Pax vobiscum,” no twang of bows, and slowly the ring of hoofs died away on the road to Chinon. Then came a rustling of the boughs on the further side of the way, and a noise of footsteps stealthily crossing the road, and now I heard a low sound of weeping from the violer woman, that was crouching hard by where I lay. Her man struck her across the mouth, and she was still.

“You saw it? Saints be with us! You saw them?” he whispered to Brother Thomas.

“Fool, had I not seen, would I not have given the word? Get

you gone, all the sort of you, there is a fey man in this company, be he who he will. Wander your own ways, and if ever one of you dogs speak to me again, in field, or street, or market, or ever mention this night.. ye shall have my news of it. Begone! Off!"

"Nay, but, Brother Thomas, saw'st thou what we saw? What sight saw'st thou?"

"What saw I? Fools, what should I have seen, but an outrider, and he a King's messenger, sent forward to warn the rest by his fall, if he fell, or to raise the country on us, if he passed, and if afterward they passed us not. They were men wary in war, and travelling on the Dauphin's business. Verily there was no profit in them."

"And that was all? We saw other things."

"What I saw was enough for me, or for any good clerk of St. Nicholas, and of questions there has been more than enough. Begone! scatter to the winds, and be silent."

"And may we not put the steel in that Scotch dog who delayed us? Saints or sorcerers, their horses must have come down but for him."

Brother Thomas caught me up, as if I had been a child, in his arms, and tossed me over the ditch-bank into the wood, where I crashed on my face through the boughs.

"Only one horse would have fallen, and that had brought the others on us. The Scot is safe enough, his mouth is well shut. I will have no blood to-night; leave him to the wolves. And now, begone with you: to Fierbois, if you will; I go my own road –

alone."

They wandered each his own way, sullen and murmuring, starved and weary. What they had seen or fancied, and whether, if the rest saw aught strange, Brother Thomas saw nought, I knew not then, and know not till this hour. But the tale of this ambush, and of how they that lay in hiding held their hands, and fled – having come, none might say whence, and gone, whither none might tell – is true, and was soon widely spoken of in the realm of France.

The woods fell still again, save for the babble of the brook, and there I lay, bound, and heard only the stream in the silence of the night.

There I lay, quaking, when all the caitiffs had departed, and the black, chill night received me into itself. At first my mind was benumbed, like my body; but the pain of my face, smarting with switch and scratch of the boughs through which I had fallen, awoke me to thought and fear. I turned over to lie on my back, and look up for any light of hope in the sky, but nothing fell on me from heaven save a cold rain, that the leafless boughs did little to ward off. Scant hope or comfort had I; my whole body ached and shuddered, only I did not thirst, for the rain soaked through the accursed napkin on my mouth, while the dank earth, with its graveyard smell, seemed to draw me down into itself, as it drags a rotting leaf. I was buried before death, as it were, even if the wolves found me not and gave me other sepulture; and now and again I heard their long hunting cry, and at every patter of

a beast's foot, or shivering of the branches, I thought my hour was come – and I unconfessed! The road was still as death, no man passing by it. This night to me was like the night of a man laid living in the tomb. By no twisting and turning could I loosen the rope that Brother Thomas had bound me in, with a hand well taught by cruel practice. At last the rain in my face grew like a water-torture, always dropping, and I half turned my face and pressed it to the ground.

Whether I slept by whiles, or waked all night, I know not, but certainly I dreamed, seeing with shut eyes faces that came and went, shifting from beauty such as I had never yet beheld, to visages more and more hideous and sinful, ending at last in the worst – the fell countenance of Noiroufle. Then I woke wholly to myself, in terror, to find that he was not there, and now came to me some of that ease which had been born of the strange, sweet voice, and the strange words, "Mes Frères de Paradis."

"My brethren of Paradise"; who could she be that rode so late in company of armed men, and yet spoke of such great kinsfolk? That it might be the holy Colette, then, as now, so famous in France for her miracles, and good deeds, and her austerities, was a thought that arose in me. But the holy Sister, as I had heard, never mounted a horse in her many wanderings, she being a villein's daughter, but was carried in a litter, or fared in a chariot; nor did she go in company with armed men, for who would dare to lay hands on her? Moreover, the voice that I had heard was that of a very young girl, and the holy Sister Colette was now entered

into the vale of years. So my questioning found no answer.

And now I heard light feet, as of some beast stirring and scratching in the trees overhead, and there with a light jingling noise. Was it a squirrel? Whatever it was, it raced about the tree, coming nearer and going further away, till it fell with a weight on my breast, and, shivering with cold, all strained like a harp-string as I was, I could have screamed, but for the gag in my mouth. The thing crawled up my body, and I saw two red eyes fixed on mine, and deemed it had been a wild cat, such as lives in our corries of the north – a fell beast if brought to bay, but otherwise not hurtful to man.

There the red eyes looked on me, and I on them, till I grew giddy with gazing, and half turned my head with a stifled sob. Then there came a sharp cry which I knew well enough, and the beast leaped up and nestled under my breast, for this so dreadful thing was no worse than the violer woman's jackanapes, that had slipped its chain, or, rather, had drawn it out of her hand, for now I plainly heard the light chain jingle. This put me on wondering whether they had really departed; the man, verily, thirsted for my life, but he would have slain me ere this hour, I thought, if that had been his purpose. The poor beast a little helped to warm me with the heat of his body, and he was a friendly creature, making me feel less alone in the night. Yet, in my own misery, I could not help but sorrow for the poor woman when she found her jackanapes gone, that was great part of her living: and I knew what she would have to bear for its loss from the man that was

her master.

As this was in my mind, the first grey stole into the sky so that I could see the black branches overhead; and now there awoke the cries of birds, and soon the wood was full of their sweet jargoning. This put some hope into my heart; but the morning hours were long, and colder than the night, to one wet to the bone with the rains. Now, too, I comforted myself with believing that, arrive what might, I was wholly quit of Brother Thomas, whereat I rejoiced, like the man in the tale who had sold his soul to the Enemy, and yet, in the end, escaped his clutches by the aid of Holy Church. Death was better to me than life with Brother Thomas, who must assuredly have dragged me with him to the death that cannot die. Morning must bring travellers, and my groaning might lead them to my aid. And, indeed, foot-farers did come, and I did groan as well as I could, but, like the Levite in Scripture, they passed by on the other side of the way, fearing to meddle with one wounded perchance to the death, lest they might be charged with his slaying, if he died, or might anger his enemies, if he lived.

The light was now fully come, and some rays of the blessed sun fell upon me, whereon I said orisons within myself, commanding my case to the saints. Devoutly I prayed, that, if I escaped with life, I might be delivered from the fear of man, and namely of Brother Thomas. It were better for me to have died by his weapon at first, beside the broken bridge, than to have lived his slave, going in dread of him, with a slave's hatred in my heart. So now

I prayed for spirit enough to defend my honour and that of my country, which I had borne to hear reviled without striking a blow for it. Never again might I dree this extreme shame and dishonour. On this head I addressed myself, as was fitting, to the holy Apostle St. Andrew, our patron, to whom is especially dear the honour of Scotland.

Then, as if he and the other saints had listened to me, I heard sounds of horses' hoofs, coming up the road from Chinon way, and also voices. These, like the others of the night before, came nearer, and I heard a woman's voice gaily singing. And then awoke such joy in my heart as never was there before, and this was far the gladdest voice that ever yet I heard, for, behold, it was the speech of my own country, and the tune I knew and the words.

> "O, we maun part this love, Willie,
> That has been lang between;
> There's a French lord coming over sea
> To wed me wi' a ring;
> There's a French lord coming o'er the sea
> To wed and take me hame!"

"And who shall the French lord be, Elliot?" came another voice, a man's this time, "though he need not cross the sea for you, the worse the luck. Is it young Pothon de Xaintrailles? Faith, he comes often enough to see how his new penoncel fares in my hands, and seems right curious in painting."

It may be deemed strange that, even in this hour, I conceived in my heart a great mislike of this young French lord, how unjustly I soon well understood.

> "O, nae French lord for me, father,
> O, nae French lord for me,
> But I'll ware my heart on a true-born Scot,
> And wi' him I'll cross the sea."

"Oh, father, lo you, I can make as well as sing, for that is no word of the old ballant, but just came on to my tongue!"

They were now right close to me, and, half in fear, half in hope, I began to stir and rustle in the grass, for of my stifled groaning had hitherto come no profit. Then I heard the horses stop.

"What stirring is that in the wood, father? I am afraid," came the girl's voice.

"Belike a fox shifting his lair. Push on, Maid Elliot." The horses advanced, when, by the blessing of the saints, the jackanapes woke in my breast.

The creature was used to run questing with a little wooden bowl he carried for largesse, to beg of horsemen for his mistress. This trick of his he did now, hearing the horses' tramp. He leaped the ditch, and I suppose he ran in front of the steeds, shaking his little bowl, as was his wont.

"Oh, father," sounded the girl's voice, "see the little jackanapes! Some travelling body has lost him. Let me jump

down and catch him. Look, he has a little coat on, made like a herald's tabard, and wears the colours of France. Here, hold my reins."

"No, lass. Who can tell where, or who, his owner is? Take you my reins, and I will bring you the beast."

I heard him heavily dismount.

"It will not let itself be caught by a lame man," he said; and he scrambled up the ditch bank, while the jackanapes fled to me, and then ran forward again, back and forth.

"Nom Dieu, whom have we here?" cried the man, in French.

I turned, and made such a sound with my mouth as I might, while the jackanapes nestled to my breast.

"Why do ye not speak, man?" he said again; and I turned my eyes on him, looking as pitifully as might be out of my blood-bedabbled face.

He was a burly man, great of growth, with fresh red cheeks, blue eyes, reddish hair, and a red beard, such as are many in the Border marches of my own country, the saints bless them for true men! Withal he dragged his leg in walking, which he did with difficulty and much carefulness. He "hirpled," as we say, towards me very warily; then, seeing the rope bound about me, and the cloth in my mouth, he drew his dagger, but not to cut my bonds. He was over canny for that, but he slit the string that kept the cursed gag in my mouth, and picked it out with his dagger point; and, oh the blessed taste of that first long draught of air, I cannot set it down in words! "What, in the name of all the saints,

make you here, in this guise?" he asked in French, but with a rude Border accent.

"I am a kindly Scot," I said in our own tongue, "of your own country. Give me water." And then a dwawm, as we call it, or fainting-fit, came over me.

When I knew myself again, I was lying with my head in a maiden's lap, and well I could have believed that the fairies had carried me to their own land, as has befallen many, whereof some have returned to earth with the tale, and some go yet in that unearthly company.

"Gentle demoiselle, are you the gracious Queen of Faerie?" I asked, as one half-wakened, not knowing what I said. Indeed this lady was clad all in the fairy green, and her eyes were as blue as the sky above her head, and the long yellow locks on her shoulders were shining like the sun.

"Father, he is not dead," she said, laughing as sweet as all the singing-birds in March – "he is not dead, but sorely wandering in his mind when he takes Elliot Hume for the Fairy Queen."

"Faith, he might have made a worse guess," cried the man. "But now, sir, now that your bonds are cut, I see nothing better for you than a well-washed face, for, indeed, you are by ordinary 'kenspeckle,' and no company for maids."

With that he brought some water from the burn by the road, and therewith he wiped my face, first giving me to drink. When I had drunk, the maid whom he called Elliot got up, her face very rosy, and they set my back against a tree, which I was right sorry

for, as indeed I was now clean out of fairyland and back in this troublesome world. The horses stood by us, tethered to trees, and browsed on the budding branches.

"And now, maybe," he said, speaking in the kindly Scots, that was like music in my ear – "now, maybe, you will tell us who you are, and how you came into this jeopardy."

I told him, shortly, that I was a Scot of Fife; whereto he answered that my speech was strangely English. On this matter I satisfied him with the truth, namely, that my mother was of England. I gave my name but not that of our lands, and showed him how I had been wandering north, to take service with the Dauphin, when I was set upon, and robbed and bound by thieves, for I had no clearness as to telling him all my tale, and no desire to claim acquaintance with Brother Thomas.

"And the jackanapes?" he asked, whereto I had no better answer than that I had seen the beast with a wandering violer on the day before, and that she having lost it, as I supposed, it had come to me in the night.

The girl was standing with the creature in her arms, feeding it with pieces of comfits from a pouch fastened at her girdle.

"The little beast is not mine to give," I went on, seeing how she had an affection to the ape, "but till the owner claims it, it is all the ransom I have to pay for my life, and I would fain see it wear the colours of this gentle maid who saved me. It has many pretty tricks, but though to-day I be a beggar, I trow she will not let it practise that ill trick of begging."

“Sooner would I beg myself, fair sir,” she said, with such a courtly reverence as surprised me; for though they seemed folks well to see in the world, they were not, methought, of noble blood, nor had they with them any company of palfreniers or archers.

“Elliot, you feed the jackanapes and let our countryman hunger,” said the man; and, blushing again, she made haste to give me some of the provision she had made for her journey.

So I ate and drank, she waiting on me very gently; but now, being weary of painful writing, and hearing the call to the refectory, and the brethren trampling thither, I must break off, for, if I be late, they will sconce me of my ale. Alas! it is to these little cares of creature comforts that I am come, who have seen the face of so many a war, and lived and fought on rat’s flesh at Compiègne.

CHAPTER IV – IN WHAT COMPANY NORMAN LESLIE ENTERED CHINON; AND HOW HE DEMEANED HIMSELF TO TAKE SERVICE

Not seemly, was it, that I should expect these kind people, even though they were of my own country, to do more for me than they had already done. So, when I had eaten and drunk, I made my obeisance as if I would be trudging towards Chinon, adding many thanks, as well I might.

"Nay, countryman," said the man, "for all that I can see, you may as well bide a while with us; for, indeed, with leave of my graceless maid, I think we may even end our wild-goose chase here and get us back to the town."

Seeing me marvel, perhaps, that any should have ridden some four miles or five, and yet speak of returning, he looked at the girl, who was playing with the jackanapes, and who smiled at him as he spoke. "You must know," said he, "that though I am the father of your Fairy Queen, I am also one of the gracious Princess's obedient subjects. No mother has she, poor wench," he added, in a lower voice; "and faith, we men must always obey some woman – as it seems now that the King himself must soon

do and all his captains."

"You speak," I said, "of the gracious Queen of Sicily and Jerusalem?" – a lady who was thought to be of much avail, as was but right, in the counsels of her son-in-law, the Dauphin, he having married her gentle daughter.

"Ay; Queen Yolande is far ben [7] with the King – would he had no worse counsellors!" said he, smiling; "but I speak of a far more potent sovereign, if all that she tells of herself be true. You have heard, or belike you have not heard, of the famed Pucelle – so she calls herself, I hope not without a warranty – the Lorrainer peasant lass, who is to drive the English into the sea, so she gives us all fair warning?"

"Never a word have I heard, or never marked so senseless a bruit if I heard it; she must be some moon-struck wench, and in her wits wandering."

"Moon-struck, or sun-struck, or saint-struck, she will strike down our ancient enemy of England, and show you men how it is not wine and wickedness that make good soldiers!" cried the girl whom he called Elliot, her face rose-red with anger; and from her eyes two blue rays of light shot straight to mine, so that I believe my face waxed wan, the blood flying to my heart.

"Listen to her! look at her!" said her father, jestingly. "Elliot, if your renowned maid can fright the English as you have affrayed a good Scot, the battle is won and Orleans is delivered."

But she had turned her back on us pettishly, and was talking in

[7] Very intimate.

a low voice to her jackanapes. As for me, if my face had been pale before, it now grew red enough for shame that I had angered her, who was so fair, though how I had sinned I knew not. But often I have seen that women, and these the best, will be all afire at a light word, wherein the touchiest man-at-arms who ever fought on the turn of a straw could pick no honourable quarrel.

"How have I been so unhappy as to offend mademoiselle?" I asked, in a whisper, of her father, giving her a high title, in very confusion.

"Oh, she will hear no bourde nor jest on this Pucelle that all the countryside is clashing of, and that is bewitching my maid, methinks, even from afar. My maid Elliot (so I call her from my mother's kin, but her true name is Marion, and the French dub her Héliote) hath set all her heart and her hope on one that is a young lass like herself, and she is full of old soothsayings about a virgin that is to come out of an oak-wood and deliver France – no less! For me, I misdoubt that Merlin, the Welsh prophet on whom they set store, and the rest of the soothsayers, are all in one tale with old Thomas Rhymer, of Ercildoune, whose prophecies our own folk crack about by the ingle on winter nights at home. But be it as it may, this wench of Lorraine has, these three-quarters of a year, been about the Sieur Robert de Baudricourt, now commanding for the King at Vaucouleurs, away in the east, praying him to send her to the Court. She has visions, and hears voices – so she says; and she gives Baudricourt no peace till he carries her to the King. The

story goes that, on the ill day of the Battle of the Herrings, she, being at Vaucouleurs – a hundred leagues away and more, – saw that fight plainly, and our countrymen fallen, manlike, around the Constable, and the French flying like hares before a little pack of English talbots. When the evil news came, and was approved true, Baudricourt could hold her in no longer, and now she is on the way with half a dozen esquires and archers of his command. The second-sight she may have – it is common enough, if you believe the red-shanked Highlanders; but if maiden she set forth from Vaucouleurs, great miracle it is if maiden she comes to Chinon." He whispered this in a manner that we call "pauky," being a free man with his tongue.

"This is a strange tale enough," I said; "the saints grant that the Maid speaks truly!"

"But yesterday came a letter of her sending to the King," he went on, "but never of her writing, for they say that she knows not 'A' from 'B,' if she meets them in her voyaging. Now, nothing would serve my wilful daughter Elliot (she being possessed, as I said, with love for this female mystery), but that we must ride forth and be the first to meet the Maid on her way, and offer her shelter at my poor house, if she does but seem honest, though methinks a hostelry is good enough for one that has ridden so far, with men for all her company. And I, being but a subject of my daughter's, as I said, and this a Saint's Day, when a man may rest from his paints and brushes, I even let saddle the steeds, and came forth to see what ferlies Heaven would send us."

"Oh, a lucky day for me, fair sir," I answered him, marvelling to hear him speak of paint and brushes, and even as I spoke a thought came into my mind. "If you will listen to me, sir," I said, "and if the gentle maid, your daughter, will pardon me for staying you so long from the road, I will tell you that, to my thinking, you have come over late, for that yesterday the Maiden you speak of rode, after nightfall, into Chinon."

Now the girl turned round on me, and, in faith, I asked no more than to see her face, kind or angry. "You tell us, sir, that you never heard speak of the Maid till this hour, and now you say that you know of her comings and goings. Unriddle your riddle, sir, if it pleases you, and say how you saw and knew one that you never heard speech of."

She was still very wroth, and I knew not whether I might not anger her yet more, so I louted lowly, cap in hand, and said —

"It is but a guess that comes into my mind, and I pray you be not angry with me, who am ready and willing to believe in this Maid, or in any that will help France, for, if I be not wrong, last night her coming saved my life, and that of her own company."

"How may that be, if thieves robbed and bound you?"

"I told you not all my tale," I said, "for, indeed, few would have believed the thing that had not seen it. But, upon my faith as a gentleman, and by the arm-bone of the holy Apostle Andrew, which these sinful eyes have seen, in the church of the Apostle in his own town, somewhat holy passed this way last night; and if this Maid be indeed sent from heaven, that holy thing was she,

and none other."

"Nom Dieu! saints are not common wayfarers on our roads at night. There is no 'wale' of saints in this country," said the father of Elliot; "and as this Pucelle of Lorraine must needs pass by us here, if she is still on the way, even tell us all your tale."

With that I told them how the "brigands" (for so they now began to call such reivers as Brother Thomas) were, to my shame, and maugre my head, for a time of my own company. And I told them of the bushment that they laid to trap travellers, and how I had striven to give a warning, and how they bound me and gagged me, and of the strange girl's voice that spoke through the night of "mes Frères de Paradis," and of that golden "boyn" faring in the dark, that I thought I saw, and of the words spoken by the blind man and the soldier, concerning some vision which affrayed them, I know not what.

At this tale the girl Elliot, crossing herself very devoutly, cried aloud —

"O father, did I not tell you so? This holy thing can have been no other but that blessed Maiden, guarded by the dear saints in form visible, whom this gentleman, for the sin of keeping evil company, was not given the grace to see. Oh, come, let us mount and ride to Chinon, for already she is within the walls; had we not ridden forth so early, we must have heard tell of it."

It seemed something hard to me that I was to have no grace to behold what others, and they assuredly much more sinful men than myself, had been permitted to look upon, if this damsel was

right in that she said. And how could any man, were he himself a saint, see what was passing by, when his head was turned the other way? Howbeit, she called me a gentleman, as indeed I had professed myself to be, and this I saw, that her passion of anger against me was spent, as then, and gone by, like a shower of April.

"Gentleman you call yourself, sir," said her father; "may I ask of what house?"

"We are cadets of the house of Rothes," I answered. "My father, Leslie of Pitcullo, is the fourth son of the third son of the last laird of Rothes but one; and, for me, I was of late a clerk studying in St. Andrews."

"I will not ask why you left your lore," he said; "I have been young myself, and, faith, the story of one lad varies not much from the story of another. If we have any spirit, it drives us out to fight the foreign loons in their own country, if we have no feud at home. But you are a clerk, I hear you say, and have skill enough to read and write?"

"Yea, and, if need were, can paint, in my degree, and do fair lettering on holy books, for this art was my pleasure, and I learned it from a worthy monk in the abbey."

"O day of miracles!" he cried. "Listen, Elliot, and mark how finely I have fallen in luck's way! Lo you, sir, I also am a gentleman in my degree, simple as you see me, being one of the Humes of Polwarth; but by reason of my maimed leg, that came to me with scars many, from certain shrewd blows got at Verneuil fight, I am disabled from war. A murrain on the English bill that

dealt the stroke! To make up my ransom (for I was taken prisoner there, where so few got quarter) cost me every crown I could gather, so I even fell back on the skill I learned, like you, when I was a lad, from a priest in the Abbey of Melrose. Ashamed of my craft I am none, for it is better to paint banners and missals than to beg; and now, for these five years, I am advanced to be Court painter to the King himself, thanks to John Kirkmichael, Bishop of Orleans, who is of my far-away kin. A sore fall it is, for a Hume of Polwarth; and strangely enough do the French scribes write my name – 'Hauves Poulvoir,' and otherwise, so please you; but that is ever their wont with the best names in all broad Scotland. Lo you, even now there is much ado with banner-painting for the companies that march to help Orleans, ever and again."

"When the Maiden marches, father, you shall have banner-painting," said the girl.

"Ay, lass, when the Maid marches, and when the lift falls and smoors the laverocks we shall catch them in plenty. [8] But, Maid or no Maid, saving your presence, sir, I need what we craftsmen (I pray you again to pardon me) call an apprentice, and I offer you, if you are skilled as you say, this honourable post, till you find a better."

My face grew red again with anger at the word "apprentice," and I know not how I should have answered an offer so unworthy of my blood, when the girl broke in —

"Till this gentleman marches with the flower of France against

[8] When the sky falls and smothers the larks,

our old enemy of England, you should say, father, and helps to show them another Bannockburn on Loire-side."

"Ay, well, till then, if it likes you," he said, smiling. "Till then there is bed, and meat, and the penny fee for him, till that great day."

"That is coming soon!" she cried, her eyes raised to heaven, and so fair she looked, that, being a young man and of my complexion amorous, I could not bear to be out of her company when I might be in it, so stooped my pride to agree with him.

"Sir," I said, "I thank you heartily for your offer. You come of as good a house as mine, and yours is the brag of the Border, as mine is of the kingdom of Fife. If you can put your pride in your pouch, faith, so can I; the rather that there is nothing else therein, and so room enough and to spare. But, as touching what this gentle demoiselle has said, I may march also, may I not, when the Maid rides to Orleans?"

"Ay, verify, with my goodwill, then you may," he cried, laughing, while the lass frowned.

Then we clapped hands on it, for a bargain, and he did not insult me by the offer of any arles, or luck penny.

The girl was helped to horse, setting her foot on my hand, that dirled as her little shoe sole touched it; and the jackanapes rode on her saddle-bow very proudly. For me, I ran as well as I might, but stiffly enough, being cold to the marrow, holding by the father's stirrup-leather and watching the lass's yellow hair that danced on her shoulders as she rode foremost. In this company,

then, so much better than that I had left, we entered Chinon town, and came to their booth, and their house on the water-side. Then, of their kindness, I must to bed, which comfort I sorely needed, and there I slept, in fragrant linen sheets, till compline rang.

CHAPTER V – OF THE FRAY ON THE DRAWBRIDGE AT CHINON CASTLE

During supper, to which they called me, my master showed me the best countenance that might be, and it was great joy to me to eat off clean platters once again, on white linen strewn with spring flowers. As the time was Lent, we had fare that they called meagre: fish from the Vienne water, below the town, and eggs cooked in divers fashions, all to the point of excellence, for the wine and fare of Chinon are famous in France. As my duty was, I waited on my master and on the maid Elliot, who was never silent, but babbled of all that she had heard since she came into the town; as to where the Pucelle had lighted off her horse (on the edge-stone of a well, so it seemed), and where and with what goodwife she lodged, and how as yet no message had come to her from the castle and the King; and great joy it was to watch and to hear her. But her father mocked, though in a loving manner; and once she wept at his bourdes, and shone out again, when he fell on his knees, offering her a knife and baring his breast to the stroke, for I have never seen more love between father and child, my own experience being contrary. Yet to my sisters my father was ever debonnair; for, as I have often marked, the mothers love the sons best and the sons the mothers, and between father and

daughters it is the same. But of my mother I have spoken in the beginning of this history.

When supper was ended, and all things made orderly, I had no great mind for my bed, having slept my fill for that time. But the maid Elliot left us early, which was as if the light had been taken out of the room.

Beside the fire, my master fell to devising about the state of the country, as burgesses love to do. And I said that, if I were the Dauphin, Chinon Castle should not hold me long, for my "spur would be in my horse's side, and the bridle on his mane," [9] as the old song of the Battle of Harlaw runs, and I on the way to Orleans. Thereto he answered, that he well wished it were so, and, mocking, wished that I were the Dauphin.

"Not that our Dauphin is a coward, the blood of Saint Louis has not fallen so low, but he is wholly under the Sieur de La Trémouille, who was thrust on him while he was young, and still is his master, or, as we say, his governor. Now, this lord is one that would fain run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, and this side of him is Burgundian and that is Armagnac, and on which of the sides his heart is, none knows. At Azincour, as I have heard, he played the man reasonably well. But he waxes very fat for a man-at-arms, and is fond of women, and wine, and of his ease. Now, if once the King ranges up with the Bastard of Orleans, and Xaintrailles, and the other captains, who hate La Trémouille,

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[9] This quotation makes it certain that Scott's ballad of Harlaw, in "The Antiquary," is, at least in part, derived from tradition.

then his power, and the power of the Chancellor, the Archbishop of Rheims, is gone and ended. So these two work ever to patch up a peace with Burgundy, but, seeing that the duke has his father's death to avenge on our King, they may patch and better patch, but no peace will come of it. And the captains cry 'Forward!' and the archbishop and La Trémouille cry 'Back!' and in the meantime Orleans will fall, and the Dauphin may fly whither he will, for France is lost. But, for myself, I would to the saints that I and my lass were home again, beneath the old thorn-tree at Polwarth on the green, where I have been merry lang syne."

With that word he fell silent, thinking, I doubt not, of his home, as I did of mine, and of the house of Pitcullo and the ash-tree at the door, and the sea beyond the ploughed land of the plain. So, after some space of silence, he went to his bed, and I to mine, where for long I lay wakeful, painting on the dark the face of Elliot, and her blue eyes, and remembering her merry, changeful ways.

Betimes in the morning I was awakened by the sound of her moving about through the house, and having dressed and gone forth from my little chamber, I found her in the house-place, she having come from early Mass. She took little heed of me, giving me some bread and wine, the same as she and her father took; and she was altogether less gay and wilful than she had been, and there seemed to be something that lay heavy on her mind. When her father asked her if the gossips at the church door had given her any more tidings of the Maid, she did but frown, and soon

left the chamber, whence my master led me forth into his booth, and bade me show him my hand in writing. This pleased him not ill, and next I must grind colours to his liking; and again he went about his business, while I must mind the booth, and be cap in hand to every saucy page that came from the castle with an order from his lord.

Full many a time my hand was on my whinger, and yet more often I wished myself on the free road again, so that I were out of ill company, and assuredly the Lorrainer Maid, whatever she might be, was scarcely longing more than I for the day when she should unfurl her banner and march, with me at her back, to Orleans. For so irksome was my servitude, and the laying of colours on the ground of banners for my master to paint, and the copying of books of Hours and Missals, and the insolence of customers worse born than myself, that I could have drowned myself in the Vienne water but for the sight of Elliot. Yet she was become staid enough, and betimes sad; as it seemed that there was no good news of her dear Maid, for the King would not see her, and all men (it appeared), save those who had ridden with her, mocked the Pucelle for a bold ramp, with a bee in her bonnet. But the two gentlemen that had been her escort were staunch. Their names were Jean de Metz and Bertrand de Poulengy, good esquires.

Of me Elliot made ofttimes not much more account than of her jackanapes, which was now in very high favour, and waxing fat, so that, when none but her father could hear her, she would

jest and call him La Trémouille.

Yet I, as young men will, was forward in all ways to serve her, and to win her grace and favour. She was fain to hear of Scotland, her own country, which she had never seen, and I was as fain to tell her. And betimes I would say how fair were the maidens of our own country, and how any man that saw her would know her to be a Scot, though from her tongue, in French, none might guess it. And, knowing that she loved wildflowers, I would search for them and bring them to her, and would lead her to speak of romances which she loved, no less than I, and of pages who had loved queens, and all such matters as young men and maids are wont to devise of; and now she would listen, and at other seasons would seem proud, and as if her mind were otherwhere. Young knights many came to our booth, and looked ill-pleased when I served them, and their eyes were ever on the inner door, watching for Elliot, whom they seldom had sight of.

So here was I, in a double service, who, before I met Brother Thomas, had been free of heart and hand. But, if my master's service irked me, in that other I found comfort, when I could devise with Elliot, as concerning our country and her hopes for the Maid. But my own hopes were not high, nor could I mark any sign that she favoured me more than another, though I had the joy to be often in her company. And, indeed, what hope could I have, being so young, and poor, and in visible station no more than any 'prentice lad? My heart was much tormented in these fears, and mainly because we heard no tidings that the Maid was

accepted by the Dauphin, and that the day of her marching, and of my deliverance from my base craft of painting, was at hand.

It so fell out, how I knew not, whether I had shown me too presumptuous for an apprentice, or because of any other reason, that Elliot had much forborne my company, and was more often in church at her prayers than in the house, or, when in the house, was busy in divers ways, and I scarce ever could get word of her. Finding her in this mood, I also withdrew within myself, and was both proud and sorely unhappy, longing more than ever to take my own part in the world as a man-at-arms. Now, one day right early, I being alone in the chamber, copying a psalter, Elliot came in, looking for her father. I rose at her coming, doffing my cap, and told her, in few words, that my master had gone forth. Thereon she flitted about the chamber, looking at this and that, while I stood silent, deeming that she used me in a sort scarce becoming my blood and lineage.

Suddenly she said, without turning round, for she was standing by a table gazing at the pictures in a Book of Hours —

"I have seen her!"

"The Pucelle? – do you speak of her, gentle maid?"

"I saw her and spoke to her, and heard her voice"; and here her own broke, and I guessed that she was near to weeping. "I went up within the castle precinct, to the tower Coudraye," she said, "for I knew that she lodged hard by, with a good woman who dwells there. I passed into the chapel of St. Martin on the cliff, and there heard the voice of one praying before the image of Our

Lady. The voice was even as you said that day – the sweetest of voices. I knelt beside her, and prayed aloud for her and for France. She rested her hand on my hair – her hair is black, and cut 'en ronde' like a man's. It is true that they say, she dresses in man's garb. We came forth together, and I put my hand into hers, and said, 'I believe in you; if none other believes, yet do I believe.' Then she wept, and she kissed me; she is to visit me here to-morrow, la fille de Dieu – "

She drew a long sob, and struck her hand hard on the table; then, keeping her back ever towards me, she fled swiftly from the room. I was amazed – so light of heart as she commonly seemed, and of late disdainful – to find her in this passion. Yet it was to me that she had spoken – to me that she had opened her heart. Now I guessed that, if I was ever to win her, it must be through this Pucelle, on whom her mind was so strangely bent. So I prayed that, if it might be God's will, He would prosper the Maid, and let me be her loyal servitor, and at last bring me to my desire.

Something also I dreamed, as young men will who have read many romances, of myself made a knight for great feats of arms, and wearing in my salade my lady's favour, and breaking a spear on Talbot, or Fastolf, or Glasdale, in some last great victory for France.

Then shone on my eyesight, as it were, the picture of these two children, for they were little more, Elliot and the Maid, kneeling together in the chapel of St. Martin, the gold hair and the black blended; and what were they two alone against this

world and the prince of this world? Alas, how much, and again how little, doth prayer avail us! These thoughts were in my mind all day, while serving and answering customers, and carrying my master's wares about the town, and up to the castle on the cliff, where the soldiers and sentries now knew me well enough, and the Scots archers treated me kindly. But as for Elliot, she was like her first self again, and merrier than common with her father, to whom, as far as my knowledge went, she said not a word about the meeting in the crypt of St. Martin's chapel, though to me she had spoken so freely. This gave me some hope; but when I would have tried to ask her a question, she only gazed at me in a manner that abashed me, and turned off to toy with her jackanapes. Whereby I went to my bed perplexed, and with a heavy heart, as one that was not yet conversant with the ways of women – nay, nor ever, in my secular life, have I understood what they would be at. Happier had it been for my temporal life if I had been wiser in woman's ways. But commonly, when we have learned a lesson, the lore comes too late.

Next day my master had business at the castle with a certain lord, and took me thither to help in carrying his wares. This castle was a place that I loved well, it is so old, having first been builded when the Romans were lords of the land; and is so great and strong that our bishop's castle of St. Andrews seems but a cottage compared to it. From the hill-top there is a wide prospect over the tower and the valley of the Vienne, which I liked to gaze upon. My master, then, went in by the drawbridge, high above

the moat, which is so deep that, I trow, no foeman could fill it up and cross it to assail the walls. My master, in limping up the hill, had wearied himself, but soon passed into the castle through the gateway of the bell-tower, as they call it, while I waited for him on the further end of the bridge, idly dropping morsels of bread to the swans that swam in the moat below.

On the drawbridge, standing sentinel, was a French man-at-arms, a young man of my own age, armed with a long fauchard, which we call a bill or halberd, a weapon not unlike the Lochaber axes of the Highlandmen. Other soldiers, French, Scottish, Spaniards, Germans, a mixed company, were idling and dicing just within the gate.

I was throwing my last piece of crust to a swan, my mind empty of thought, when I started out of my dream, hearing that rare woman's voice which once I had heard before. Then turning quickly, I saw, walking between two gentlemen, even those who had ridden with her from Vaucouleurs, one whom no man could deem to be other than that much-talked-of Maid of Lorraine. She was clad very simply, like the varlet of some lord of no great estate, in a black cap with a little silver brooch, a grey doublet, and black and grey hose, trussed up with many points; a sword of small price hung by her side. [10] In stature she was something above the common height of women, her face brown with sun and wind, her eyes great, grey, and beautiful, beneath black brows, her lips red and smiling. In figure she seemed strong and shapely,

[10] This description confirms that of the contemporary town-clerk of La Rochelle.

but so slim – she being but seventeen years of age – that, were it not for her sweet girl's voice, and for the beauty of her grey eyes, she might well have passed for a page, her black hair being cut "en ronde," as was and is the fashion among men-at-arms. Thus much have I written concerning her bodily aspect, because many have asked me what manner of woman was the blessed Maid, and whether she was beautiful. I gazed at her like one moon-struck, then, remembering my courtesy, I doffed my cap, and louted low; and she bowed, smiling graciously like a great lady, but with such an air as if her mind was far away.

She passed, with her two gentlemen, but the French sentinel barred the way, holding his fauchard thwartwise.

"On what business come you, and by what right?" he cried, in a rude voice.

"By the Dauphin's gracious command, to see the Dauphin," said one of the gentlemen right courteously. "Here is his own letter, and you may know the seal, bidding La Pucelle to come before him at this hour."

The fellow looked at the seal, and could not but acknowledge the arms of France thereon. He dropped his fauchard over his shoulder, and stood aside, staring impudently at the Maiden, and muttering foul words.

"So this is the renowned Pucelle," he cried; "by God's name".. and here he spoke words such as I may not set down in writing, blaspheming God and the Maid.

She turned and looked at him, but as if she saw him not; and

then, a light of joy and love transfiguring her face, she knelt down on the drawbridge, folding her hands, her face bowed, and so abode while one might count twenty, we that beheld her being amazed. Then she rose and bent as if in salutation to one we saw not; next, addressing herself to the sentinel, she said, very gently —

"Sir, how canst thou take in vain the name of God, thou that art in this very hour to die?"

So speaking, she with her gentlemen went within the gate, while the soldier stood gazing after her like a man turned to stone.

The Maid passed from our sight, and then the sentinel, coming to himself, turned in great wrath on me, who stood hard by.

"What make you gaping here, you lousy wine-sack of Scotland?" he cried; and at the word, my prayer which I had made to St. Andrew in my bonds came into my mind, namely, that I should not endure to hear my country defamed.

I stopped not to think of words, wherein I never had a ready wit, but his were still in his mouth when I had leaped within his guard, so that he might not swing out his long halberd.

"Blasphemer and liar!" I cried, gripping his neck with my left hand, while with two up-cuts of my right I sent his lies down his throat in company, as I deem, with certain of his teeth.

He dropped his halberd against the wooden fence of the bridge, and felt for his dagger. I caught at his right hand with mine; cries were in my ears – St. Denis for France! St. Andrew for Scotland! – as the other men on guard came running forth

to see the sport.

We gripped and swayed for a moment, then the staff of his fauchard coming between his legs, he tripped and fell, I above him; our weight soused against the low pales of the bridge side, that were crazy and old; there was a crash, and I felt myself in mid-air, failing to the moat far below us. Down and down I whirled, and then the deep water closed over me.

CHAPTER VI – HOW NORMAN LESLIE ESCAPED OUT OF CHINON CASTLE

Down and down I sank, the water surging up into my nostrils and sounding in my ears; but, being in water, I was safe if it were but deep enough. Presently I struck out, and, with a stroke or two, came to the surface. But no sooner did my head show above, and I draw a deep breath or twain, looking for my enemy, than an arbalest bolt cleft the water with a clipping sound, missing me but narrowly. I had but time to see that there was a tumult on the bridge, and swords out (the Scots, as I afterwards heard, knocking up the arbalests that the French soldiers levelled at me). Then I dived again, and swam under water, making towards the right and the castle rock, which ran sheer down to the moat. This course I chose because I had often noted, from the drawbridge, a jutting buttress of rock, behind which, at least, I should be out of arrow-shot. My craft was to give myself all the semblance of a drowning man, throwing up my arms, when I rose to see whereabout I was and to take breath, as men toss their limbs who cannot swim. On the second time of rising thus, I saw myself close to the jut of rock. My next dive took me behind it, and I let down my feet, close under the side of this natural buttress, to look around, being myself now concealed from the sight of those

who were on the bridge.

To my surprise I touched bottom, for I had deemed that the water was very deep thereby. Next I found that I was standing on a step of hewn stone, and that a concealed staircase, cut in the rock, goes down, in that place, to the very bottom of the moat; for what purpose I know not, but so it is. [11] I climbed up the steps, shook myself, and wrung the water out of my hair, looking about the while for any sign of my enemy, who had blasphemed against my country and the Maiden. But there was nothing to see on the water save my own cloth cap floating. On the other side of the fosse, howbeit, men were launching a pleasure-boat, which lay by a stair at the foot of the further wall of the fosse. The sight of them made me glad to creep further up the steps that rounded a sharp corner, till I came as far as an iron wicket-gate, which seemed to cut off my retreat. There I stopped, deeming that the wicket must be locked. The men were now rowing the boat into the middle of the water, so, without expecting to find the gate open, I tried the handle. It turned, to my no little amazement; the gate swang lightly aside, as if its hinges had been newly oiled, and I followed the staircase, creeping up the slimy steps in the half-dark. Up and round I went, till I was wellnigh giddy, and then I tripped and reeled so that my body struck against a heavy ironed door. Under my weight it yielded gently, and I stumbled across the threshold of a room that smelled strangely sweet and was very warm, being full of the sun, and the heat of a great fire.

[11] The staircase still exists.

"Is that you, Robin of my heart?" said a girl's voice in French; and, before I could move, a pair of arms were round my neck. Back she leaped, finding me all wet, and not the man she looked for; and there we both stood, in a surprise that prevented either of us from speaking.

She was a pretty lass, with brown hair and bright red cheeks, and was dressed all in white, being, indeed, one of the laundresses of the castle; and this warm room, fragrant with lavender, whereinto I had stumbled, was part of the castle laundry. A mighty fire was burning, and all the tables were covered with piles and flat baskets of white linen, sweet with scented herbs.

Back the maid stepped towards the door, keeping her eyes on mine; and, as she did not scream, I deemed that none were within hearing: wherein I was wrong, and she had another reason for holding her peace.

"Save me, gentle maid, if you may," I cried at last, falling on my knees, just where I stood: "I am a luckless man, and stand in much peril of my life."

"In sooth you do," she said, "if Robert Lindsay of the Scottish Archers finds you here. He loves not that another should take his place at a tryst."

"Maiden," I said, beginning to understand why the gate was unlocked, and wherefore it went so smooth on its hinges, "I fear I have slain a man, one of the King's archers. We wrestled together on the drawbridge, and the palisade breaking, we fell into the

moat, whence I clomb by the hidden stairs."

"One of the archers!" cried she, as pale as a lily, and catching at her side with her hand. "Was he a Scot?"

"No, maid, but I am; and I pray you hide me, or show me how to escape from this castle with my life, and that speedily."

"Come hither!" she said, drawing me through a door into a small, square, empty room that jutted out above the moat. "The other maids are at their dinner," she went on, "and I all alone – the season being Lent, and I under penance, and thinking of no danger."

For which reason, I doubt not, namely that the others had gone forth, she had made her tryst at this hour with Robin Lindsay. But he, if he was, as she said, one of the Scottish archers that guarded the gate, was busy enough belike with the tumult on the bridge, or in seeking for the body of mine enemy.

"How to get you forth I know not," she said, "seeing that from yonder room you pass into the kitchen and thence into the guard-room, and thence again by a passage in the wall behind the great hall, and so forth to the court, and through the gate, and thereby there is no escape: for see you the soldiers must, and will avenge their comrade."

Hearing this speech, I seemed to behold myself swinging by a tow from a tree branch, a death not beseeming one of gentle blood. Up and down I looked, in vain, and then I turned to the window, thinking that, as better was not to be, I might dive thence into the moat, and take my chance of escape by the stairs on the

further side. But the window was heavily barred. Yet again, if I went forth by the door, and lurked on the postern stair, there was Robin Lindsay's dirk to reckon with, when he came, a laggard, to his love-tryst.

"Stop! I have it," said the girl; and flying into the laundry, she returned with a great bundle of white women's gear and a gown of linen, and a woman's white coif, such as she herself wore.

In less time than a man would deem possible, she had my wet hair, that I wore about my shoulders, as our student's manner was, tucked up under the cap, and the clean white smock over my wet clothes, and belted neatly about my middle.

"A pretty wench you make, I swear by St. Valentine," cried she, falling back to look at me, and then coming forward to pin up something about my coif, with her white fingers.

I reckoned it no harm to offer her a sisterly kiss.

"'Tis lucky Robin Lindsay is late," cried she, laughing, "though even were he here, he could scarce find fault that one maid should kiss another. Now," she said, snatching up a flat crate full of linen, "carry these, the King's shirts, and sorely patched they are, on your head; march straight through the kitchen, then through the guard-room, and then by the door on the left into the long passage, and so into the court, and begone; they will but take you for a newly come blanchisseuse. Only speak as little as may be, for your speech may betray you." She kissed me very kindly on both cheeks, for she was as frank a lass as ever I met, and a merry. Then, leading me to the door of the

inner room, she pushed it open, the savoury reek of the kitchen pouring in.

"Make good speed, Margot!" she cried aloud after me, so that all could hear; and I walked straight up the King's kitchen, full as it was of men and boys, breaking salads, spitting fowls, basting meat (though it was Lent, but doubtless the King had a dispensation for his health's sake), watching pots, tasting dishes, and all in a great bustle and clamour. The basket of linen shading my face, I felt the more emboldened, though my legs, verily, trembled under me as I walked. Through the room I went, none regarding me, and so into the guard-room, but truly this was another matter. Some soldiers were dicing at a table, some drinking, some brawling over the matter of the late tumult, but all stopped and looked at me.

"A new face, and, by St. Andrew, a fair one!" said a voice in the accent of my own country.

"But she has mighty big feet; belike she is a countrywoman of thine," quoth a French archer; and my heart sank within me as the other cast a tankard at his head.

"Come, my lass," cried another, a Scot, with a dice-box in his hand, catching at my robe as I passed, "kiss me and give me luck," and, striking up my basket of linen, so that the wares were all scattered on the floor, he drew me on to his knee, and gave me a smack that reeked sorely of garlic. Never came man nearer getting a sore buffet, yet I held my hand. Then, making his cast with the dice, he swore roundly, when he saw that he had thrown

deuces.

"Lucky in love, unlucky in gaming. Lug out your losings," said his adversary with a laugh; and the man left hold of my waist and began fumbling in his pouch. Straightway, being free, I cast myself on the floor to pick up the linen, and hide my face, which so burned that it must have seemed as red as the most modest maid might have deemed seemly.

"Leave the wench alone; she is new come, I warrant, and has no liking for your wantonness," said a kind voice; and, glancing up, I saw that he who spoke was one of the gentlemen who had ridden with the Maiden from Vaucouleurs. Bertrand de Poulengy was his name; belike he was waiting while the King and the nobles devised with the Maiden privately in the great hall.

He stooped and helped me to pick up my linen, as courteously as if I had been a princess of the blood; and, because he was a gentleman, I suppose, and a stranger, the archers did not meddle with him, save to break certain soldiers' jests, making me glad that I was other than I appeared.

"Come," he said, "my lass, I will be your escort; it seems that Fortune has chosen me for a champion of dames."

With these words he led the way forth, and through a long passage lit from above, which came out into the court at the stairs of the great hall.

Down these stairs the Maiden herself was going, her face held high and a glad look in her eyes, her conference with the King being ended. Poulengy joined her; they said some words which

I did not hear, for I deemed that it became me to walk forward after thanking him by a look, and bending my head, for I dared not trust my foreign tongue.

Before I reached the gateway they had joined me, which I was glad of, fearing more insolence from the soldiers. But these men held their peace, looking grave, and even affrighted, being of them who had heard the prophecy of the Maiden and seen its fulfilment.

"Have ye found the body of that man?" said Poulengy to a sergeant-at-arms.

"Nay, sir, we deem that his armour weighed him down, for he never rose once, though that Scot's head was seen thrice and no more. Belike they are good, peaceful friends at the bottom of the fosse together."

"Of what man speak you?" asked the Maiden of Poulengy.

"Of him that blasphemed as we went by an hour ago. Wrestling with a Scot on some quarrel, they broke the palisade, and – lo! there are joiners already mending it. 'Tis old and frail. The gentle Dauphin is over poor to keep the furnishings of his castle as a king should do."

The Maiden grew wan as sun-dried grass in summer when she heard this story told. Crossing herself, she said —

"Alas! I warned him, but he died unconfessed. I will do what I may to have Masses said for the repose of his soul, poor man: and he so young!"

With that she wept, for she wept readily, even for a less thing

than such a death as was that archer's.

We had now crossed the drawbridge, whereat my heart beat more lightly, and the Maiden told Poulengy that she would go to the house where she lodged, near the castle.

"And thence," she said, "I must fare into the town, for I have promised to visit a damsel of my friends, one Héliote Poulvoir, if I may find my way thither. Know you, gentle damsel," she said to me, "where she abides? Or perchance you can lead me thither, if it lies on your way."

"I was even going thither, Pucelle," I said, mincing in my speech; whereat she laughed, for of her nature she was merry.

"Scots are Héliote and her father, and a Scot are not you also, damsel? your speech betrays you," she said; "you all cling close together, you Scots, as beseems you well, being strangers in this sweet land of France"; and her face lighted up as she spoke the name she loved, and my heart worshipped her with reverence.

"Farewell," she cried to Poulengy, smiling graciously, and bowing with such a courtesy as a queen might show, for I noted it myself, as did all men, that this peasant girl had the manners of the Court, being schooled, as I deem, by the greatest of ladies, her friends St. Margaret and St. Catherine.

Then, with an archer, who had ridden beside her from Vaucouleurs, following after her as he ever did, the Maiden and I began to go down the steep way that led to the town. Little she spoke, and all my thought was to enter the house before Elliot could spy me in my strange disguise.

CHAPTER VII – CONCERNING THE WRATH OF ELLIOT, AND THE JEOPARDY OF NORMAN LESLIE

The while we went down into the city of Chinon, a man attired as a maid, a maiden clad as a man – strange companions! – we held but little converse. Her mind, belike, was on fire with a great light of hope, of which afterwards I learned, and the end of the days of trouble and of men's disbelief seemed to her to be drawing near. We may not know what visions of victory and of auxiliary angels, of her King crowned, and fair France redeemed and at peace, were passing through her fancy. Therefore she was not fain to talk, being at all times a woman of few words; and in this, as in so many other matters, unlike most of her sex.

On my side I had more than enough to think of, for my case and present jeopardy were enough to amaze older and wiser heads than mine. For, imprimis, I had slain one of the King's guards; and, moreover, had struck the first blow, though my adversary, indeed, had given me uttermost provocation. But even if my enemies allowed me to speak in my own defence, which might scarcely be save by miracle, it was scantly possible for me to prove that the other had insulted me and my country. Some

little hope I had that Sir Patrick Ogilvie, now constable of the Scottish men-at-arms in France, or Sir Hugh Kennedy, or some other of our knights, might take up my quarrel, for the sake of our common blood and country, we Scots always backing each the other when abroad. Yet, on the other hand, it was more probable that I might be swinging, with a flock of crows pecking at my face, before any of my countrymen could speak a word for me with the King.

It is true that they who would most eagerly have sought my life deemed me already dead, drowned in the fosse, and so would make no search for me. Yet, as soon as I went about my master's affairs, as needs I must, I would be known and taken; and, as we say in our country proverb, "my craig would ken the weight of my hurdies." [12] None the less, seeing that the soldiers deemed me dead, I might readily escape at once from Chinon, and take to the roads again, if but I could reach my master's house unseen, and get rid of this foolish feminine gear of cap and petticoat which now I wore to my great shame and discomfort.

But on this hand lay little hope; for, once on the road, I should be in a worse jeopardy than ever before, as an apprentice fled from my master, and, moreover, with blood on my hands. Moreover, I could ill brook the thought of leaving Elliot, to whom my heart went forth in love, and of missing my chance to strike a blow in the wars for the Maiden, and against the English; of which reward I had the promise from my master. Fortune, and

[12] "My neck would learn the weight of my more solid proportions."

fame, and love, if I were to gain what every young man most desires, were only to be won by remaining at Chinon; but there, too, the face of death was close to mine – as, indeed, death, or at least shame and poverty, lay ambushed for me on all sides.

Here I sadly remembered how, with a light heart, I had left St. Andrews, deeming that the story of my life was now about to begin, as it did for many young esquires of Greece and other lands, concerning whom I had read in romances. Verily in the tale of my adventures hitherto there had been more cuffs than crowns, more shame than honour; and, as to winning my spurs, I was more in point to win a hempen rope, and in my end disgrace my blood.

Now, as if these perils were not enough to put a man beside himself, there was another risk which, even more than these, took up my thoughts. Among all my dangers and manifold distresses, this raised its head highest in my fancy, namely, the fear that my love should see me in my outlandish guise, clad in woman's weeds, and carrying on my head a woman's burden. It was not so much that she must needs laugh and hold me in little account. Elliot laughed often, so that now it was not her mirth, to which she was ever ready, but her wrath (whereto she was ready also) that I held in awful regard. For her heart and faith, in a marvellous manner passing the love of women, were wholly set on this maid, in whose company I now fared. And, if the Maid went in men's attire (as needs she must, for modesty's sake, who was about men's business, in men's company), here was I attending her

in woman's gear, as if to make a mock of her, though in my mind I deemed her no less than a sister of the saints. And Elliot was sure to believe that I carried myself thus in mockery and to make laughter; for, at that time, there were many in France who mocked, as did that soldier whose death I had seen and caused. Thus I stood in no more danger of death, great as was that risk, than in jeopardy of my mistress's favour, which, indeed, of late I had been in some scant hope at last to win. Thus, on all hands, I seemed to myself as sore bestead as ever man was, and on no side saw any hope of succour.

I mused so long and deep on these things, that the thought which might have helped me came to me too late, namely, to tell all my tale to the Maiden herself, and throw me on her mercy. Nay, even when at last and late this light shone on my mind, I had shame to speak to her, considering the marvellous thing which I had just beheld of her, in the fulfilment of her prophecy. But now my master's house was in sight, at the turning from the steep stairs and the wynd, and there stood Elliot on the doorstep, watching and waiting for the Maid, as a girl may wait for her lover coming from the wars.

There was no time given me to slink back and skulk in the shadow of the corner of the wynd; for, like a greyhound in speed, Elliot had flown to us and was kneeling to the Maid, who, with a deep blush and some anger in her face – for she loved no such obeisances – bade her rise, and so kissed and embraced her, as young girls use among themselves when they are friends and fain

of each other. I had turned myself to go apart into the shadow of the corner, as secretly as I might, when I ran straight into the arms of the archer that followed close behind us. On this encounter he gave a great laugh, and, I believe, would have kissed me; but, the Maiden looking round, he stood erect and grave as a soldier on guard, for the Maiden would suffer no light loves and daffing.

"Whither make you, damsel, in such haste?" she cried to me. "Come, let me present you to this damsel, my friend – and one of your own country-women. Elliot, ma mie," she said to my mistress, "here is this kind lass, a Scot like yourself, who has guided me all the way from the castle hither, and, faith, the way is hard to find. Do you thank her for me, and let her sit down in your house: she must be weary with the weight of her basket and her linen" – for these, when she spoke to me, I had laid on the ground. With this she led me up to Elliot by the hand, who began to show me very gracious countenance, and to thank me, my face burning all the while with confusion and fear of her anger.

Suddenly a new look, such as I had never seen before on her face in her light angers, came into her eyes, which grew hard and cold, her mouth also showing stiff; and so she stood, pale, gazing sternly, and as one unable to speak. Then —

"Go out of my sight," she said, very low, "and from my father's house! Forth with you for a mocker and a gangrel loon!" – speaking in our common Scots, – "and herd with the base thieves from whom you came, coward and mocking malapert!"

The storm had fallen on my head, even as I feared it must, and

I stood as one bereft of speech and reason.

The Maid knew no word of our speech, and this passion of Elliot's, and so sudden a change from kindness to wrath, were what she might not understand.

"Elliot, ma mie," she said, very sweetly, "what mean you by this anger? The damsel has treated me with no little favour. Tell me, I pray, in what she has offended."

But Elliot, not looking at her, said to me again, and this time tears leaped up in her eyes – "Forth with you! begone, ere I call that archer to drag you before the judges of the good town."

I was now desperate, for, clad as I was, the archer had me at an avail, and, if I were taken before the men of the law, all would be known, and my shrift would be short.

"Gracious Pucelle," I said, in French, turning to the Maiden, "my life, and the fortune of one who would gladly fight to the death by your side, are in your hands. For the love of the blessed saints, your sisters, and of Him who sends you on your holy mission, pray this demoiselle to let me enter the house with you, and tell my tale to you and her. If I satisfy you not of my honour and good intent, I am ready, in this hour, to go before the men of law, and deliver myself up to their justice. For though my life is in jeopardy, I dread death less than the anger of this honourable demoiselle. And verily this is a matter of instant life or death."

So saying, I clasped my hands in the manner of one in prayer, setting all my soul into my speech, as a man desperate.

The Maiden had listened very gravely, and sweetly she smiled

when my prayer was ended.

"Verily," she said to me, "here is deeper water than I can fathom. Elliot, ma mie, you hear how gently, and in what distress, this fair lass beseeches us."

"Fair lass!" cried Elliot: and then broke off between a sob and a laugh, her hand catching at her side.

"If you love me," said the Maid, looking on her astonished, and not without anger – "if you love me, as you have said, you that are the first of my comforters, and, till this day, my only friend in your strange town, let the lass come in and tell us her tale. For, even if she be distraught, and beside herself, as I well deem, I am sent to be a friend of all them that suffer. Moreover, ma mie, I have glad tidings for you, which I am longing to speak, but speak it I will never, while the lass goes thus in terror and fear of death or shame."

In saying these last words, the fashion of her countenance was changed to a sweet entreaty and command, such as few could have beheld and denied her what she craved, and she laid her hand lightly on Elliot's shoulder.

"Come," said Elliot, "be it as you will; come in with me; and you" – turning to myself – "do you follow us."

They passed into the house, I coming after, and the archer waiting at the door.

"Let none enter," said the Maiden to her archer, "unless any come to me from the King, or unless it be the master of the house."

We passed into the chamber where my master was wont to paint his missals and psalters when he would be alone. Then Elliot very graciously bade the Maiden be seated, but herself stood up, facing me.

"Gracious Maiden, and messenger of the holy saints," she said, "this lass, as you deem her, is no woman, but a man, my father's apprentice, who has clad himself thus to make of you a mockery and a laughing-stock, because that you, being a maid, go attired as a man, by the will of Them who sent you to save France. Have I said enough, and do I well to be angry?" and her eyes shone as she spoke.

The Maiden's brows met in wrath; she gazed upon me steadfastly, and I looked – sinful man that I am! – to see her hand go to the hilt of the sword that she wore. But, making no motion, she only said —

"And thou, wherefore hast thou mocked at one who did thee no evil, and at this damsel, thy master's daughter?"

"Gentle Maiden," I said, "listen to me for but a little moment. It may be, when thou hast heard all, that thou wilt still be wroth with me, though not for mockery, which was never in my mind. But the gentle damsel, thy friend, will assuredly pardon me, who have already put my life in peril for thy sake, and for the sake of our dear country of Scotland and her good name."

"Thy life in peril for me! How mean you? I stood in no danger, and I never saw your face before."

"Yet hast thou saved my life," I said; "but of that we may

devise hereafter. I am, indeed, though a gentleman by blood and birth, the apprentice of the father of this damsel, thy friend, who is himself a gentleman and of a good house, but poverty drives men to strange shifts. This day I went with my master to the castle, and I was on the drawbridge when thou, with the gentlemen thy esquires, passed over it to see the King. On that bridge a man-at-arms spoke to thee shameful words, blaspheming the holy name of God. No sooner hadst thou gone by than he turned on me, reviling my native country of Scotland. Then I, not deeming that to endure such taunts became my birth and breeding, struck him on his lying mouth. Then, as we wrestled on the bridge, we both struck against the barrier, which was low, frail, and old, so that it gave way under our weight, and we both fell into the moat. When I rose he was not in sight, otherwise I would have saved him by swimming, for I desire to have the life of no man on my hands in private quarrel. But the archers shot at me from the drawbridge, so that I had to take thought for myself. By swimming under the water I escaped, behind a jutting rock, to a secret stair, whence I pushed my way into a chamber of the castle. Therein was a damsel, busy with the linen, who, of her goodwill, clad me in this wretched apparel above my own garb, and so, for that time, saved my life, and I passed forth unknown; but yet hath caused me to lose what I prize more highly than life – that is, the gracious countenance of this gentle lady, thy friend and my master's daughter, whom it is my honour and duty in all things to please and serve. Tell

me, then, do I merit your wrath as a jester and a mock-maker, or does this gentle lady well to be angry with her servitor?"

The Maiden crossed herself, and murmured a prayer for the soul of him who had died in the moat. But Elliot instantly flew to me, and, dragging off my woman's cap, tore with her fair hands at the white linen smock about my neck and waist, so that it was rent asunder and fell on the floor, leaving me clad in my wet doublet and hose.

At this sight, without word spoken, she broke out into the merriest laughter that ever I heard, and the most welcome; and the Maid too, catching the malady of her mirth, laughed low and graciously, so that to see and hear her was marvel.

"Begone!" cried Elliot – "begone, and shift thy dripping gear"; and, as I fled swiftly to my chamber, I heard her laughter yet, though there came a sob into it; but for the Maid, she had already stinted in her mirth ere I left the room.

In this strange and unseemly fashion did I first come into the knowledge of this admirable Maid – whom, alas! I was to see more often sad than merry, and weeping rather than laughing, though, even in her utmost need, her heart could be light and her mirth free: a manner that is uncommon even among brave men, but, in women, never known by me save in her. For it is the way of women to be very busy and seriously concerned about the smallest things, whereat a man only smiles. But she, with her life at stake, could pluck gaiety forth of danger, if the peril threatened none but herself. These manners of hers I learned to know and

marvel at in the later days that came too soon; but now in my chamber, I shifted my wet raiment for dry with a heart wondrous light. My craig [13] was in peril, as we say, neither less nor more than half an hour agone, but I had escaped the anger of Elliot; and even, as I deemed, had won more of her good countenance, seeing that I had struck a blow for Scotland and for her friend. This thought made me great cheer in my heart; as I heard, from the room below, the voices of the two girls devising together very seriously for nigh the space of an hour. But, knowing that they might have matters secret between themselves to tell of, for the Maiden had said that she brought good tidings, I kept coy and to myself in my little upper chamber. To leave the house, indeed, was more than my life was worth. Now to fly and hide was what I could not bring myself to venture; here I would stay where my heart was, and take what fortune the saints might send. So I endured to wait, and not gladden myself with the sight of Elliot, and the knowledge of how I now stood with her. To me this was great penance, but at last the voices ceased, and, looking secretly from the window, I saw the Maiden depart, her archer following her.

[13] Neck.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.