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THE STORY OF
THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

"A GOOD-WIFE FROM BATH"—PAGE 6

THE STORY OF THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS

RETOLD FROM
CHAUCER
AND OTHERS BY
F · J · HARVEY DARTON

◆ ◆ ◆

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Of the tales in this book, the following are taken from works not by Chaucer: "Sir Gamelyn" (author unknown); "The Story of Cambuscan Bold," Part II (from Spenser), and Part IV (from an eighteenth-century writer who attempted to complete this tale entirely); "The Chequer of the Hoop," and "Beryn" (author unknown); and "The Destruction of Thebes" (from Lydgate).

THE STORY OF
THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS

THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

THE FIRST DAY

AT THE TABARD; THE BEGINNING OF THE PILGRIMAGE

LONG ago, when Richard II. was King, the highways of England must have been a far gayer and stranger sight than they are nowadays. The roads themselves were bad ones, little better than rough, muddy lanes, and often very dangerous by reason of the robbers who lurked in the woods which were so widely spread over the land. But on these roads, bad as they were, traveled wayfarers who appear to us now no more than the people of legends, who seem never really to have lived except in songs and stories. Day after day men would pass up and down in strange garments and on errands so strange that, if we could look back and see them close at hand, we might fancy ourselves, so far as outside appearances went, well on the way to fairyland. Yet these were after all the ordinary Englishmen of those days, living and thinking really not very differently from ourselves, though we only know of them now through books.

Imagine a highway of those times, and fancy the travelers going to and fro upon it. Here you might see a knight riding with his squire to some tournament, or maybe merely roving in search of adventures with other knight-errants like himself. Or round

a bend in the road would appear some great lord, with a long train of armed men and servants on horseback; even the ladies would be riding, for carriages were rare and uncomfortable. Here, again, was a wandering minstrel, or a troop of jugglers, going to some castle near at hand, where they would be sure of a welcome, rich and poor alike showing hospitality according to their means. Perhaps a monk or a friar would pass on his way to beg offerings from anyone he could find, meeting with a response from most men, but a welcome from few, for many of the officers of the Church bore a bad name, abusing their great power, and winning the hatred of the poorer classes.

People were much more friendly, much gayer, and much more outspoken and unrestrained. Travelers would gladly join together for a journey, partly for safety, but quite as much for the pleasure of one another's company on the road. They willingly helped each other, and few would pass on the road without exchanging greetings. But in spite of this friendliness among strangers, there were very clear divisions between the rich and the poor. The court and the great nobles thought themselves far above the rich middle class, who imitated them in many ways, and who in turn looked down on the lowest classes of all. The nobles spent their time in fighting and learning to fight, in entertaining and feasting, in carrying on affairs of State; the middle class in trade or agriculture; while the lower classes were in many cases little more than slaves, even when their condition was not hopelessly bad. And apart from these social distinctions there was, of course, much more discomfort, more violence, more oppression then than now.

But in spite of all hardships, men really loved gayety—gay clothes of every kind of bright color, gay trappings to their

horses, gay songs and dances (for everyone then was musical). They loved also the open air and spring and the sun and flowers, so that often young knights and ladies would spend their afternoons in the pleasant walled gardens of the great castles, weaving garlands of blossoms and singing and dancing merely for joy in the fine day. Fighting, too, was an amusement; a man went light-heartedly to his death in a tourney, as if to a joyful feast, and ladies looked on gladly at a fight, and encouraged their faithful knights to acts of prowess. As for the games and sports that were played by all classes, they were without number.

People were more unrestrained, again, both in deed and in word. If a man's wife disobeyed him, he beat her till she knew better. Knights might be courteous and debonair in their manners, but they could be brutal and harsh as well. Men talked more freely, too, about all manner of things, and their ideas of the mirth of which they were so fond were not always the same as ours nowadays. But above all they were outspoken in regard to sacred things. They were continually meeting, for good or ill, one or other of the officers of the Church, and the Church had a wide power over their daily life; and so they spoke very familiarly both of the clergy and of religion. But though they talked lightly and freely of these matters, as it seems to us now, they did not think at all lightly of them, but deeply and seriously. These thoughts they often carried out very openly in acts and words, and thus, as the outcome of their readiness to do religious deeds frankly and without constraint, almost the commonest sight to be seen on an English roadside was the wayfaring pilgrim.

A pilgrimage was one of the most popular of institutions. It was the custom for men to go long journeys at certain seasons to

the shrines of famous saints, or to cathedrals and abbeys where relics of good and holy men were to be found, for it was believed that by traveling so far they showed their sorrow and penitence for any evil they had done; and they sometimes endeavored to display still deeper repentance by going barefoot or lightly-clad, or in some other painful way. They made special vows at these shrines, for prayers at such places, by virtue of the saints and martyrs who had lived or died there, were thought to be of more power than those offered elsewhere.

The chief season for pilgrimages was spring, when the sweet showers of April had put to flight the dryness and cold weather of March. At that time of the year the west wind with his sweet breath is giving new life to all the plants and flowers. The young sun has just left the sign of the Ram in the heavenly Zodiac, and the little birds are beginning to sing again, and to sleep all night with one eye open. Men, too, like the flowers and birds, feel new strength in their veins, and early spring in those far-off days, five centuries and more ago, seemed to bid them leave their homes and use their fresh vigor in a journey to some distant place, to renew their vows and repent of their sins.

Some pilgrims would go abroad, to sacred spots far distant in foreign lands—to the Holy Land, for instance, or to the shrine of St. James of Compostella in Spain—and they would come back wearing a token of palm from Jerusalem, or a St. James's scollop-shell, as a sign of their devotion. But there were also in England itself many places which they visited, and the most famous of all was the shrine of the martyr Thomas Becket in the cathedral at Canterbury, to which men came from every part of the country, and even from Europe itself.

Thus it was a frequent sight in the England of those days to

see a band of pilgrims slowly going on their way through Kent, the country-folk staring at the noise and dust of the gayly-clad little company, and all the dogs barking at their heels. Sometimes, indeed, a pilgrimage seemed nothing but an excuse for a lively and pleasant holiday, and the travelers often made themselves very merry on the road, with their loud jests and songs, and their flutes and fiddles and bagpipes. But there were very many who went with high thoughts in their hearts, garbed outwardly in accordance with the reverent purpose of their journey, wearing the sober robe and hat, and carrying the staff and scrip which were known as the proper "weeds" for a serious pilgrim. And even those who turned the journey into a pleasant outing never forgot their real purpose in going, and were moved by a real religious feeling, in spite of all their light behavior.

It chanced one year that Geoffrey Chaucer, the poet who wrote most of these "Canterbury Tales," made up his mind to go on a pilgrimage to Canterbury; and accordingly he set out early in April. On his way, he stopped one Tuesday evening at the Tabard Inn, in Southwark, kept by a certain Harry Bailly, close to the Bell. The Tabard (a tabard was a kind of sleeveless coat), or a rebuilt inn on the same site, was still standing nearly five hundred years later; but in Chaucer's time it was much more important than in after days, because Southwark was a common resting-place for Canterbury pilgrims, and here they usually got fresh horses to take them on the road. A journey as far as Canterbury was no light matter in those days, if it seems no great distance from London now; the bad roads made traveling slow, and though a man in a hurry might accomplish as much as forty miles in one day, most people would be content with twenty or so at the most. Sometimes great personages would get to Can-

terbury and back in as little as four days. But a large body of pilgrims, some of them unable to travel fast because of their poor mounts, would have to go at the pace of the slowest member of the company, and so would be very leisurely over the journey.

There were many people already gathered at the Tabard when Chaucer arrived—a good-wife from Bath, for example, who had just ridden up on an ambling nag; a clerk or student from Oxford, riding a horse as lean as a rake, even thinner than he was himself; a miller in a white coat and blue hood, with his bagpipes lying idle by his side, as he sat drinking great draughts of the Tabard's ale; and many another one. More continually came up from every quarter, knowing that the inn was a good place at which to put up for the night and get food and rest.

The travelers belonged to all kinds of different ranks and professions, and had come from many parts of England. Most of them were of the middle class, and it was clear enough that they were all bent on the same errand. The pilgrimage was a bond of friendliness and good fellowship between them, and before long Chaucer himself had spoken to everyone. They soon agreed that it would be safer and easier for them if they continued their journey all together in one band, and they resolved to get up betimes the next morning, in order to set out in good time. Men rose and went to bed early in those days; if they were up at six in the morning, they were usually asleep again by nine or ten o'clock at night at the latest.

The Tabard was an inn of a very good repute, and both man and beast were well cared for there. Harry Bailly, the host, was a stout, bright-eyed man, of a fine imposing presence, a merry, outspoken fellow, though quite wise and prudent with

all his jollity. He gave the pilgrims good cheer, with food and wine of the best, and sat talking and joking with them as they were eating their supper.

When they had paid their reckoning (which they did overnight in order to save time in the morning), they fell to asking him about the coming journey, and the pleasures and amusements they would have on the way. They could not travel much more than fifteen miles a day, they thought, as they were such a mixed company, so that they would have to make the time pass in some fashion or other.

Harry Bailly listened to their words, and talked and laughed freely with them. At length he told them of a plan which their questions had suggested to him.

"You are right welcome here, good sirs," he said. "I have not seen such a merry company together in my house this year, and I would gladly do something which I have just thought of to serve you. Listen to me. You are about to go on your way to Canterbury—well, God speed you, say I, and may the saint help you when you reach his shrine! On the journey you will have many a cheerful tale and jest, I warrant; there is no mirth in riding together all the way as dumb as stones. Now, I have a plan for making you merry, if you will hear it. Hold up your hands, if you wish me to explain it to you."

They were not long in deciding; they did not think they need hesitate about the matter, and without more ado held up their hands to show that they were ready to hear the Host's advice.

"Listen, then," he went on, "and do not look down on what I shall say; I will speak plainly. Each of you shall tell a tale to pass the time and make the journey seem short—one or more on the road to Canterbury, and the same on the way back.

When you have all done this, the tales shall be judged. Whoever is thought to have told the best shall have a supper given him here at the Tabard by all of you when you come back on your way home again. And to make you still merrier, I myself will gladly ride with you, at my own cost, and be your guide and captain; you shall promise to do what I tell you, and if anyone disobeys me, he shall pay whatever is spent that day. That is my plan, and if you agree to it, say so without any more words, and I will get ready to go with you."

The guests were very glad to hear a device which would save them so much trouble and make the journey more cheerful. They soon agreed to do as the Host said—to let him be ruler of the whole company in all things, and judge of the stories. Then they all went to bed for the night.

Thus a company was formed for the pilgrimage, and thus they undertook to tell so many tales on the way to Canterbury.

Apart from Chaucer and the Host, there were some thirty others, all of them men such as could be seen anywhere in England at that day. They represented many different professions, from chivalry to the humblest rank of freemen, and from the most honorable orders of the Church to those who were bringing it into disrepute and dislike. About some of them (if you do not know what sort of men they were) you will learn more as the journey goes on, because of the stories they told and their behavior on the road. Their number was made up thus:

A Knight, who had just come back from the wars, and was going to give thanks for his safety. His fustian doublet was still travel-stained, and his horses were not gayly harnessed, but good, steady, useful beasts.

The Knight's son, who acted as his Squire.

A Yeoman, a crop-headed, brown-faced fellow, who came in attendance upon the Knight and the Squire, and was their only servant. He was a forester, and knew his craft well. He wore a bright-green jacket and hood, and carried a sword, buckler, and horn, and a bright, sharp-pointed dagger. He bore in his hand a mighty bow, and always kept the peacock-feathered arrows at his belt in good condition and ready for use. On his breast was fastened a silver brooch, showing the figure of St. Christopher, to save him from sudden death or harm.

A Prioress, attended by a Nun and three Priests.

A Monk and a Friar.

A Merchant, wearing a Flemish beaver hat and clad in motley.

The Clerk of Oxford, a Man of Law, and a Franklin.

A Haberdasher, a Carpenter, a Weaver, a Dyer, and a Carpet-maker, all wearing the livery of a great Gild or company. They seemed prosperous and well-kept citizens, every one of them, the sheaths of their knives being newly tipped with polished silver, and their girdles and pouches spick and span. They were five good, honest men, likely and well fitted to become aldermen; and if that happened, their wives would be mightily proud of them, for then the good ladies would be called "madam," and walk in front of their neighbors at church and in public places.

A Cook and a Shipman.

A Doctor of Medicine, who knew the causes of all kinds of diseases, and could cure every illness. He had some knowledge also of astronomy, and was an able and prosperous physician; yet he was very simple in his habits, and never took to spending rashly the wealth he won in the plague years. His clothes were of cloth of two colors—bright red and blue-gray, lined with taffety and sendal, two kinds of fine silk.

The Good-wife from Bath, named Dame Alison.

A Parson, a poor man as far as money goes, but rich in holy thoughts and deeds. A better shepherd of his flock you would never find. He did not forget to visit and teach the poor of his village, or to give alms, and he would never press hard upon those who could not pay their tithes to him. He set an example by doing good deeds first and teaching them afterwards, without any pride or outward show, and he was not one of those who used to leave their parish to others to look after, but himself lived and worked among his own people, teaching and following the word of Christ.

The Parson's brother, a poor farmer and plowman, a true, good worker, who threshed and dug and ditched for himself, earning his living by his own toil, and willingly giving his help to his poorer friends whenever he could. He lived in peace and perfect charity with all men, and loved God above all things, and his neighbor as himself.

A Miller, a Manciple, a Reeve, a Summoner, and a Pardoner, whose doings and professions will be seen later.

These, then, were the pilgrims who set out for Canterbury together from the Tabard Inn in Southwark, where they had met (so we are told) on Tuesday, the sixteenth of April, in the year thirteen hundred and eighty-seven.

THE SECOND DAY

THE DEPARTURE FROM SOUTHWARK

THE next morning the Tabard was astir early. The Host rose by daybreak, and collected the whole flock of pilgrims together, like a cock calling his hens round him. As soon as they were all ready they set out, riding at little more than a foot-pace. Some of their horses were but sorry beasts, and many of the pilgrims were bad riders. The Shipman had much trouble in sticking on the great carthorse which he had hired—a strange beast for a sailor to be on. The Reeve, too, was all behindhand, mounted upon a dapple-gray cob called Scot, on whose flanks his rusty sword dangled awkwardly.

Indeed, they must have appeared an oddly mixed band, as they started along the road toward Greenwich: the lean Clerk; Dame Alison, the red-faced Wife of Bath, wearing a big round hat as broad as a shield, and sitting easily on her gentle, ambling nag; the Monk on a fat palfrey as brown as a berry, his harness jingling as loudly as his own chapel-bell; the Merchant very upright on his tall horse; the Summoner carrying a large cake as a shield, with a garland on his head as big as those hung out as the sign of an inn; and all the rest in their different costumes, riding anyhow together. The Pardoner was singing lustily a song beginning "Come hither, love, to me," and the Summoner joined in with a deep bass voice like a trumpet. The Miller, though he was still a little sleepy, rode bravely at the head of

the procession, to lead them out of town, gaily blowing a tune on his bagpipes.

This Miller was a large, brawny fellow, with huge shoulders, like those of a good wrestler and fighting-man. He could heave any door off its hinges, however big, or butt it open with his head. His beard was as red as a fox's coat, and as broad as a spade. He had a great wart on the tip of his nose, wide-open nostrils, and a mouth like a furnace. He was a boastful talker and ribald jester, but clever enough at stealing corn or getting three times as much as was due to him. In fact, he was a coarse and cunning rascal; but he could play the bagpipes right well, and his merry tunes and rough jokes made the company start in good spirits.

The pilgrims rode on until they came to the Watering of St. Thomas, a place beside a brook about two miles from their starting-point. Here the Host stopped his horse, and turned to the others.

"Listen to me, sirs, if you please," he cried, "and remember your promise to obey me. If you are still of the same mind, let us see who is to tell the first tale. If anyone refuses to do as I bid him, he must pay for all that is bought to-day, as we agreed. Here are straws of different lengths; you shall each draw one, and whoever draws the shortest must begin with the first tale. Come near, my lady Prioress, and you, Sir Clerk, lay aside your modesty. Draw, every one of you."

They drew as the Host bade them. The shortest straw fell to the Knight, and everyone felt glad at the result. He was a very brave and good man, an honorable Crusader, who ever since he first rode abroad had loved honor and chivalry and truth. He had done his duty well in his overlord the King's service, and had

fought thrice in the lists for the Christian faith in far-off lands, and in fifteen mortal battles, winning fame throughout all Christendom. Many a time had he been put at the head of the high table at feasts, to show in what esteem he was held. Yet, with all his valor and high renown, he was as courteous and meek as a maid, and a very perfect, gentle knight. It was fitting therefore that he should have the place of honor, and tell the first tale.

THE KNIGHT'S TALE

PALAMON AND ARCITA

I.—Palamon and Arcita Fall Out

THERE was once, as the old stories tell us, a noble duke named Theseus. He was lord and governor of Athens, and in his day the greatest conqueror under the sun. He had fought battles and wars without end, winning many victories and adding rich countries to his dominions. Chief among his conquests was his defeat of the Amazons of Scythia. He overcame their army in a great pitched battle, and took their Queen Hippolyta prisoner, with her sister, the fair Emelie.

"After this victory he married Queen Hippolyta, amid great feasting and revelry. I could tell you a long tale of all the splendid feasts that were held at this wedding, or of the great thunderstorm that broke over the Duke and his bride as they began their journey home. But time is short, and my story is long without that; I must forbear, and not keep another man from having his fair chance of winning the supper. So now for the tale of what happened soon after the wedding.

"The Duke, then, having taken Hippolyta to wife, set out in state on the way home with her and her sister, full of joy and pride in his victory and his marriage, and looking to meet with rejoicing everywhere on his journey to Athens. But as he drew near the city, he saw a band of ladies clad in black kneeling in the road, two by two, weeping and wailing in a most pitiful man-

ner; nor did they cease till Theseus reined in his horse and spoke to them.

" 'Who are you that break in upon my joyful homecoming?' he asked. 'Are you so jealous of my success that you try to mar my rejoicings by your cries of sorrow? Or has any man ill-used or harmed you? Why do you weep and wear mourning garments? Tell me what wrong has been done you, that I may help and avenge you.'

" 'My lord Duke,' answered the lady who seemed to be chief among the mourners, 'Fortune has given you victory and success. We have no grudge against the glory and prosperity that you have won, but we are here to beg you to pity our woe and help us. All of us who thus beseech you were once great ladies, high in rank and honor; and here we have awaited you these fourteen days past, to pray your mercy on us. I was wife of King Capaneus, who died at the siege of Thebes, and all these others had great lords for their husbands, who fell with him. Creon has taken Thebes and is king of it, and now in the hardness of his heart he will not let the bodies of our husbands be buried, but has piled them in a heap where they were slain in battle, so that they lie exposed for birds and beasts to prey upon.'

"With that she and all the other distressed ladies threw themselves on their faces on the ground, and began to weep once more. 'Have pity on us unhappy women,' they wailed, 'and let our sorrows touch your heart.'

"The gentle Duke was filled with pity when he saw their grief. He leapt down from his horse and raised them up and comforted them. He swore a great oath, on his knighthood, to take such vengeance upon the tyrant Creon that all Greece should ring with it, and, while his anger was still hot within him, he

cut short his return to Athens without entering the city. There and then he set his army in array to march straight to Thebes; and he sent Hippolyta and Emelie and their ladies to Athens to await his return.

"When he arrived at Thebes, with all the flower of his chivalry in his train, he drew up his army for battle in a broad open space near the city. There was a great fight, and Theseus killed Creon in fair combat with his own hand. The Thebans were utterly defeated, and their city taken by assault and sacked; and then the bodies of the nobles whom Creon had left unburied were given to the ladies, who buried them with great ceremony and lamentation. Theseus stayed awhile near Thebes, ravaging the country and doing with it as he pleased.

"After the great battle, the victorious soldiers went about robbing and pillaging, stripping the dead of their armor and clothes and anything else of value which they could find. A party of these pillagers came upon the bodies of two youths, very richly dressed, lying in the place where the fight had been thickest, and pierced through and through with wounds. They found that the young men were not quite dead, though grievously wounded, and they took them to Theseus, seeing from their garb that they were of noble birth.

"A herald skilled in blazonry and armor was sent for. He announced that the coats of arms of the two captives showed them to be of the royal family of Thebes; and very soon it was found that they were Palamon and Arcita, two cousins, both of the royal house, the sons of two sisters.

"When Palamon and Arcita were healed of their wounds, the Duke sent them to Athens to be kept in prison for the rest of their lives; for he had vowed vengeance on Creon's whole house,

and would take no ransom and show no mercy. So they were thrown into prison, in a strong tower at Athens, close to the palace of Theseus. Theseus himself after a little time returned home in state as a conqueror, and reigned in joy and honor with his queen Hippolyta.

"Several years passed, and Palamon and Arcita still lay unransomed in their dungeon. At length, however, one day in spring, the lady Emelie, fairer than the lily and fresh as May flowers, rose at daybreak to walk in her garden. It was a morning in May, the month when spring will not suffer anyone to lie abed after the sun has risen. In that bright sunlight Emelie's beauty vied with the roses themselves, as she paced up and down gathering flowers white and red to make a woven garland for her fair yellow hair, which hung down her back, braided in a tress; and as she walked she sang sweetly.

"It happened that the great tower of the castle where Palamon and Arcita were confined joined the garden wall, so that they could see the garden from their narrow window. That very morning Palamon was awake with the sun, and roamed up and down the chamber, lamenting that he had ever been born, if it were only to spend his life in prison.

"Suddenly he heard a voice outside singing very sweetly. He peered between the thick iron bars of the window, and looked out from the gloomy dungeon on to the city, which lay below in the fresh sunshine, and the pleasant garden just outside his prison. The first thing he saw was Emelie, walking up and down among the flowers. So fair was she that he fell in love with her at the mere sight. He started back, and cried out as though he were wounded to the heart.

"The cry roused Arcita, who shared the same dungeon. He

got up quickly, saying: 'Cousin mine, what ails you, that you turn so pale? Why did you cry out? Be patient; we must bear our imprisonment as well as we can, for we shall never escape. So the stars ordained for us when we were born.'

" 'You are wrong, cousin. It was not the hardness of our fate that made me cry out: I was wounded in my heart. The beauty of the lady whom I see yonder roaming in the garden is the cause of all my woe. Ah, how fair she is! Is she a woman, or can she be some spirit in human form?'

"He thought that it might be a goddess who had taken the form of a mortal woman, and he began to pray to Venus, the goddess of love, not to mock them thus, but to help them to escape.

"Then Arcita, hearing his words, also went to the window, and saw Emelie walking in the sunshine. At the sight of her his heart, too, was wounded as sorely as Palamon's, and with a sigh he said: 'I am pierced to the heart by the beauty of her I see yonder. If I cannot win her favor, I am naught but a dead man. There is no more for me to say.'

"Palamon looked at him askance, and asked, 'Is this a jest, or do you speak in earnest?'

" 'Nay, Palamon, in earnest, by my faith,' answered Arcita. 'I have no mind to jest now.'

"Palamon knit his brows in anger. 'It would bring you no great honor to be false to me,' said he. 'I am your cousin, nay, your brother and comrade, and we swore between ourselves a great oath never till death parts us to stand in one another's way, in love or in anything else. You were to help me, and I you. And now you pretend to love this my lady, whom I will

serve until I die. You shall not do so, false Arcita! I saw and loved her first, and told you of it before ever you looked upon her. You are bound by your oath as a knight to help me, if it lies in your power; else you are false to your word.'

" 'You will be false sooner than I,' answered Arcita proudly, 'and I tell you it is you who are false now. I loved her with a true love before ever you did. You do not really love her; you do not even know if she be a woman or a goddess. Your love is the reverence that is given to holy things, but I love her as men should love, not as they worship the gods. As for our oath, you know the old saying, "Who can set a law on lovers?" Love is a stronger power than any oath, and all other laws are daily broken by it. But this is idle talk. It is not likely that you will win her favor any more than I, for you know full well that you and I are doomed to prison for the rest of our days. There can be no ransom and no freedom for us. We are striving like the dogs that fought for a bone, and as they were fighting, a kite came and took it away. Love, if you like, cousin. I love her too, and shall forever. That is all there is to do. Here in this prison we must both endure, and each of us alike take his chance.'

"But Palamon would not hear a word of reason, and the strife continued long between them, as I could show you if I had time. But hear what came to pass next.

"There was a good Duke named Pirithoüs who had been a dear friend and comrade of Duke Theseus ever since they were children. He had known Arcita also when he was at Thebes, and loved him well. It happened that he came about this time to Athens, and hearing that Arcita was in prison, he begged Theseus to set him free. Theseus could not refuse his friend this boon, and at length, after many a prayer, he let Arcita go with-

out ransom, but only on condition that he never again came into any country ruled by the Athenians, on pain of death.

"Arcita was told that he would be set free on this condition, and he accepted it. But it pleased him no more than it pleased Palamon. 'Cousin Palamon,' he said, 'the victory is yours. You are to stay here near the lady whom we both love, but I may never come into any land which Theseus governs. Your prison, near our lady's garden, is a paradise, for you can see her perhaps every day; and who knows but that some unlooked-for chance may even fulfil your desire for you? But I am exiled, and must bid good-by to love and hope.'

"So Arcita went away home to Thebes, free, but full of sorrow and discontent. He spent all his days in lamenting because he could no longer see Emelie, and secretly sought some chance to kill himself.

"But Palamon in his dungeon at Athens could not contain his love in silence. All day long he mourned, till the great tower echoed again and again with his cries. 'Alas! Arcita, my cousin, it is you who have the best of all our strife. You can walk free in Thebes, heedless of me and my griefs; and you can gather an army of our folk, if it pleases you, and stir up war against Theseus till you win our lady for your wife by force of arms. But I have to linger on here imprisoned in this cage, with the pains of love added to my other woe.'

"Thus Palamon increased his misery by jealousy, railing against Heaven and his cruel fate. Summer with its bright days and winter's long nights alike passed slowly over him as he lay in prison.

"There I will leave Palamon for a little. But tell me," said the Knight, looking round on the pilgrims, "which of these two

passionate lovers, Palamon or Arcita, do you think is the better off—Palamon, who can see his lady every day when she walks in the garden, but must live in prison and cannot reach her; or Arcita, who is free and may do as he wishes at Thebes, but cannot even see Emelie?"

II.—The Meeting in the Wood

"When Arcita had gone to Thebes, for many a day he mourned as if he would never again see his lady. He grew as thin as the shaft of an arrow; his cheeks became pale, his eyes hollow, and he was forever wandering alone, weeping all night in the deepest misery and despair.

"After a year or more of this torment, he was so changed in appearance that it would have been hard even for his friends to know him. His spirits were so feeble and low from brooding on his hopeless love that he did not think of trying to go back to Athens. But one night in a dream he saw the god Mercury, who bade him be merry, saying: 'You shall go to Athens. It is fated that there you shall find an end to your woe.'

"Arcita woke with a start at these words. 'I will go back,' he said, 'and see my lady again, even if I die for it.'

"He caught at a mirror that lay near his hand, and saw how his face was changed by grief. He thought that perhaps if he bore himself as one of low rank he might not be known at Athens, and he made up his mind to carry out the words of the god.

"He clad himself as a poor laborer, and in this disguise he journeyed back to Athens, alone except for one faithful squire who knew all his secrets, and was also disguised. At Athens he went up to the Court one day and offered himself at the gate

for service under the name of Philostratus. It happened that the lady Emelie's chamberlain needed a man such as Arcita seemed to be, and he gave him the post.

"Arcita was young and strong, as well as prudent and wise. He could hew wood or draw water, or do anything else that was asked of him. He remained a year or two in this sort of service, and he was so gentle and well-behaved that men were amazed at his good manners, and his fame went throughout the Court of Theseus. They said it would be but fitting if the Duke were to raise him in station, and put him to more honorable service.

"This at length came to pass. Theseus made him one of his own squires of the bedchamber, and gave him money to keep up his new rank honorably, though all this time Arcita had also had money brought him secretly from Thebes year by year, so that he could make a brave show whatever post he held. And now he had succeeded in some part of his desire, for he was often near or in the presence of the fair Emelie, though he dared not tell his true name and rank.

"Meanwhile, seven years passed, and Palamon was still in prison, enduring more woe than I can tell. But at length he contrived to obtain some poison from a friend outside the prison. He mixed it with wine, and gave it to his gaoler late in the night of the third of May. The gaoler drank the draught, and was soon sent fast asleep by the poison in it; no noise and no shaking could rouse him. Then Palamon fled out of the prison as fast as he could, taking the keys from the sleeping man's girdle. He wished to escape to Thebes, and rouse his friends to make war on Theseus, so that he might either win Emelie for his wife, or die fighting.

"When he had gone a little way from the city, he found a thick grove of trees, where he hid. It was growing light, and he wished to travel only by night, for fear of being seen. So he lay down in the brushwood to rest himself for the day.

"The busy lark was hailing the gray dawn with her song. The fiery sun rose up bright, and all the east was laughing in his light, as he dried the silver dewdrops on the trees with his rays; and Arcita, now chief squire to Theseus, rose and looked out from his chamber window on the merry morning. It was springtime, the fourth of May, and he made up his mind to ride out in the early sunshine to do honor to the spring, as the custom is.

"He mounted his courser and rode out of the city, till he came by chance to the grove where Palamon lay hid. By the way he picked flowers, with woodbine and hawthorn leaves, to make a garland; and loudly he sang beneath the rising sun, 'O May, fair fresh May, welcome art thou, with all thy green and all thy flowers! Ah, if thou didst but bring me fresh hope!'

"He dismounted and strode on into the grove, wandering up and down a little path, hard by where Palamon lay hid in the brushwood. Palamon saw him, but did not know him, so much had his cousin been changed by the long months of sorrow at Thebes. He lay quiet, therefore, behind a bush. 'Fields have eyes, and the wood has ears,' says the proverb, and men often meet in unexpected ways.

"After a little Arcita fell to musing, instead of rejoicing aloud. Thus do lovers change quickly, their hopes rising up and down like a bucket in a well. He sat down and began once more to lament. 'Alas for the day that I was born! The gods are the enemies of Thebes, and the royal city is fallen; and

here am I, Arcita, of the race of Cadmus and Amphion, serving my mortal enemy Theseus. Once I was Arcita; now I am Philostratus, the Duke's squire. Ah, fell Mars and Juno have destroyed our house! And worse than all this evil that has come upon our race, Love has pierced my heart through with his burning, as if Fate meant to kill me altogether. It is you who have slain me with your eyes, Lady Emelie! I would care for nothing else, if only I could do your pleasure.'

"With that he was silent again. But when Palamon heard what he was saying, he felt as though a cold sword had been thrust into his heart. All his old anger against Arcita started up again and mastered him. He leapt like a madman from his hiding-place, and rushed out with his face all pale, crying, 'Arcita, false traitor! you that talk of your love for Emelie, now you are caught—you through whom I suffer all this pain and woe! You are of the same blood as I; you have sworn an oath to me—all this I said to you before. You were untrue to me, and now you are untrue to your new master Theseus, changing your name to get the better of me and him. You shall not love my lady Emelie, but I alone will, and no other. I am Palamon, your mortal foe. Though I have no weapon here—for it is but a little time since I escaped from prison—you shall none the less die by my hand, or give up your love for Emelie. Choose which you will. You shall not escape.'

"When Arcita heard him speak, he knew who he was, and drew his sword, fierce as a lion. 'By my faith,' cried he, 'were you not ill and mad for love and unarmed, I swear you should never go from this place alive! I would kill you with my own hand. As for your talk of my oath to you, I defy it. Look you, you madman, love is free, and I will love Emelie for all

that you can do. But since you are a knight of gentle birth and fair fame, and are ready to fight for her, hear what I will do. To-night I will bring you meat and drink; and to-morrow —I swear it upon my knighthood—I will come hither alone at this same time, with arms for you. You shall put on the armor, and we will fight here in this wood for the lady Emelie. If you win the victory and slay me, you may have her.'

" 'I grant it,' Palamon answered.

"So the cousins parted, and Arcita went back to Athens, while Palamon hid himself again.

"On the morrow, ere it was light, Arcita took two horses and a spare suit of arms, and went out to the wood. He met Palamon at the same time and place as on the day before. When they met, their faces changed color, as a huntsman's does when he hears the lion rushing on him through the bushes, and thinks, 'Here comes my enemy; he or I must die.'

"They said not a word, not even 'Good-day,' but each helped the other to put on his armor, as friendly as if they had been brothers. Then they fell to fighting. So fierce was their rage against one another that you might fancy, to see them, that Palamon was a forest lion and Arcita a cruel tiger. They fought till they were ankle-deep in blood. And there let us leave them while we go back to Theseus and the lady Emelie.

"The judgments of God are carried out surely and certainly over all the earth. So strong is His word, that though the whole world vowed that a thing should not happen, it would none the less come to pass. Thus it was ordained that the great Duke Theseus should desire to hunt that day in that very wood, it being his custom to go a-hunting every morning in spring.

"The young day was clear and fine when Theseus, with Hip-

polyta, his fair Queen, and Emelie, clad all in green, rode out royally to hunt. They took their way to the grove, where men said there was a hart, and they expected to find good sport that fine spring morning. Suddenly Theseus shaded his eyes from the bright sun; a little way off he had caught sight of Palamon and Arcita, fighting furiously as two wild boars. Their gleaming swords flashed to and fro so terribly that it seemed as if their lightest blow would fell an oak.

"The Duke could not see clearly who they were, but he spurred his horse forward and went between them with his sword drawn.

" 'Hold!' he cried. 'No more of this, or you shall lose your heads. Who are you, and why are you fighting here?'

"Palamon answered quickly. 'Sire, what need of many words is there? We have both deserved death. We are two poor wretches who are weary of our lives. Have no mercy on us. Slay me first, if it is your will, but slay my enemy as well; or slay him before me if you wish.' Then he told Theseus who they were: 'This is your deadly foe—this is Arcita, who was banished from your land, and is now by deceit your squire, named Philostratus; I am woeful Palamon, who have broken out from the prison into which you cast me. He and I love the Lady Emelie. I am ready to die now in her sight, and so I ask you to judge and condemn me. But I pray you if you kill me, kill Arcita also, for we both deserve death.'

" 'Out of your own mouths you are condemned,' said the Duke. 'You shall both die.'

"Thereat the Queen Hippolyta and Emelie and all the ladies of their company began to weep for pity. They saw the wounds which the lovers had given one another, and thought it sad that young men so comely and so nobly born should die only for

loving so truly. They fell down on their knees before Theseus, weeping and crying, 'Have pity, great lord,' and they would have kissed his feet as he stood there, until he was moved to mercy. But pity soon finds a way into noble hearts, and the first anger of Theseus was speedily softened. He said to himself that every man in love tries to help himself, if he can, even so far as to break out of prison; and his heart was touched when he saw the women weeping before him. 'Shame upon a lord,' thought he, 'who will have no mercy, but is as cruel as a lion both in word and in deed, and stands by his first judgment, however harsh it be.'

"He looked up with gentle eyes. 'What a tyrant is this god of love!' he said, smiling. 'He can do with every heart as he pleases. See how he has wrought with Palamon and Arcita, and how, to crown it all, Emelie has heard no more of their love than a cuckoo. I know his power well, and therefore I am willing to forgive them the wrong they have done, since my Queen and her dear sister ask it. Sirs, you must both swear to me never more to be at enmity with me or make war upon my country, but to be my friend in everything.'

"Palamon and Arcita took a solemn oath as he bade them.

"'Listen, then,' the Duke went on, 'and hear what further you must do. Doubtless you are both worthy in lineage to marry Emelie; but both of you cannot do so, and you will not agree about it. One of you must lose her, and put up with the loss as best he may; and the matter shall be settled in this way:—Both of you shall go where you please for fifty weeks. At the end of that time you must return, each with a hundred knights armed for the lists. There shall be a great tournament between you and the knights you bring on each side, and I swear to you

by my troth as a knight, that whosoever of you with his hundred men shall slay the other or drive him out of the lists shall wed the Lady Emelie. The lists shall be held here in Athens. If you think this is well, say so.'

"Palamon looked glad, and Arcita sprang up with joy on hearing these words. They readily agreed to the conditions, and went down on their knees to Theseus, and thanked him with all their heart and might.

"Thus with good hope and blithe hearts they took their leave, and rode away from Athens to rouse their friends and gather each a hundred knights for the tournament."

III.—The Answer of the Gods

"You would think me careless and forgetful," the knight went on, "if I did not tell you something of the lists or theater that Theseus caused to be made ready for the tournament. It was the most wonderful theater, I should think, that ever was seen, and the Duke summoned all the most skilful workmen and architects in the land to aid in building it. It was a mile round, with stone walls, outside which ran a ditch. Inside for sixty paces all round there rose up tiers of seats for the people to sit on, raised one above the other, so that no man could prevent anyone else from seeing.

"At the east end of the lists was a great gate of white marble, with another gate like it opposite at the west end. Above the eastern gate was built a shrine or little temple, with an altar to Venus, the goddess of love. Over the western gate was one dedicated to Mars; and Diana had a shrine of white alabaster and red coral on the north side of the theater in a turret on the

wall. These temples were filled with splendid pictures and statues in honor of the gods to whom they were sacred.

"In the temple of Venus were paintings of all the passions which love may rouse, and of Cithæron, the mount sacred to the goddess, and of the garden of love, which has Idleness for its porter. Here, too, were shown the heroes who had met their death through love: Hercules, who was slain by his wife; Narcissus, who became a flower; Medea, who killed her husband Jason. And there was a statue of the goddess herself, rising from the foam of the sea amid the glittering green waves, a garland of fresh roses upon her head, and doves fluttering round her. Before her stood her son Cupid, with wings on his shoulders; he carried his bow and bright keen arrows, but his eyes were blinded.

"On the wall of the temple of Mars, the red god of war, there was painted first of all a forest, wherein dwelt neither man nor beast; it was filled with old gnarled trees, through which the wind seemed almost to sigh and rumble and tear at the branches. Down below, at the foot of a hill, was shown the likeness of a temple of Mars, wrought in burnished steel. The entrance was long and narrow and gloomy, and there was no light within, except what came in from the north, past great doors of iron and adamant; there were no windows, and the place seemed full of a sound of moaning. In this temple you could see the beginnings of all manner of murders and deaths such as war begets, and of anger and fear: here a man smiling falsely, with a knife hidden under his cloak, ready to stab; here a stable burning, and the black smoke rising up from it; there a man murdered in his bed by treachery; there, again, one slain by his own hand; in another place, open war. In the midst Mischance

was painted with lowering face, and Madness, laughing in his rage, and many another terrible scene of battle and violence. There, too, were painted the craftsmen who supply the arms of warfare—the smiths, the armorer, and the like. Above all sat Conquest in a tower, a sharp sword hanging over his head by a single slender thread; and close by were shown the deaths of famous conquerors. A statue of Mars himself stood in a chariot, armed, and grim to look upon. Before him was a red-eyed wolf devouring a man.

"Scenes of the chase were painted in Diana's temple, for she was the goddess of hunters as well as of all those who would not wed. Here you might see Callisto, who was turned into the constellation called the Bear; Actæon torn in pieces by his own hounds for spying on Diana; Atalanta hunting the wild boar; Daphne changed into a laurel, and many another. The goddess was shown riding a hart, her little hounds playing round her; and beneath was a moon, almost at the full, ready to wane. Her statue was clad all in green, and in her hand she held a bow and arrows.

"Thus Theseus built the lists, and these were the temples set up in them.

"The day at last came round when Palamon and Arcita were to return with their knights, and fulfill their promise to the Duke. Both of them came in good time, each bringing his hundred men, well-armed and equipped, two companies as noble as you could wish to see.

"The chief of Palamon's knights was Lycurgus himself, the great King of Thrace. His beard was black, and his eyes glowed yellow and red. Black also was his hair, hanging all rough and unkempt over his forehead, but combed out behind on his

broad shoulders. On his head he wore a massy ring of gold, set with fine rubies and diamonds. Over his armor, instead of a coat of arms, hung a bear's skin, coal black and very old, with yellow claws. He rode in a chariot of gold drawn by four white bulls. Alongside ran a score or more of huge white hounds, wearing golden collars; with these hounds he was wont to go lion-hunting.

"In the train of Arcita, it is said, came Emetreus, King of India, riding on a bay steed trapped in steel, and covered all over with cloth of gold, embroidered with a pattern; his saddle also was of pure beaten gold. His coat of arms was of rich silk, set with great round white pearls. On his shoulder he wore a cloak studded thick with rubies which sparkled red as fire. A wreath of fresh green laurels was upon his curled yellow hair, which shone like the sun. His eyes were bright, his face ruddy, and he had the look of a young lion. He was about five-and-twenty years of age, and his beard was just beginning to spring. When he spoke, his voice sounded like a trumpet thundering. A tame eagle, white as a lily, sat on his hand, and all round him ran tame lions and leopards.

"In this wise, about nine o'clock on a Sunday morning, these lords rode into the city of Athens. Theseus lodged them in the palaces of the town, and made great feasts in their honor, and did everything which can be imagined for their entertainment.

"That Sunday night, two hours or so before dawn, just at the time which the astrologers hold sacred to the goddess of love, Palamon heard the lark singing outside his chamber. He rose up and went to the temple of Venus to pay honor to her. Down he knelt, and prayed with humble heart.

" 'Fairest of the fair, Lady Venus,' he said, 'have pity on my

bitter tears. Suffer me to win my lady, Emelie, or let Arcita kill me outright in the tournament. Give me my love, and I will ever more offer sacrifice to you. I care nothing for my life, if I cannot win Emelie. That is all my prayer: only give me my love, Lady Venus.'

"Then he offered a sacrifice to the goddess, and looked to hear an answer from her. Long did he wait, till at length the statue of Venus which was in the shrine trembled all over, and seemed to make a sign to him; whereat he thought that his boon would surely be granted, even though it might be after some delay.

"When the sun rose, up rose the fair Emelie, and went to the temple of Diana with her maidens, who bore incense and fire and horns filled with mead, to carry out the rites of the shrine. She purified herself to offer sacrifice, and loosened her bright hair and set upon it a garland of oak-leaves. Then she prayed to Diana:

" 'Goddess of the green woods, by whom heaven and earth and sea are seen, queen of the dark realms of Pluto, goddess of maidens, you know that I long to serve you all my life and wed no man. Help me now, lady. Send love and peace between Palamon and Arcita, who love me so dearly; turn their hearts away from me, and let their desires be quenched. Or if my destiny be so shaped that I must needs have one of the two, give me to him that most desires me.'

"There were two fires on the altar in the temple, which burnt up clearly while the Lady Emelie prayed. But suddenly she saw a strange sight. One of the fires died down, and blazed up again; then the other fire died out altogether. As it went out, there was a whistling sound, as of wet wood in the flames,

and at the ends of the branches there ran out drops which seemed to be blood.

"Emelie was filled with fear at the sight, and began to weep, not knowing what the sign meant. Suddenly the goddess Diana appeared, clad as a huntress, her bow in her hand, and spoke to her: 'Daughter, cease from your sorrow. Among the gods on high it is decreed that you shall be wedded to one of those two who have endured so much for your sake; but to which of them you shall be given I may not tell you. Farewell, for I may stay no longer. These fires burning on my altar shall be a sign to you of what will befall.'

"With that, the arrows in the goddess's quiver clattered and rang, and she vanished from sight. But Emelie was amazed, and knew not what would happen. 'What means all this?' she cried. 'O Lady Diana, I am in your power.' And with that she went home, troubled in her heart about what she had seen.

"An hour afterwards, at the time which is sacred to the god Mars, Arcita also was for doing sacrifice. He turned his steps towards the temple of the terrible god of war, and prayed there after he had performed all due rites.

" 'Strong god, holding in your hand power over all strife on earth, giving victory or defeat at your will, accept my sacrifice if I be deserving. I am young and unwise, maybe, but yet I have had more sorrow in my love than any living man. She for whom I endure all this woe cares not at all for me. Yet I may win her by my might in the tournament, though I know that without your aid my strength is of no avail. Help me, then, lord of battles, and grant that I may have the victory. Let the toil in the fight be mine, and yours the glory, for I will ever pay

chief honor to you, and hang my armor for an offering in your temple. Have pity on me, and give me victory.'

"His prayer ceased. The rings hanging on the temple doors clanged, and the doors themselves clashed together. Fear and wonder fell on Arcita at the sound. Then he saw the fires on the altar flaming brightly, lighting up all the temple, and a sweet smell arose from the ground. He lifted up his hand, and cast more incense into the flames. At length the armor on the statue of Mars began to shake with a sound of ringing metal, and he heard a murmur, low and dim, whispering 'Victory!'

"Then Arcita gave honor and glory to the god of war, knowing that his prayer was answered; and he went home to his lodging full of joy and hope, as glad as a bird in the sunshine.

"But on Olympus, the abode of the gods, there was great strife between Venus and Mars about this matter, for each of them had promised victory, the one to Palamon, the other to Arcita. Jupiter, king of the gods, could not check the dispute till Saturn, the father of them all, calmed them with his words.

" 'Daughter Venus,' said he, 'weep no more. In my power lies the death that is met in the pale sea. I am lord of the prison and the dungeon, strangling and hanging, poison and murder and rebellions. Mine it is to take vengeance, and punish. I will see to it that Palamon, your own knight, shall in the end win his lady; yet Mars shall help his knight to success in the tournament, and so be satisfied. Between you two there must be peace.'

"Now I will leave the gods and the prayers that were offered to them, and tell you as plainly as I can the end of all that I set out to relate."

IV.—The Tournament

"There was high revelry among the people in Athens that Monday. All through the bright spring day, from dawn till eve, they danced and feasted. But they went to bed early at night, so as to rise betimes to see the great fight on the morrow.

"In the morning, when day began to break, the inns and streets began very early to be filled with the noise and clattering of horses and harness. Everywhere there could be seen strange, rich, emblazoned armor, bright shields and trappings, helmets and mail of gold, and golden coats of arms; great lords on their chargers, the steeds pawing the ground and champing their bits; squires buckling on helmets, lacing up breastplates, fitting straps to shields; armorers, yeomen on foot, pipers, trumpeters, drummers—the whole city was crowded with all manner of peoples and sights. They stood in little groups here and there, and all their talk ran on the wonderful tournament, some saying Palamon would win, others Arcita; some thought of the might of Emetreus, others feared the black-bearded King of Thrace, whose battle-axe alone, so it was said, was twenty pounds in weight.

"The turmoil roused Theseus in good time, but he waited till the knights had all assembled at his palace. Then he took his place at a window, seated on a throne where the crowd could see him. A herald stood forth on a platform and proclaimed silence; when all the people were still, he cried the Duke's commands:

" 'The great Duke has in his high discretion considered that it would waste noble blood to let this tournament be like deadly warfare. These, therefore, are the rules of battle which he or-

ders: No man, on pain of death, shall bring into the lists a knife, or a bow and arrows, or a pole-axe, or a short sword for stabbing. No man shall ride more than one course with the spear against his opponent. After that he is to thrust on foot, if he wishes to go on fighting. He who is overcome shall be not slain, but taken prisoner, and brought to the stakes which will be set on either side; there he shall wait till the end of the tournament. If it so happens that the leader on either side be taken or slain, the tournament shall cease thereat. God speed you! Go forth, and lay on fast! Fight your fill with sword and mace. This is the Duke's command.'

"A loud cry went up from all the people—'God save the good Duke, who will not waste noble lives!' Blasts were blown upon the trumpets, and the whole company rode to the lists in state. Theseus sat on the ducal throne, and round him were Hippolyta and Emelie and their ladies according to their degree. Then from the west, by the gate whereon stood the temple of Mars, Arcita rode in with his train, showing a red banner. On the east, under Venus's shrine, came Palamon, with a white banner, followed by all his chivalry. They ranged themselves in two ranks, when their names and titles had first been read out.

"'Do now your duty, proud young knights,' proclaimed the herald.

"The gates were shut, the trumpets sounded, the herald rode out of the lists, and the tournament began.

"Now was the time to see who was the best at jousting and riding. Shafts were shivering on stout shields, spears bristling twenty feet or more in length, swords gleaming and crashing through helmets and armor. Now a horse would fall, and his rider roll underfoot like a ball; now he leaps up and fights on

foot with his mace. Now one is overcome, and led to the stake to await the end of the tourney; then another is captured from the opposite side, so that they are even again.

"After a time a short space was given them for rest, and then they fell to again. Arcita and Palamon had already met many times; they had unhorsed one another, but no more; and Palamon was raging up and down like a tiger whose cubs have been stolen. But at length they drew to an end. King Emetreus the strong smote Palamon, who was fighting with Arcita, and pierced his side deep with his sword. A score of others leapt upon him, to drag him to the stake as a prisoner. King Lycurgus tried vainly to rescue him; he was borne down by the press of men. But Emetreus, for all his strength, was carried out of his saddle to the ground, and fell a sword's length behind his horse, so fiercely did Palamon strike him as he was dragged off.

"So Palamon was led to the stake where other prisoners stood; there, perforce, he had to remain. But Theseus, when he saw Palamon taken, started up.

"'Hold! no more!' cried he; 'the tourney is ended. Arcita of Thebes shall have the Lady Emelie, for he has won her fairly in the fight.'

"At that the people raised such a shout that it seemed as though the lists would fall with the sound.

"But on Olympus, among the gods, strife began anew, for Saturn had promised Venus that her knight Palamon should win his lady. When the goddess saw Palamon defeated, and Emelie given to Arcita, she fell to weeping and upbraiding the father of the gods.

"'Daughter, hold your peace,' answered Saturn. 'Mars has

his will now, and the victory is Arcita's; but your turn will come.'

"The trumpets were sounding, the noise of minstrelsy was everywhere heard in praise of Arcita. He took off his helmet to show his face, and rode proudly up to the place where Emelie sat. She cast her eyes upon him not unwillingly, for she had seen his brave deeds in the tournament. And now his horse was prancing and curvetting before her, when suddenly from out of the ground there started a Fury, which Saturn had asked Pluto, god of the underworld, to send, in order to fulfil his promise to Venus.

"Arcita's horse reared and turned aside terrified, and fell in turning. Before Arcita could save himself, he pitched forward on his head, and lay where he fell as if dead, his breast crushed by the saddle-bow. His friends ran to help him, and lifted him up and carried him away to Theseus' palace. There he was laid on a bed and tended carefully. He did not seem to be very severely hurt, and men said that he would live to marry Emelie.

"Duke Theseus and all his company went to the palace after the tournament. When care had been taken that Arcita should fare well, the knights on both sides were royally entertained, and those that were hurt had their wounds tended. No one had been killed, though many were wounded. For three days great rejoicings were held, and at the end of that time the knights went to their own homes, each with a splendid escort and gifts, given them by the Duke's command.

"Thus ended the great tournament, and I need speak of it no more. Let us return to the story of Palamon and Arcita.

"Arcita's wound grew worse instead of better, in spite of all

the care that was bestowed upon him. Drugs and physicians were of no avail, and soon it was clear that he would not live long. He sent for Emelie and his cousin Palamon to see him.

" 'Dear lady,' said he, 'I have not time in my life to tell you of my sorrow, because I must leave you. Alas! my queen, my heart's lady, take me in your arms softly, and hear what I say. For love of you there has been strife between my cousin Palamon and me for many a long day. There is no man so worthy to be loved for his truth and honor, for his wisdom, his humble spirit, and his gentle birth, as this my cousin, who serves you and will serve you always, all his life. I pray you, forget him not.'

"His breath failed him, his eyes grew dim, as he spoke his last words, 'Have pity on me, Emelie.' So his spirit changed its home, and went to the place that I know not, for I have not yet come thither. And thus were the promises of Saturn fulfilled; for Mars had given Arcita success, but Venus could yet have hope for her knight Palamon, since Arcita was dead.

"There was great mourning all over the city when the news was told. Endless were the tears of the old folk, and of those of tender years; children and men alike lamented his fate. 'Why should he die?' cried the women, 'when he had won Emelie with such great glory?' There was no one, too, who could give comfort to Theseus, except his aged father Egeus. 'My son,' said the old man, 'all men must die; this world is but a road of woe, and we are all pilgrims passing to and fro upon it. Death is the end of every worldly trouble.' And he said many more wise words to comfort him.

"The Duke cast about to find a fit place to give Arcita seemly burial. At last he decided that, since Palamon and Arcita had fought first in the little wood or grove near the town, he would

cut down the whole wood, and make there a funeral pyre of it, to burn the body of Arcita, according to the custom of the country.

"They set the body on a bier covered with cloth of gold. Before it three great white horses walked, trapped in glittering steel; mounted on them were men carrying Arcita's shield, his spear, and his bow and bright golden quiver. Behind came Palamon, mourning, clad all in black, and Emelie, ruefullest of all the company. On one side of the bier rode Theseus, on the other Egeus, each bearing in his hand a vessel of fine gold filled with honey and blood and milk and wine. The bier was borne by the noblest of the Athenians; and so, with slow and solemn pace, they went through the streets, all hung with black, till they came to the grove.

"But I will not tell you now, for it would be too long a tale, of the rich gifts that were cast upon the pyre, according to old custom; nor how the flames of the great fire blazed so furiously that the lady Emelie swooned at the sight, and the brightness of the sunlight itself seemed dimmed; nor of the costly spices thrown upon the pyre, and the rich clothes in which they decked the body of Arcita; nor of the ceremony at the burning; nor of the long funeral games which were held afterwards, according to the Athenian rites. I will go shortly to the point, and make an end of my long tale.

"Time wore on, and a few years passed, till the grief for Arcita was less keenly felt. At length a council was held, at the end of which Theseus sent for Palamon and Emelie. They came and stood before him, but he was silent for a little time before any word fell from him. With a sad face, he sat motionless, until at length he said his will thus:

" 'The great Maker of all things, when first He caused the world to be, with life and hate and love in it, knew well His own intent. He ordained laws and seasons as seemed good to Him. Lo, the oak, that has so long a life from the time when it first springs up, is yet wasted and dies in the end. Consider also the hard stone under our feet, on which we tread, how in time it is worn away. Of men and women also, in the same way, we see that they must all die, king no less than page. So it seems to me wisdom to make a virtue of necessity, and take in good part that which we cannot escape. Whosoever does not so does folly, and is a rebel against the Ruler of the world. And surely a man has greatest honor when he dies at the height of his excellence, sure of his own good name, and having done his friends no wrong. Why, then, should we complain if Arcita, the flower of chivalry, has honorably escaped from the sorrowful prison of this life? Let us, before we go from this place, make out of two sorrows one perfect joy. Thus shall it be: Sister, you of your grace shall take for your lord and husband this gentle Palamon, your own knight, who serves you with heart and might and will. He is son of a king's brother, and were he but a poor novice in knighthood, he has deserved well.'

"Then he said to Palamon, 'I trow there is little need of more words to make you consent to this. Come hither, and take your lady by the hand.'

"Thus with all joy Palamon wedded Emelie, and won his lady whom he had bought so dearly. They dwelt together in unceasing happiness, and riches, and wealth; Emelie loved him so well, and he served her so tenderly, that there was never a word of quarrel or jealousy between them; and they lived long, contented and prosperous.

"Thus ends the story of Palamon and Arcita and Emelie; and may God save all this fair company."

"THE MILLER IS A CHURL"

WHEN the Knight had told his tale, in all the company there was not one who did not say it was a noble story, worthy to be kept in memory. As soon as they had praised and thanked the Knight for it, the Host spoke again.

"We are doing well," he said, with a laugh. "Our wallet of stories is opened, and the game is fairly begun. Now who will come next? You, Sir Monk, tell us somewhat to vie with the Knight's tale."

But before the Monk could answer the Miller broke in. He would not show courtesy to anyone, being still quarrelsome and sleepy, hardly able to sit upright on his horse.

"I can tell a noble tale to pay back the Knight," he roared in a great voice.

"Nay, Robin Miller," answered the Host, "wait your turn. Let some better man have his say first, good brother, that we may profit by it."

"I swear I will not," the Miller cried. "I will tell a tale, or else leave you and go the rest of the way alone."

"Tell on, then, and a plague on you," said the Host. "You are a fool, and your wits have gone astray."

The Miller would not be silent or orderly.

"Listen to me, all of you," he shouted. "I will tell you a tale about a carpenter who was tricked and made to look a fool by a clerk."

"Stop your noise," said Oswald the Reeve, who did not like a carpenter being thus laughed at. "It is wrong and foolish to slander other men."

The Miller, however, heeded neither him nor anyone else, but told a rude and churlish tale about a carpenter of Oxford.

This carpenter, so the story said, was persuaded by a clerk that there would be a second great flood, and that if he wished to be safe from drowning he must make himself an ark. So he used his kneading-trough as a sort of boat, and was hoisted in it up to the ceiling of the kitchen. When the water began to rise, the clerk told him he was to cut the cords that held the ark, and drop into the flood, and sail safely away. He did exactly as he was told, and for a little while hung quietly up in the air, close to the roof, waiting for the deluge in a state of great fear and wonder. Suddenly he heard someone crying, "Water!" He cut the cords, thinking that the flood had come, and down he fell to the hard floor, breaking his arm, and getting nothing but laughter for his folly.

When the tale was ended, the pilgrims were not sure whether to be angry with the Miller for his rudeness or to laugh. But Oswald the Reeve was much offended by the story, for he was a quick-tempered man, and, besides, he had done work as a carpenter when he was young. That had been his first trade, but he had prospered greatly since then. He was Reeve to a great landowner at Baldswell in Norfolk, and he had charge of the whole of his master's estate—sheep, cattle, dairy, swine, horses, poultry, stock, and all. He knew his business well, and could always tell what sort of crops he would have according as the season was wet or dry. He had been a faithful servant ever since his lord had been twenty years of age, and no one

could ever prove him short in his accounts, though maybe he was not really over-honest. The bailiffs and herdsmen all feared him, and he had contrived to do very well for himself. He had a good store of wealth laid by at home in his pleasant house, which stood on a heath in the shadow of some green trees.

He was a tall, thin man, and his legs were like sticks, with no calf at all to be seen on them. His beard was shaved as close as could be, and his hair cropped short round his ears, with a bald patch on the top of his head. He wore a long blue surcoat, and rode with it tucked up round his waist, like a friar's gown.

He took the Miller's tale very amiss, though the rest of the company speedily resolved not to mind it.

"I could tell you a story about a proud miller who was befooled," he said angrily, "if I wished to pay you back. But I am an old man now, with gray hair, and I have no love for rude jesting. Many a year has passed since first the stream of my life began to run, and now the vessel is almost empty. The stream—"

"Enough of your sermons, Oswald," the Host broke in, for the Reeve seemed likely to go on with his moralizing. "Tell a tale, and do not waste time. Look, here we are in sight of Deptford and Greenwich, and it is half-past seven. It is time for you to begin your story."

"Well, sirs," answered the Reeve, "you have heard this Miller's rude tale about a carpenter: now hear one about a miller."

With that he began the story of Simkin, the miller of Trumpington, who was cheated and laughed at, in spite of all his cunning, by two students from Cambridge.

"That was a good trick they played upon the miller," said the Cook, clapping Oswald on the back when the tale was ended. "But let us not stop our tales here. If you will listen to a poor man, sirs, I will tell you a little jest that happened in our city."

"I give you leave," said the Host. "Tell on, Roger Cook, and let the story be better than your pasties. I warrant many a pie of yours is more than one day old, and many a man has eaten jack-puddings of yours which have been cooked and grown cool twice over. But do not heed my jests or grow angry. Tell your tale."

"True jokes are not always good jokes," answered Roger the Cook. "But you, too, must not be angry, Harry Bailly, if my story turns out to concern an inn-keeper."

The Cook had left his shop in London in order to go on this pilgrimage, and was very useful to the travelers. He could roast meat, seethe it, fry it, or broil it as well as any man, and make good soup, too, or bake a fine pie. Now, with a laugh, he began his tale.

"An apprentice once lived in our city," he said—"a proper little man, gay as a goldfinch and brown as a berry, with well-trimmed black hair. He was a good dancer, too, and they called him Perkyn the Reveller, because he loved the tavern better than his master's shop. He was an idle rogue. Whenever there was any stir in Cheapside, out of the shop he ran, and saw all that there was to be seen. He gathered a band of others like himself, and they would dance, sing, and play with the dice for hours together. Perkyn found his pockets empty more often than not, for all his skill and cunning, and his master was forever chiding him, until at length he turned him

out of his house for good, bidding him go and riot as much as he pleased at his own expense."

Here the Cook stopped short. "Plague on it! I will tell no further," he said. "The tale is a bad one, not fit to be heard by you. But I will give you instead a story of a knight's three sons." And at once he started a new tale.

THE COOK'S TALE

SIR GAMELYN

LISTEN, Gentles, and hearken to me," began the Cook again. "There was once a doughty knight named Sir John of Bounds. He had three sons, Sir John, Sir Ote and Sir Gamelyn. They all loved their father well, but the eldest, Sir John, was grasping and miserly.

"At length the old knight fell ill, and knowing that his end was near, he wished to divide his lands among his sons, for he was anxious that they should live well and prosperously after he was gone. He sent letters, therefore, to certain wise knights of his county, asking them to haste and come if they desired to learn his wishes before he died; and as soon as they heard that he lay ill, they did not rest day or night until they reached his house.

"When they were all assembled round him, he said: 'Sirs, I warn you I can live but a little longer. It is God's will that death should soon take me.'

"They grieved sorely at his words. 'Be not dismayed, sir,' said they. 'God is able to bring good out of evil.'

" 'It is true,' said Sir John. 'But I beseech you, sirs, for the love you bear to me, go and divide my land among my three sons, and for the love of Heaven do it aright. Forget not Gamelyn, my youngest son. Take heed to him as well as to his brothers.'

"The knights went out, and took counsel about the division. They divided all the land into two portions, leaving none for Gamelyn, the youngest son, but saying that his brothers would give him a share when he was old enough. When they had done this, they went back to Sir John, and told him how they had made the division.

"Sir John liked it not at all. 'By St. Martin!' he cried, 'for all your division the land is still mine, and I will divide it as I wish. John, my eldest son, shall have the five plow-lands which my father inherited. Sir Ote, my second son, shall have also five plow-lands out of that which I have won for myself. All the rest, and my parks and my deer, and the horses that I have bought, shall go to my son Gamelyn. And I beseech you, sirs, you who are skilled in the law, to see that this my bequest is made good, for Gamelyn's sake.'

"Thus spoke the old knight; and a little while after he lay still forever in death.

"As soon as his father was gone, Sir John, the eldest son, thrust Gamelyn aside, and took all his lands and horses for himself, letting the parks and woods and houses go to ruin. Gamelyn himself was brought up meanly in his household. But in spite of his unjust brother, he grew so lusty and well built that when he became a young man few dared lay hands on him or provoke him to anger. His brothers themselves feared him, knowing well that he was the strongest of them all.

"He was standing one day in Sir John's courtyard, stroking his young beard and thinking of the lands that were his, the parks all broken down, the deer stolen, the horses used up by his brother, when Sir John strode in, and said roughly to him: 'Is our meat ready?'

"Gamelyn's anger burst out. 'Go and be your own baker!' he cried. 'I will not cook for you!'

"'How is this, brother Gamelyn?' asked Sir John. 'How come you to answer me thus? Never have you dared to speak so before.'

"'Have I not?' answered Gamelyn. 'By my faith, I am thinking that I have never yet heeded enough the wrong that has been done me. My parks and my deer are all wasted by you for your own good pleasure—all that my father left to be mine!'

"'Hold your peace!' cried Sir John, in a rage. 'You shall be glad to have your food and clothing, you good-for-nothing!'

"'Good-for-nothing! I am the son of a gentle knight, and woe to him that calls me good-for-nothing!'

"Sir John dared not face Gamelyn himself. He called instead to his men. 'Go and beat the boy, and stop his jests. Teach him to answer me fitly another time.'

"'A pretty brother you are to me!' cried Gamelyn. 'Who is going to beat me? Why do you not do it yourself?'

"The men took up clubs, and would have obeyed Sir John's orders. But Gamelyn saw what they were about, and casting his eye round, he spied a pestle lying in a mortar by the wall. He sprang to it quickly, being light of foot as well as strong of body, and seizing it, used it so well that he drove all the servants in a crowd before him, laying on right heartily. His brother fled up into a loft, and shut the door fast.

"When he had put them all to flight, Gamelyn began to search for Sir John, looking like a wild lion in his anger. He saw him at the loft window.

" 'Brother,' said he, 'come near, and I will teach you the sword and buckler game!'

" 'While you have that club in your hand,' answered Sir John, 'I will not come near you. Throw it away, and let us make our peace, and give up our anger.'

" 'I do well to be wroth,' said Gamelyn. 'You would have had your men beat me, and they had done it but for my strength of arm.'

" 'Gamelyn, do not be angry,' went on Sir John. 'I did it only for a test, to see if you were as strong for your age as you seemed.'

" 'Come down to me, then,' said Gamelyn, 'and grant me a boon. I will only ask one thing.'

"Down came Sir John, with fair and friendly words, for he was sore afraid of the pestle; but he hid treachery in his heart.

" 'You shall have it, whatever it is,' he said. 'What is it that you ask? Hold me to blame if I do not soon perform it.'

" 'We shall be at one again, brother, if you will only restore to me my lands and deer and horses which my father left for me. Do this, and our strife is at an end.'

" 'You shall have them all back, Gamelyn,' replied his crafty brother. 'I swear it.'

"But he was trying to think of some deceit as he spoke, though Gamelyn was too simple to suspect it.

"They made friends again, and went on living together. But Sir John did not at once give his brother back his inheritance, and Gamelyn was not anxious to begin the quarrel afresh, so that for a time he said no more about it.

"Soon after this a great fair was held in a town near at hand. A champion wrestler came to it, and had it proclaimed that he

would try a fall with all who liked to come. The prize for anyone who overthrew him was to be a ram and a ring.

"Gamelyn, feeling himself young and active, wished to go and prove his strength against the champion. 'Brother, lend me a horse,' he said to Sir John. 'I must go on an errand.'

" 'Go and choose the best in the stable,' answered his brother. 'But whither would you ride?'

" 'There is a wrestling match in the town, and I am going to try for the ram and the ring, which are to be the prize for whoever defeats the champion. It would bring great honor to our house if I could win them.'

"So a horse was saddled, and Gamelyn put his spurs on and rode off with his servant to the fair. Sir John was not sorry to see his brother go, for he hoped that he would get his neck broken by the champion.

"As Gamelyn drew near to the fair, and was about to get off his horse to go to the wrestling, he saw a franklin wringing his hands and making a great lamentation.

" 'What is the matter, good man?' he asked. 'Can I help you?'

" 'Alas that ever I was born!' said the other. 'I had two sons, strong and stalwart; but now a champion wrestler at the fair yonder has thrown them and half slain them. I would gladly lose ten pounds and more if I could only find a man to give him some rough handling.'

" 'Good man, hold my horse,' said Gamelyn, 'and help my man to guard my clothes, and I will go and see what success I may have with this champion.'

" 'I will do it,' answered the man. 'I will second you, and hold your clothes.'

"So Gamelyn stripped for the fray, and went to the place where the wrestling was held. All the people there wondered that he dared face the champion.

"Up started the great wrestler when he saw Gamelyn coming towards him.

" 'Who is your sire?' said he. 'You must be mad to come here.'

" 'You knew my father well when he was alive,' replied Gamelyn. 'He was Sir John of Bounds, and I am his son Gamelyn.'

" 'I knew your father well, my fine fellow, and I knew you, too, Gamelyn, when you were a child—and an unruly cub you were!'

" 'Now that I am older, you shall find me something more than that,' answered Gamelyn.

" 'Welcome, then, to my arms,' said the champion. 'Once you come into my grip, you will fare ill!'

"With that they fell to. The champion tried all his tricks, and put forth all his strength, but he could not throw Gamelyn, who stood firm, and mockingly bade him do his best.

" 'Now that I have made trial of one or two tricks of yours,' said Gamelyn at length, 'you must see one of mine.'

"He closed fiercely with his enemy, and cast him on his left side, breaking three of his ribs and his arm in the fall. 'Is it a fair throw?' he asked.

" 'Whether it is that or not,' answered the champion, 'I know that whoever comes into your hands will not come well out of them again.'

" 'Blessed be the day you first saw the light, Gamelyn!' cried the franklin whose sons had been hurt by the wrestler. 'Young

Gamelyn has taught you the game,' he added, turning to the champion.

" 'He is an evil master, and his play is rough,' answered the latter, who did not like his defeat. 'It is long since first I learned to wrestle, but never yet have I been so rudely handled.'

"Gamelyn stood forth after his victory and cried: 'If there are any more, let them come to work with me. The champion does not desire another bout.'

"But no one else was anxious to wrestle with him when they saw how he had treated the champion.

" 'Put on your coat again, Gamelyn,' said the two gentlemen who had charge of the place, coming up to him. 'The fair is over now.'

" 'But I have only sold half my wares,' replied Gamelyn, who was ready to go on wrestling with anyone who would come.

" 'I have bought enough of them,' said the champion. 'You sell too dear, and he is a fool who buys of you at such a cost.'

" 'I wish you had paid dearer for what you got,' grumbled the franklin.

"But Gamelyn put on his clothes again, and began to set out. The judges of the wrestling brought him the ram and the ring, saying, 'Here are the ram and the ring, a prize for the best wrestler who has ever been seen here.'

"Thus Gamelyn won the ram and the ring, and went home with them, a great crowd shouting and singing in his train. But Sir John saw them coming in the distance, and told the porter to shut the gate of his house fast, and keep Gamelyn outside.

"The porter did as he was bid, and Gamelyn found the gate shut when he arrived.

"'Porter, undo the gate,' he shouted. 'Many a good man's son is waiting outside to enter with me.'

"'By my beard,' answered the porter, 'I swear you shall not come in at this gate, Gamelyn!'

"'You lie,' said Gamelyn, and smote the little wicket-gate at the side of the main one with his foot, and broke away the bolt that fastened it. The porter, seeing that he could do no more, took to his heels and fled.

"'Faith! you run in vain,' said Gamelyn. 'I am as light of foot as you.'

"He could no longer contain his anger, but sprang after the porter, and caught him by the neck, so that the bone was broken, and he died. Then Gamelyn took the body with one hand, and cast it into a well which I have heard men say was seven fathoms deep.

"After this the men in the yard shrank away before Gamelyn, and did not try to stop him. He went to the gate, and threw it open wide.

"'Welcome!' he said to the crowd which came pouring in. 'We will be masters here, without any man's leave. Yesterday I left in my brother's cellar five tuns of good wine. Let it be brought, and you shall all have your fill of it. My brother is a niggard; we will spend his savings for him, and if anyone withstands me, he shall go to join the porter in the well.'

"Meanwhile Sir John had fled to a little turret of the house. He saw his brother and the guests wasting his goods, but dared not come down to stop them. Seven days and seven nights they feasted, and on the morning of the eighth day they went away, though Gamelyn would have had them stay longer. Then Sir John came down, and found Gamelyn standing all alone.

"'Who made you so bold as to waste my stores?' he asked, going close up to him.

"'You need not be angry,' Gamelyn answered. 'Long ago I paid for what I have now taken. For sixteen years you have had the use of my fifteen plowlands, and of my horses that my father left me on his death-bed. All the profits during those years on the goods of mine which you have never yielded up to me do I now give you, without any more claim on them, in exchange for what we wasted at our feast.'

"'Hearken, brother Gamelyn,' said the false Sir John, wishing to put Gamelyn in a good temper; 'hear what I will do for you. I have no son, and I will make you my heir.'

"'So be it, if you think as you say,' answered Gamelyn, who suspected no evil.

"'But there is one thing, brother,' Sir John went on, 'that I must tell you: you threw my porter into the well, and in my anger I swore a great oath that I would bind you hand and foot for that deed. Do not let me be false to my oath, but suffer me to bind you for a little time, just to keep my vow.'

"'Brother,' answered Gamelyn, 'you shall not break your word or be forsworn if it is only I who stand in your way.'

"So Gamelyn let himself be bound hand and foot, thinking it was but a form, to let his brother keep the words of his vow. But as soon as he was secured, Sir John added fetters, and made him fast to a post in the great hall. He told all who came that his brother was mad, and there Gamelyn stood fettered to a stake for two days and two nights without food or drink.

"At the end of that time he contrived to speak to Adam the butler. 'Adam Butler, I have been fasting too long. I beseech you for the love my father bore you to free me from my bonds,

if you can anyhow come at the keys of these fetters. If you will do this, I will give you a gift of land.'

"Then said Adam the butler: 'I have served your brother these sixteen years. If I were to let you go, he would say that I am a traitor.'

" 'Adam, you will find my brother false in the end,' replied Gamelyn. 'I beseech you to free me. I will give you a gift of my lands.'

" 'If you will vow to keep that promise, I will do all that lies in my power,' said the butler.

" 'I shall keep my word,' promised Gamelyn, 'if you help me to get free.'

"The butler agreed to help Gamelyn. When Sir John had gone to bed that night he stole the keys and unlocked Gamelyn's fetters, and gave him food and drink in a quiet room, to bring back his strength again, for he was faint and weak with hunger.

" 'What is your advice, Adam?' asked Gamelyn, when he had refreshed himself. 'Shall I go and cut off my brother's head?'

" 'Not so,' Adam replied. 'I can tell you a plan worth two of that. To-morrow your brother gives a feast to the abbots and priors and other churchmen of the country round. You shall stand up by the post as if you were still bound, and I will leave the fetters unlocked. When the guests have eaten well, you must beg them all in turn to free you; and if any of them will stand up for you, you will be freed, and I shall escape any blame. But if not, we must try another way: you and I will each take a good staff, and woe be to that one of us who fails the other!'

" 'Evil come on me if I fail!' said Gamelyn. 'But warn me, Adam, when we are to begin.'

" 'I will warn you, Gamelyn. When I wink at you, cast away the fetters and come to me.'

" 'It is a good plan,' said Gamelyn, 'and I will lay on well if they refuse to free me.'

"When the next day arrived, the abbots and priors were welcomed to the feast. As they came in at the door, they cast their eyes upon young Gamelyn, who stood at the stake as if bound fast. The false knight, Sir John, full of treachery, told them all manner of shameful things about him.

"When they had feasted well, and were in a good humor, Gamelyn began to play his part.

" 'Why do you serve me thus, brother John?' he asked. 'I stand here fasting while the other men feast.'

"But Sir John only told his guests to pay no heed to Gamelyn, for he was mad, and needed chains to restrain his fury.

"Gamelyn was silent again for a little. Then, according to the plan which Adam had made, he cried to the guests: 'Sirs, I pray you help me out of my bonds.'

"Then answered an abbot: 'Woe to him who pledges himself to set you free! May he prosper who does you harm!'

" 'I would have your head cut off, even though you were my brother,' another called out.

" 'It is a grievous wrong, boy, that you are alive at all,' added a third, a prior.

" 'You all refuse? I see that I have no friends,' cried Gamelyn. 'Bad luck to anyone who ever does a good turn to a prior or abbot!'

"Adam the butler was watching him as he took up the cloth, and saw that his anger was roused. He put two great staves near the hall-door, and gave Gamelyn a quick look, which he

understood at once. Gamelyn slipped off his loosened fetters, and together they went and laid hold of the staves, and strode back into the body of the hall, looking around with eyes of terrible anger.

"Then they fell to work. The common people standing in the room had little love for Sir John's guests, and would not lift a finger to help them. The two scattered and drove the monks in a crowd before them, Adam at one end, Gamelyn at the other, paying them all in full for the wrongs Gamelyn had suffered.

" 'Give them good measure, Gamelyn!' cried Adam. 'I will keep the door.'

" 'Keep it well, Adam,' he answered. 'Do not let any pass, and we will see how many there are of them.'

" 'Do no harm to them! Draw no blood, and have mercy on their shaven crowns, but break their arms and legs!' said the butler grimly.

"Thus Gamelyn and Adam worked quickly and with a will, till the monks who had ridden there with rejoicing and merriment were glad to be carried back in carts and wagons, unable to walk or ride.

" 'Alas! Sir Abbot,' said a prior, 'we had been better at home with our bread and water than at a feast like this!'

"Sir John had been looking on with a glum face while Gamelyn laid hands on his guests. As soon as they were all gone, Gamelyn smote him on the back of the neck with his great staff, and knocked him down. Then he took him and tied him up with fetters to the stake.

" 'Sit there, brother, to cool your blood, as I did,' said he.

"When Adam and Gamelyn had done their work, they

washed themselves and sat down to eat, the servants waiting on them gladly. But the Sheriff lived only five miles away, and word was very soon brought to him of what had been done, and how Gamelyn and the butler had broken the King's peace. He cast about in vain for someone to go and take the two wrong-doers prisoners, till at last four-and-twenty young men came to him and said that, if he agreed, they would bring Gamelyn and Adam before him. He gave them leave, and they set out at full speed to do their task.

"When they came to the gate they knocked, for they found it shut. The porter looked out, and asked their errand. He had seen them coming, and was afraid of treachery, for he loved Gamelyn.

" 'Undo the gate, porter,' cried one of them.

" 'You must say your errand before I let you in,' answered the porter.

" 'Tell Gamelyn and Adam that we wish to speak two or three words to them.'

" 'Stand there awhile, fellow,' the porter replied, 'and I will go to Gamelyn and find out his wishes.'

"He came to Gamelyn and said: 'Sir, I warn you that the Sheriff's men are at the gate to take you both, and to see that you do not escape.'

" 'Go to the gate, porter,' said Gamelyn, 'and stay there, and you will soon see something. Adam, look, we have foemen at our gate, and not one friend to help us. It is the Sheriff's men who are come to take us.'

" 'We will give the Sheriff's men such a welcome,' answered Adam, 'as that some of them will be glad to sleep here to-night in the mud!'

"They went out quietly at a little postern-gate, each with a great staff in his hand, and from behind set on the men waiting by the main gate. Gamelyn felled three, Adam two; the rest turned and fled.

" 'Do not haste away,' cried Adam after them. 'I have some good wine here; drink some before you go!'

" 'Your wine is too strong for us,' they answered, as they ran off in a panic.

"In a little while the Sheriff himself, hearing the news, set out with a great body of men to take them by force.

" 'What shall we do, Adam?' asked Gamelyn. 'Here comes the Sheriff!'

" 'We can stay here no longer, or we shall fare amiss. Let us go away before they catch us.'

"So they took their horses and went on their way. Soon after they had gone the Sheriff arrived with his men, and found that his birds had left the nest. He got down from his horse, and went into the hall, where Sir John was still bound to the pillar; and he set him free, and sent for a doctor to tend him.

"Now let us leave the false knight and the Sheriff, and see how Gamelyn is faring. He and Adam rode away into the woods, ill content with their fortunes.

" 'Now I know that I like better to be a butler, and carry the keys,' said Adam, 'than to walk in these wild woods, tearing my skin and clothes on the thorn-bushes.'

" 'Never despair, Adam,' answered Gamelyn. 'Many a good man's son has been in trouble before this, and has come out of it safely.'

"Even as they were speaking, they heard the voices of men talking near at hand, as it seemed. Gamelyn looked warily be-

tween the trees, and saw a little way off some seven score of young men sitting down on the greensward for a meal.

" 'Adam, we need have no doubts,' said Gamelyn. 'By the grace of Heaven, after evil good comes. I think we can see meat and drink before us.'

"Adam, too, looked at the company of men, and was glad enough at the sight, for he longed sorely for food. But just then the chief of the band happened to see them, and spoke to his comrades.

" 'Young men,' said he, 'I have to be cautious with chance guests. I am aware of two standing yonder amid the trees. They are well dressed, and maybe there are more of them. Go, some of you, and fetch them to me.'

"Up started seven of the outlaws—for this company thus assembled in the wood was a great band of outlaws, who had broken the laws of the land, and fled to the forest for safety—and came to Gamelyn and Adam, bidding them give up their bows and arrows.

" 'He would be a poor creature who yielded to you,' answered Gamelyn. 'Bring another five, and I will fight the twelve of you.'

"When they heard his words, they did not feel very willing to oppose him.

" 'Come before our master, and tell him what you wish,' they said humbly.

" 'Who is your master?' asked Gamelyn.

" 'He is the crowned king of the outlaws,' they replied.

" 'Adam, we will go to him,' said Gamelyn. 'He cannot, for shame, deny us food and drink, and he may do us some good, if he is of gentle blood.'

"So they went to the king of the outlaws, and greeted him. He asked them what they wanted in the greenwoods.

" 'He must needs walk in the woods who may not walk in the town,' answered Gamelyn. 'We do not come here to do any harm, but if we meet with a deer, we would shoot it just as any man would who is hungry, and can find no meat.'

"The outlaw chief listened to their words, and had pity on them. 'You shall have plenty here,' he said, and bade them sit down and rest themselves, while they feasted on food and wine of the best.

"As they sat there, one of the outlaws recognized Gamelyn. He told the master who it was, for Gamelyn's deeds were by now well known in the country round. When the captain heard this, and had been told by Gamelyn how he had been turned out of his home, he made him his chief lieutenant, second in command of the whole band.

"A little while afterwards, word was brought that a pardon had been granted to the captain of the outlaws, and he went back free to his own estate. But before he left them he said to his men: 'Now that I can no longer stay with you here, I leave you in charge of Gamelyn. I am pardoned, and must go home again.'

"So Gamelyn was crowned king of the outlaws in his stead, and lived for a while in the greenwoods.

"But in the meantime, his false brother, Sir John, had been made Sheriff, and had sent out a writ against Gamelyn, proclaiming him a wolf's-head and outlaw. Gamelyn's old friends and servants were filled with grief and anger at this deed, and sent word of it to him in the greenwoods. The messenger with the news came and fell on his knees before him.

" 'Sir,' he said, 'be not angry at the evil tidings which I bring.

Your brother is Sheriff, and has proclaimed you a wolf's-head.'

"Gamelyn waxed wrathful at the message, for he knew that his goods would be plundered, and his tenants oppressed, and that any man who met him was free to capture and kill him if he could.

" 'Alas that I left Sir John without breaking his neck!' said he. 'I vow that I will go to the next assizes and speak with my brother the Sheriff, even if it cost me my life!'

"When the time for the assizes came, Gamelyn strode into the hall where his brother sat as lord and master. He pulled his hood down boldly, to show them all his face.

" 'God save you, sirs!' he cried. 'But as for you, Sir Sheriff, evil befall you! Why have you had me, your brother, cried as an outlaw?'

"But Sir John the Sheriff thought it high time to stop Gamelyn's mouth, and he had him seized there and then, and bound and thrown into prison.

"Gamelyn's other brother, Sir Ote, was as good a knight as might well be, and when a messenger came to him with the news that Sir Gamelyn had been cast into prison by his brother the Sheriff, he saddled a horse, and rode straight to Sir John.

" 'How is this, Sir John?' he asked. 'We are but three brothers, and you have thrown the best one of us all into prison!'

" 'He shall fare the worse for your words, Sir Ote,' answered Sir John. 'He is in the King's prison, according to the law, and there he shall abide till justice can be done on him.'

" 'I know a better way than that,' said Sir Ote. 'I demand that you let him out on bail. I will be surety for him, and answer for it that he shall appear before the court on the appointed day.'

" 'On that condition I grant your request. But if he does not come, you must be given up to justice in his stead.'

"So Gamelyn was set free, and went away with Sir Ote. On the morrow he prepared to leave his brother, saying, 'Brother, I must now go to the woods to see how my young men are faring without me. They may be quarreling or doing wrong by now.'

" 'Ah, brother!' said Sir Ote, 'that is a hard word for me to hear. Now I see that all the trouble will fall on my head. It is I who will have to go before the court, and be cast into prison in your stead, if you do not appear.'

" 'Do not fear,' answered Gamelyn. 'If I am alive, I will be ready in good time.'

" 'Heaven shield you from shame!' said his brother. 'Return when it is time, and save us both from dishonor.'

"Gamelyn bade him farewell, and returned to his band in the greenwoods. He found his young men glad to have him back, and he told them what had been done, and how he had to appear at the assizes on a certain day. Then for a time they betook themselves to collecting toll of the rich who passed through the wood.

"Meanwhile, Sir John was doing his best to get together a judge and jury who would obey his wishes and have his brother hanged, and he soon found enough men ready to his hand. They all came to the court on the day fixed for the trial, but Gamelyn had not returned, and Sir Ote was brought in to undergo justice from them in his stead.

"But Gamelyn had not forgotten his promise.

" 'Get ready,' he said to his men. 'We must all go together to these assizes. I swore to my brother that I would not let him suffer for me.'

"They set out in a body for the court, and Adam was sent on

to see what had been done by the Sheriff. He came to the court-house, and found Sir Ote bound, and the jury of Sir John's men making ready to have him hanged.

"When Gamelyn was told this he was very wroth, and said: 'You hear this, friends—Sir Ote is fettered, and about to be sentenced in the court-house. By Heaven's aid, he who brought him thither shall rue it! We will slay those who are guilty, and let the rest go. Let none escape by the doors. I will be justice to-day. Adam, come you with me; you shall be my clerk.'

"His men bade him do his best. 'You will find us ready when you need us. We will stand by you as long as we live.'

" 'I will be as true to you as you to me,' answered Gamelyn; and with that he went into the justice-hall.

"The judge was sitting in state, fearing nothing, when in strode Sir Gamelyn amongst them all. He went straight to Sir Ote, and set him free from his bonds.

" 'You were almost too late, Gamelyn,' said Sir Ote. 'The verdict was against me, and I was to be hanged.'

" 'Brother,' answered Gamelyn, 'those who will be hanged to-day are the men who have condemned you—judge and jury, and the Sheriff through whom this was done.'

"Then he turned to the justice. 'Now is your power come to an end, Sir Judge!' he cried. 'You have given evil judgments. I will sit in your place, and set them right.'

"The judge remained still in his seat, and did not move. Then Gamelyn broke his cheek-bone with one great blow, saying never a word, and took him and threw him over the bar of the court, so that his arm also was broken. The rest looked on in fear, and durst not resist.

"Gamelyn sat down in the judge's seat, Adam at his feet and

Sir Ote by his side. The false judge and Sir John the Sheriff were bound and brought to the bar as prisoners, and he asked which were the jurymen whom Sir John had bribed to deal unjustly. When they were found, they too were all brought to the bar alongside of Sir John and the judge.

" 'You have judged unjustly, you and the jurymen that sat in your court,' said Gamelyn to the judge. 'You shall all be hanged this day.'

" 'I beg your mercy, sir!' cried Sir John. 'You are my brother!'

" 'Yes,' said Gamelyn, 'and if you were still my master, I should fare worse than I do now.'

"So, to make my story short, they hanged them all, Sheriff, judge, and jurymen; and thus ended the false knight, Sir John, and all his treachery.

"Sir Ote and Sir Gamelyn went with their friends to the King, and told him all that had been done, and made their peace with him. The King loved Sir Ote well, and made him a justice of his peace. Soon afterwards he appointed Gamelyn chief lord of all his forests, and forgave his young men for the unlawful deeds they had done when they were outlaws in the greenwoods.

"Thus Sir Gamelyn won back his lands, and dwelt in peace, having paid his enemies their due in full. After a little time he took a wife, and, being made Sir Ote's heir, when that worthy knight died, he lived in great prosperity and happiness to the end of his days."

The Cook's was the last tale that day. We are told that very soon after it the pilgrims came to Dartford, where they stayed the night.

THE THIRD DAY

A SERGEANT OF THE LAW

THE next morning the bright sun had run a quarter or more of his course before the travelers began to carry on their stories. It was about ten o'clock when the Host, after calculating the time from the length of the shadows cast by the trees, suddenly turned round on his horse and spoke to his companions.

"I warn you, sirs, a full quarter of the day is gone. Lose no time, for the hours waste day by day, stealing from us while we sleep, and even while we are awake, all by our own neglect. Time is like a stream running from a mountain to a plain, and it can never be called back again. So let us go on with our tales. Sir Man of Law, tell us a story, according to the promise that the whole company has made. You know that you agreed to obey me. Do your duty."

The Man of Law was one who studied the law as his profession, a careful and discreet man, as, indeed, he seemed to be by the wisdom of his words whenever he spoke. He was very learned, being held in great honor for his skill in the law. He had often been appointed judge at the assizes, and knew all the decrees and judgments which had been made since the time of William the Conqueror. There never was such a busy man as he, and yet he seemed to be busier than he really was.

"Sir Host," he answered, "I will obey, for I would fain do

all my duty. But I am no clever story-teller, like friend Chaucer here, who has already told many a tale in his books. He indeed knows how the task should be carried out. Nevertheless, I do not find that he has ever written the story of Constance; and that I will tell you, if I may. It was taught me long ago by a merchant whom I knew."

Thereupon he quietly began his tale.

THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE

FAITHFUL CONSTANCE

THERE once lived in Syria a company of rich merchants. They were very prosperous, and traveled with their wares far and wide over the world, trading in spices, cloth of gold, and fine satins; and all men were glad to deal with them when their ships came into port.

"It happened that in one of their voyages some of the chief of them went to Rome, where they stayed a little time for business and pleasure. While they were in the city they were continually hearing the praises of the Emperor's daughter, the Lady Constance. Every day new tales of her virtue and beauty were told to them. 'Our Emperor of Rome, whom may God keep from harm,' men said, 'has a daughter whose like for loveliness and wisdom has never been seen since the world began. She is the mirror of courtesy; her heart is a very chamber of holiness, her hand ever open to give alms freely. Would that she were Queen of all Europe!'

"The merchants remained in Rome as long as they wished, and then went back to Syria, well satisfied with the business they had done. But they did not forget what they had heard about Constance.

"The Sultan of Syria used to show these merchants great favor, and always sent for them, and entertained them when they returned from a voyage, in order to learn what they had seen

and done in their travels. He summoned them this time as usual, and they told him where they had been and how they had fared. Above all, they spoke so earnestly of the fame of Constance that the Sultan was moved by a great curiosity about her; and when he had heard everything that they could tell him of her, he was filled with a desire to have her for his wife.

"He sent for his counselors, and told them his wishes, bidding them say what should be done. They talked and argued long about the matter, but in the end could see nothing for it but to send an embassy to Rome to ask plainly for the hand of the Emperor's daughter in marriage. But the Sultan was not a Christian, and they said that no Christian king would let his daughter wed a heathen.

" 'Rather than lose Constance,' answered the Sultan, 'I will be baptized and become a Christian. I cannot live without her.'

"Why should I make a long story of it? Ambassadors were sent with rich presents to Rome to ask for the hand of Constance, and the Sultan and all his nobles promised to become Christians. The Emperor of Rome gave his consent to the marriage, and bishops and lords and ladies and knights of high renown were chosen to go with Constance to her new home.

"The appointed day at length came, and all was ready for departure. But it grieved Constance to leave her dear country to go to the strange, far-off land of Syria. She obeyed her father's wishes in all things; but what wonder that she wept and was full of sorrow?

" 'Father and you, dear mother,' she cried, 'give me your blessing before I go to this barbarous country. I will go, for

you wish it, but Heaven keep me safe among the barbarians! Alas! I shall never see you again.'

"But she was to see them again, though not yet; nor could she foresee what she must suffer before that would come to pass.

"So she went forth from them weeping. 'God be with you all!' she said. They could but answer 'Farewell!' And so she sailed away in a ship over the sea, with a splendid escort and a great train of friends and attendants with her.

"The old Sultaness, the mother of the Sultan of Syria, had heard of her son's wish, and knew that he would give up heathen worship and sacrifices now that he was to take a Christian princess to wife. She made up her mind to be revenged on Constance, and to get rid of her if she could. She summoned a council of her own friends, and when they had come together spoke thus to them:

" 'Lords, you know well that my son will give up our religion and become a Christian, all for the sake of this wife who is coming to him from Rome. Why should we suffer this? Shall we submit to his new laws? Will you promise to obey me, my lords, if I try to make our religion and ourselves safe for evermore?'

"They swore, every one of them, to stand by her and strengthen her in every way they could.

" 'Then let us first pretend to become Christians and be baptized,' she continued, 'and I will make such a feast in honor of Constance as will give the Sultan his due. Let his wife be christened never so white, she will need much water to wash away all the red flood that will soon flow.'

"Thus the old Sultaness laid her plans. Before Constance

had arrived in Syria, she went to the Sultan, and told him that she would take back her refusal to become Christian (for she had indeed refused at first, in her rage). She repented of being heathen so long, she said, and wished to have Christian baptism.

" 'Let me also bid the Christians to a feast, my son,' she added. 'I will strive to entertain them well.'

" 'Your wish shall be granted,' answered the Sultan.

"The Sultaness knelt and thanked him for his gracious leave. He knew not what to say, for he was full of joy at her words and her desire to be baptized. Then she kissed him, and went home to set about her plot.

"Constance and her escort of Christian ladies and nobles at last arrived in Syria. The Sultan caused his mother to be told the news at once, and sent word through all his kingdom, calling on his subjects to come and welcome his wife, and uphold the honor of their land. Great was the press of people and rich the array when he went down to the shore to greet Constance; and the Sultaness received her with gladness, bidding her a loving welcome.

"The time came for the feast to which the Sultaness had asked the Christians. They thronged to the noble cheer that was set before them—the Sultan and Constance and all the Christian knights. And, to tell you shortly in a few words what happened, they were all stabbed and murdered there as they sat at the feast, except Constance, and there was not a Christian left alive in all Syria.

"But as for Constance, the heathens took her and set her in a ship without a rudder, telling her to seek the way back to Italy for herself. In the boat (for it was no more) they put all the

gifts that had come with her, and a great store of food and raiment. And thus she sailed forth into the salt sea.

"O gentle Constance, dear princess, may He who is Lord of man's fate steer you!" said the Man of Law, breaking off his story for a moment. "Earnestly did she pray to God to have pity on her and save her, and her prayers were heard; for His power guided and watched over her continually. Who else but God could have kept her unharmed?

"The boat was driven far, through the Greek Sea and past the Straits of Gibraltar, right into the ocean itself, till at length it was cast upon the coast of Northumberland, where it stuck fast on the shore. The Constable of a castle which stood near chanced to find the wreck, and saw Constance lying in it, weary and in despair, her treasure beside her.

"She besought him to slay her, to free her from her woe. But when the Constable heard her words (for he understood the Latin tongue, which she used), he helped her out of the boat on to dry land, and she knelt down and thanked God for her safety. But when she was asked about herself, never a word of her name or estate would she say to anyone. She told them she was so dazed by the sea that she had forgotten all that happened to her before.

"The Constable and Dame Hermengild, his wife, took pity on her, and she went to live with them. She was so gentle and so willing to serve and please them that everyone who looked on her face loved her.

"The Constable and his wife were heathens, and so were the people of the country round. But Constance grew to be so loved by Hermengild that the Constable's wife became a Christian through her teaching. In all that land there were no other

Christians except three who dwelt near the castle; the rest, because of the pagans who so often ravaged those regions, had fled to Wales, where they could keep their own worship without fear.

"One of the three who were left was a blind man, old and bent; who saw nothing with the eyes of his face, but much with the eyes of his mind. It chanced that one bright summer's day Constance, Hermengild, and the Constable were walking by the sea, when they met him. He was told who they were, and was moved to speak in such a manner that the Constable himself should have knowledge of the word of God.

"'In Christ's name,' he cried in a loud voice, 'give me my sight again, Dame Hermengild!'

"Hermengild was filled with terror lest her husband should slay her, for he did not know till now that Constance had converted her. But Constance gave her courage.

"The Constable was amazed at what he heard. 'What means this, wife?' he asked.

"'Sir, it is the work of Christ,' answered Constance for her. 'He it is who helps men against Satan.' And with that she explained to him the Christian faith till he was convinced.

"Thus the Constable became a Christian. He was not, I would have you know, sole lord of this district, but keeper of the castle only, subject to Ella, the wise King of Northumberland who warred so mightily against the Scots. But I must turn to my tale again.

"Ere long a young knight of that country fell madly in love with Constance; but she cared nothing for all his wooing, knowing him to be bad at heart. Then his love was turned into bitter hatred, and he cast about for some way to bring her to a shameful end.

"At length he laid a plan. He waited till the Constable was absent from his home, and then crept up secretly one night into Hermengild's chamber, where Constance lay sleeping by the side of the Constable's wife.

"They were in a deep slumber, and he did not wake them. Softly he went up to the bed, and without a sound cut Hermengild's throat as she slept. Then he laid the blood-stained knife by the side of Constance, and went his way.

"Soon after this the Constable came home again, bringing King Ella with him. They found the Lady Hermengild foully slain, and Constance was accused of the evil deed, for the knife had been discovered all blood-stained at her side.

"King Ella was told the whole story of her coming—how she had been found drifting in an open boat, and how the Constable and his wife had taken pity on her. His heart was overcome with pity when he heard the tale, and he would not believe that Constance had done the murder. Neither could anyone be found to swear an accusation against her, until the base knight himself came forward to bring the charge.

"A court was held before the King, who thought that there might be something further hidden in the knight's accusation, and wished to inquire more fully. The charge was read, and there seemed no help for it but to believe that Constance had done the crime.

"There was no champion there to uphold her cause for her, and she fell down on her knees before them all, and prayed: 'Immortal God, if I be guiltless of this murder, help me, for else I must die.'

"Have any of you ever seen in a great press of people the face of a man being led to his death, with no hope of grace—a

white, pale face that you would know among all the other faces in the crowd? Even so did Constance look, turning her gaze in despair upon the court.

"King Ella's gentle heart was touched with pity for her, and tears ran down his cheeks. 'Let someone bring a Bible quickly,' he said, 'and if this knight will swear on it that Constance slew the Lady Hermengild, we will consider how justice may be done.'

"They fetched a Bible. On it the knight swore that Constance was guilty. Even as he spoke an unseen hand smote him on the back of his neck, so that he fell down suddenly like a stone, his eyes bursting out of his head; and a voice was heard, saying, 'Thou hast slandered an innocent daughter of the Christian faith!'

"The crowd in the court was aghast at the marvel. They saw in it the finger of Constance's God helping her. Great was their fear and deep their penitence for having wronged her by a false charge; and the King and many of his nobles were converted, and became Christians at the sight of this sign from God. The base knight was straightway put to death by Ella's orders, and Ella himself took Constance to wife amid great rejoicing.

"But Ella's mother, Donegild, when she heard the news, was filled with anger. She would not give up her pagan gods, but hated Constance for making her son the King a Christian.

"After a time Ella went away to fight against the Scots, and left Constance once more in the care of the Constable. While he was absent Constance gave birth to a son, who was christened Maurice. The Constable wrote a letter to the King, telling him that an heir to his throne was born, and gave it to a messenger to take to him.

"The messenger's way lay near a castle belonging to Donegild, the King's mother, who was still eager for vengeance on Constance for stealing her son from her, as she said, by marriage with him. The man stopped at the castle to rest, for he reached it late at night; and when Donegild heard this she caused him to be brought into her presence.

" 'My lady, you may rejoice and be glad,' said the messenger, when she asked him his errand and what news he was carrying. 'Our lady the Queen has borne a son to bless this kingdom. I have here sealed letters about the matter, which I must take to your son the King with all speed. If you wish me to give any message from you to him, I am your servant now and always.'

" 'I will give you no message now,' answered Donegild. 'But rest here to-night; I will tell you to-morrow what I wish.'

"The messenger ate and drank heartily, and slept soundly after it. While he was asleep the letter was taken out of his wallet and given to Donegild. She wrote a cunning imitation of it, telling Ella that Constance had indeed brought a child into the world, but that it was a horrible, misshapen creature which no one could bear to look upon, and it was clear from this that Constance was a witch who had cast a spell upon them all.

"This false letter was sealed up and directed so as to look like the old one, and the messenger went on his way with it in the morning. Donegild bade him tell the King how glad she was that an heir to the throne had been born.

"When Ella read the awful news which the wicked Queen had put into the letter he was filled with grief. But he thought that the letter was indeed true, and so submitted to the will of Heaven, writing back to the Constable: 'God's will be done! Keep both the mother and the child till I return home. If it is

the wish of Heaven, I shall one day have a true heir born to me.'

"The answer was given to the same messenger. On his way back he stopped again for the night at Donegild's castle. Again he ate and drank heavily; again the letter was stolen while he lay snoring, and a new one written thus:

" 'The King commands his Constable, on pain of hanging, not to let Constance remain in his kingdom more than three days longer, but to put her and her young son and all the treasure she brought with her into the same boat in which she came, and drive her forth from the land, charging her never more to return.'

"The messenger gave this letter to the Constable, who was amazed when he saw it. 'How can this be?' cried he. 'Will God let an innocent life be lost so cruelly? Woe is me that I must do this evil! Why do the guiltless suffer and the wicked prosper?'

"When he told what had to be done all the people wept, young and old alike. Nevertheless, the King's command prevailed, and on the appointed day Constance, with her face deadly pale, walked down to her boat. She knelt on the shore and prayed: 'He that kept me safe from the false charge before can keep me now from harm on the salt sea as surely as ever He has helped me. In Him I trust!'

"Her little child lay in her arms weeping. It was piteous to hear her say to him, as she knelt down, 'Peace, little son! I will do you no harm.'

"With that she laid her kerchief over his face, and rocked him in her arms, and cast her eyes up to heaven again. 'Little child,' she cried, 'what guilt is there in you who never yet did evil?

"SHE WAS DRIVEN FORTH INTO THE OCEAN"—PAGE 79

Why will your cruel father slay you? Mercy, dear Constable! Let my little child dwell here with you. Or, if you dare not save him for fear of punishment, kiss him but once, in his father's name!'

"Then she looked back at the land she was leaving.

" 'Farewell, cruel husband!' she said, and rose up and walked down the beach to the ship, all the multitude following her. She took leave of them and blessed them, hushing the child's cries the while, and got into the boat. Food for a long time and all other necessary things were put on board, and she was driven forth into the ocean.

"Soon after this King Ella came home, and asked where his wife and child were. The Constable's heart grew cold at the question, as he told the King all he had done, and what letters he had received.

" 'My lord, I did as you bade me do on pain of death,' he said; and Ella saw that the fault was not his.

"The messenger was called, and forced by torture to tell all that had happened on his journeys, and how he had stopped and slept a night each time at Donegild's castle. In the end Ella found out what had taken place, and put the wicked Queen to death with his own hand. He searched far and wide on the seas and neighboring coasts for Constance, but found her not, and after a great while he gave her up for dead.

"But Constance all this time was being carried far out into the ocean in her little boat. She drifted long over the sea without ever coming near land. She was not in want, for there was a vast store of food on board.

"At last she was driven on shore near a heathen castle. The boat was soon seen by the people of the place, and great crowds

flocked to the beach to look at the stranger. The steward of the castle, also, when he heard of her coming, came down to see her.

"As soon as he beheld her he desired her for his wife, and asked her to come with him to his castle. But she knew his mind, and would not come. Then he tried to take her by force, but Constance resisted, and cried piteously to Heaven for aid, and the child began to wail. As they struggled, the wicked steward fell suddenly over the side of the boat and was drowned.

"Thus did Heaven a second time by a miracle save Constance from her enemies. Once more she set out into the open sea in her little boat, and drifted for many a league, past the Straits of Gibraltar again, and into the Mediterranean. There she was long tossed about in the waves; but the end of her troubles was at hand.

"Now let us leave Constance for a little, and go back to her father, the Emperor of Rome. He learnt by letters that the Christian folk in Syria had all been killed by the wicked old Sultaness, and he sent a certain great senator with a large body of men to take vengeance.

"The senator and his troops burnt, and slew, and harried all over Syria for many a day. At length they made an end, and set out on their journey home again. On their way they fell in with the little boat in which Constance and her son Maurice were drifting. They did not know who she was, but they brought her to Rome, and the senator himself told her to live with his wife. The senator's wife was Constance's aunt, but she did not recognize her, and Constance would not say who she was or whence she came. With them she dwelt for a few years happily, doing good deeds, and loved by all who saw her.

"Meanwhile King Ella was overcome with remorse for having put Donegild, his mother, to death, though in her wickedness she had deserved it. He thought that he was himself to blame for the fate of Constance, whom he believed to be dead, and he resolved at length to go to Rome and do penance.

"The report soon spread in Rome that King Ella was come on a pilgrimage, and he was entertained honorably by the Emperor and his nobles. Among others, the senator in whose house Constance was living was asked to feast with him. He came bringing with him the little boy Maurice, Constance's son, who, while they feasted, stood near Ella, watching him.

"The King wondered at the child's beauty, and said to the senator, 'Whose is that fair child that stands yonder?'

" 'I know not,' answered he. 'We do not know his father.' Then he told the story of the finding of Constance. 'Never lived a woman so good and so fair as she whom we found in the sea,' he said at the end of his tale.

"The child was as like Constance as could be. Ella remembered well his dear wife's face, and wondered greatly at the story he had just heard. But he thought it not possible that Constance should be still living. 'I am dreaming,' he said to himself. 'Yet might not God send my wife hither as easily as He sent her to my own country?'

"He soon made an excuse to leave the feast, for the sight of Maurice had brought back all his remorse and sorrow for the loss of Constance.

"A few days afterwards he went to the senator's house to see her of whom such a wonderful story was told. As soon as he came face to face with Constance, at the first look he knew truly who she was. But she for sorrow stood still and dumb as a tree,

remembering that he had sent her adrift into the sea. Then suddenly she fell down in a swoon.

"Ella wept at the sight. 'Heaven have mercy on me!' he said. 'I vow that I am guiltless of harm towards you and my son, dear Constance.'

"Long was their sobbing and bitter their pain ere their grief came to an end. But I am weary of telling you of weeping and sorrow. When each had heard the other's tale there began to grow up between them such a true and perfect joy that there was none ever like it, nor will there be while the world lasts.

"But the Emperor did not yet know that his daughter was found. So Constance asked her husband to pray him to dine with them, without telling him what had happened.

"When the Emperor came, they went forth together to the gate to greet him, and as soon as Constance saw her father in the street before her she fell at his feet.

" 'Father,' she cried, 'have you forgotten your daughter Constance? I am she whom you sent to Syria long ago, and after many wanderings I have come back to you and to this my dear husband.'

"Thus at last they were all come into happiness. After a little while Ella and Constance went to England together; but when a year had passed Ella died, and Constance came back again to Rome, where she was known far and wide for her virtue and good works. After many years her son Maurice was crowned Emperor, and ruled well and wisely, as you will find in the chronicles of Rome.

"My tale is ended. May God, who of His might sends joy after woe, keep us in His grace and help all this company!"

SIR GENTLE MASTER, GENTLE MARINER!

"A GOOD tale, sirs," said the Host, standing up in his stirrups and looking round on the company, when the Man of Law had finished speaking. "Now, Sir Parish Parson, you must tell a tale. I warrant you are learned enough, by Heaven!"

"What ails the man, that he speaks so lightly of Heaven?" answered the Parson gently. He did not like Harry Bailly's rude words.

"Ho, ho! what is that you say, Jack Priest?" cried the Host. "Look you, friends, be quiet now, for the Parson is going to preach us a sermon."

"No, that he is not," said the Shipman, interrupting, as he jolted along on his cart-horse. He was dressed in a long gown of rough cloth which reached to his knees. His face was all browned by sunshine and rain and wind, for he had seen fair and foul weather in many a sea, and knew every haven from Gottland to Cape Finisterre. He had a dagger under his arm, hanging by a lace round his neck.

He had come all the way from Dartmouth, then a great seaport, and was the master-mariner of a ship called the *Maudelayne*. He was a worthy man and a fine seaman, something of a pirate, after the fashion of his time. He made no bones about throwing his prisoners overboard after a victory, so that the merchant had good reason for his endless talk about the need for keeping the sea safe in the straits between Middelburgh, in Holland, and the mouth of the river Orwell.

"We will not have any sermons now," he cried, "or the Parson

will sow a great crop of arguments for us. I will wake you all up with a tale like a peal of bells."

He began his story without any more words. It was about a merchant, his wife, and his cousin John, a monk. The wife had run into debt, and was afraid to tell her husband. She went privately to the monk, and told him of her trouble, saying that she had to pay a hundred francs before the next Sunday, and had no money to discharge the debt. The monk consoled her, and promised to lend her the money, if he could get it. When she had gone away he went to the merchant and told him that he wanted to buy some cattle, but was short of money; would he lend him a hundred francs for a week or two? The merchant (who was about to go a long journey) gladly did him this service, bidding him pay back the loan whenever he could. The monk took the money, and gave it to the merchant's wife, not telling her from whom he had received it; and she paid her debt. When the merchant came home again, the monk went to him and spoke of the money he had borrowed. He said he had paid it back a day or two before to the merchant's wife, as the merchant himself was away from his home. The wife, of course, had said nothing to her husband about the money, and she was very surprised when he asked her about it. By way of excuse for not telling him, she said she thought that it was a present from the monk, not the payment of a debt, and so she had spent it in buying herself clothes; but she offered to pay it back gradually, and asked him to forgive her. The merchant saw that, whatever had happened, it was no use to chide her, and so he pardoned her. Thus the cunning monk paid the wife's debt out of the merchant's money, and taught her that it was best not to hide anything from her husband.

"Well told," said the Host when the Shipman ceased. "Long may you live to voyage along our coasts, gentle Sir Master-mariner! Now let us pass on, and seek about to see who will tell the next tale."

With that he turned to Madame Eglantyne the Prioress, speaking to her as gently as a girl, for she was all feeling and tender heart; she would weep if she saw a mouse caught in a trap, or if ever a man whipped one of her little lap dogs, which she fed on roast meat or milk and cake. But in spite of her gentleness and good nature, she tried to mimic the manners of the Court and stand on her dignity. She sang Divine Service vastly well, intoning through her nose in a very seemly way; and she spoke French excellently, in an English fashion, after the manner of the school at Stratford-at-Bow, for she did not know the French of Paris.

She was of a good height, with a comely face, a well-shaped nose, gray eyes, little red lips, and a broad, fair forehead. On her arm she wore a set of red coral-beads, with green ones here and there, and a golden brooch hanging from them, with a motto on it—"*Love conquers all.*"

"My lady Prioress," said the Host very courteously, "by your leave—for I would not offend you—I think you should tell us the next tale, if you will. Will you grant us this favor, dear lady?"

"Gladly," she answered, and told a story about a little boy who was murdered by some Jews. The Jews were greatly hated by the Christians of Europe, and were often cruelly persecuted. People were ready to believe almost anything evil of them, so that it was neither strange nor painful to the pilgrims to hear the tale which the gentle Prioress now began.

THE PRIORESS'S TALE

THE BOY MARTYR

THERE was once in a great city of Asia a Jews' quarter, a street where all the Jews lived. The Jews who dwelt there were usurers and money-lenders, kept there by a lord of that country for his own purposes. They were always quarreling with the Christians of the city, whom they hated, for Jews and Christians are very bitter enemies, wherever they are.

"At one end of the street stood a little school of Christian folk, at which there were a great number of children of the Christian faith, learning year by year to sing and read, as children do when they are young. Among them was a widow's son, a little chorister-boy, seven years of age, who went day by day to the school. His mother had taught him to reverence above all the Virgin Mary, the mother of Christ, and he forgot none of her teaching, for, like St. Nicholas, he began to reverence Christ when he was yet very young.

"This little child, learning from his book as he sat at school, heard a hymn sung in praise of the Virgin, beginning, 'Gentle mother of the Redeemer,' and it sounded so sweet that he drew as near as he dared to hear it better. He listened to the words and the notes till he had the first verse by heart.

"He knew nothing of what the hymn meant, for it was written in Latin, and he was too young to understand it. But one day he asked another boy, older than himself, to tell him the meaning of it.

"'This song,' the boy answered, 'was made in praise of the Virgin Mary, so I have heard, to pray her to help us. I can tell you no more; I learn the song, but I do not know grammar enough to understand the words.'

"'And is this song made in reverence of Christ's mother?' said the little child. 'I will do my best to learn it all ere Christmas comes. Even though I be beaten for not heeding my books I will learn it, to honor the Virgin.'

"His friend taught him from day to day, till he knew it all by heart. Then he sang it out well and boldly from word to word, according to the right notes; and he loved it so well that he could not stop singing it. Twice a day did the hymn come from his lips, as he went to school and as he came back home through the long street of the Jews' quarter.

"Thus for a little while he sang sweetly every day. But Satan entered into the hearts of the Jews among whom the boy passed on his way to the little Christian school. 'People of the Jews,' said he, tempting them, 'is it to your credit that every day this boy should walk and sing as he pleases in your midst, defying the honor which is due to your law, in spite of you?'

"Thenceforth the Jews plotted to drive this innocent child out of the world. They hired a murderer, who lay hid secretly in a dark alley. As the boy came by, singing his hymn, the man leapt out upon him and held him fast; then he cut his throat, and cast the dead body into a pit.

"The poor widow waited all that night for her little child, but he did not come. As soon as it was daylight, she went out to seek him, her face pale with fear and her mind busy with terrible thoughts. She searched at the school and all over the city, till at length she found that he had last been seen in the Jews'

quarter. Half out of her mind with grief and terror, the poor mother went to every place where she thought she might find her child, and at last dared to ask the Jews themselves about him.

"She prayed piteously to every Jew who dwelt there to tell her if her child had been seen to pass that way; but they all answered 'No.' But God in His mercy soon led the widow near the pit where her son's body had been cast. O Almighty God, who dost Thy wonders through the mouths of innocents, how great is Thy might!

"Hear now the marvel that was wrought. As the widow, calling her son by name, drew near the spot where the dark pit lay, the dead child began to sing in a sweet, clear voice his little hymn, so that all the place rang with the sound.

"The Christian folk passing by ran to see this wonder, and sent for the Provost of the city. He came in haste, and when he had given thanks to God for the miracle, he ordered the Jews of the neighborhood to be seized and bound. They were tortured till they confessed who had planned and done the crime. The murderers were drawn by wild horses, and then hanged according to the law.

"The child was taken up with mourning and lamentation and carried to the nearest abbey, the voice still singing. The poor mother was so bowed down with grief that she had hardly strength to follow her little son's body as it was borne through the city on a bier, and laid upon the great altar of the abbey. The Abbot was sent for to read the Burial Service, but the voice of the dead boy still sang 'Gentle mother of the Redeemer.'

"The Abbot was a good and holy man, and began to exhort the child, saying, 'Dear child, I conjure you, in Christ's name, to tell me why you sing thus, your throat being cut, as we see?'

" 'My throat is cut to the neck-bone,' the boy answered, 'and I should have died from it straightway, after the manner of men. But our Lord Christ, to keep me mindful of His glory, grants that I may still sing "Gentle mother of the Redeemer" loud and clear. Ever did I love the mother of Christ as well as I was able, and when I was about to yield up my life, she came to me and bade me sing as I lay dying this hymn which you have heard; and when I had sung a little, I thought that she laid a grain or seed on my tongue. Therefore I sing, and I must still sing in her honor till the grain is taken from my tongue; for when she had put it there, she said, "My little child, I will fetch you when the grain is taken from your tongue. Be not afraid; I will not forsake you." '

"The Abbot caught the boy's tongue in his fingers, and took away the grain which he saw lying there. Then the spirit seemed to pass suddenly out of the child, and softly he gave up his life. The good Abbot's eyes filled with tears, and he fell down in a swoon on the altar-steps, and lay there as if dead.

"They took the martyr's body from the abbey, and built a tomb of clear marble for him. There he is now. May we meet him in Heaven, and may God grant us sinful folk His mercy!"

CHAUCER AND THE MONK

WHEN the lady Prioress had finished her tale of this miracle, all the rest were silent, no one liking to speak. At last the Host broke in in his jesting way. He gave a glance at Chaucer, who was riding as if he saw and heard no one, and said: "What sort of a man are you, Master Chaucer? You are for ever staring at the ground, as if you were trying to spy a hare

crouching. Come near, and look up merrily. See, friends, he has a waist as large and finely-shaped as mine"—the Host was a stout, round man—"and is well enough to look at. Yet he will not speak to anyone, but always wears an absent look on his face. Now, sirs, let him have place, and you shall tell us a tale of mirth right quickly, Master Chaucer, as the others have done."

"Do not be discontented if you get a poor reward from me, Host," was the answer. "I can tell no story, except an old rhyme I learnt long ago."

"That is good enough," said the Host. "We shall hear a dainty tale, to judge by your looks."

At that Chaucer began a wordy, rambling legend, after the manner of the feeble minstrels and story-tellers of his day, making fun of the rhymes they sang.

"Listen, lords, and I will tell you a tale of mirth and comfort. Once there lived a fair knight of great prowess, whose name was Sir Topaz. He was born in a far country, at Popering in Flanders beyond the sea, and his father was lord of that land.

"Sir Topaz was a doughty knight, his face as white as the finest bread, his lips as red as roses, and he had a seemly nose, I tell you. His hair and beard were saffron-yellow, hanging down as far as his waist. His shoes were of Cordovan leather, his brown hose of Bruges stuff, his robe of costly cloth; and he could hunt the wild deer, hawk with a gray goshawk, wrestle, or shoot with the bow as well as any man.

"It befell one day, as I will tell you, that Sir Topaz went a-riding on his gray steed, a lance in his hand, a long sword by his side. He rode through a fair forest, wherein was many a fierce wild beast, such as the buck and the hare. There grew

also in that forest trees and plants of every kind, and the birds were singing merrily—the sparrow-hawk, the popinjay, the thrush, and the wild dove. At the sound of their song Sir Topaz grew wild with delight, and spurred his horse till the beast's sides ran with blood.

"At length he grew a-weary of riding, and lay down on the grass, while his horse fed and was rested. As he lay idle, he bethought him of a dream which he had had the night before. In his sleep he had seen the Elf-Queen, the Queen of Fairyland. So lovely had she seemed to him that when he awoke he swore he would wed none other than the Queen who had appeared to him in the dream.

"Into his saddle he climbed again, at this thought, and rode on over hill and dale till he found the country of Fairyland so wild. There came forth to meet him a great giant, whose name was Elephant, a very terrible warrior.

" 'Here dwells the Queen of Faery,' cried the giant. 'Sir Knight, if you haste not hence, by Termagant! I will slay your steed with my mace.'

" 'Wait till to-morrow. To-morrow I will meet you,' quoth Sir Topaz, 'when I have my armor. To-morrow I will pierce you through and through with my lance. Here shall you be slain to-morrow morning.'

"He drew back quickly, and turned his horse and fled. The giant cast great stones at him with a sling, but he escaped unhurt.

"Listen, lordings, to my tale, how Sir Topaz came home again in haste over hill and dale, and commanded his men to make merry because he must needs fight a giant with three heads for love of a bright lady.

"'Come hither, my minstrels and story-tellers,' he said, 'and tell me tales as I put on my armor—tales of romance, of kings and cardinals.'

"They came and sang to him, and made him a drink of sweet wine, royal spices, gingerbread, licorice, and sugar, all mixed in a great wooden bowl. Then he put on his shirt of fine linen, his jacket, and his suit of mail, his hauberk of Jewish work, and his coat-armor, white as a lily-flower. He took his shield of red gold, his helmet, his sword in its ivory sheath, his sharp cypress spear, and his leggings of boiled leather; he mounted his dapple-gray steed, with its ivory saddle and its bridle as bright as the sun or moon, and he swore a great oath—'By ale and bread, the giant shall die, come what may!'

"Men tell in romances of Sir Bevis or Sir Guy and other brave knights, but Sir Topaz was the flower of chivalry. He bestrode his good steed, and rode forth upon his way like a spark from a firebrand. In his helmet he stuck a lily-flower.

"That night he would not sleep in a house, but lay in the open air, his helmet for his pillow, while his horse cropped the grass nearby. Himself he drank water from the well, like Sir Percival—"

Thus far had Chaucer got in the tale, which did not seem likely ever to come to any point, when the Host broke in:

"No more of this!" cried he. "I am weary of it, and my ears ache with your worthless tale."

"Why do you stop me more than anyone else?" asked Chaucer. "I tell you the best tale I know."

"You do but waste time with your empty babbling," answered the Host. "Let us see if you can tell us a true story of adven-

ture, or at least one in which there is some mirth or some profit for our minds."

"Gladly," said Chaucer. "I will tell you a little tale that you will like. It is a virtuous moral tale, in which you will find many good proverbs and sayings, though perhaps they will be wrapped in new words."

He told them therefore the tale of Melibeus, a story full of learning and piety. A certain Melibeus and his wife Prudence had a daughter named Sophia. One day Melibeus went out, leaving his wife and daughter alone at home. Three of his enemies found out that he was absent, and came and tried to enter his house; but the doors were fast shut, and they could not enter until they found a ladder and climbed in. When at last they got in, they beat Dame Prudence, and wounded her daughter, and went away leaving them both for dead. Melibeus came back and found what they had done, and swore to be avenged terribly. He was for going after the villains at once and slaying them, but his wife, being revived from the swoon into which she had fallen, persuaded him not to act hastily in his anger. So he held a council of his friends, and then asked his wife's advice again. She was ever anxious for peace, and proposed that he should leave the matter to her to settle quietly; and this at length he did. Dame Prudence sent for the three enemies, and spoke with them sensibly and calmly about peace and friendship. They were so pleased with her words that they agreed to do as she wished, and she bade them come on a certain day to ask mercy of Melibeus. They did so, and by his wife's advice he forgave them all the wrong they had done him.

This, then, was the second tale Chaucer told, but he filled it

out so with texts and sentences from famous writers of old that it became a kind of sermon or moral argument, such as men in those days liked to hear; and the pilgrims were pleased with the lesson taught by the story—"Do nothing in haste."

Harry Bailly especially liked Chaucer's description of Dame Prudence. "I wish my wife could have heard that tale," he said. "She is not so patient as your Prudence. Whenever I have to beat my servants, she comes out with great knotted clubs, crying, 'Kill the knaves! Break all their bones!' And if any one of our neighbors will not bow to her at church, or offends her, she comes home and flies out at me, raging because I do not go and beat him. 'Give me your knife, you coward!' she cries, 'and you take my distaff and go spin!' Day and night she talks on: 'Alas that I was ever wedded to a milksop, a cowardly ape who lets every one browbeat him! You dare not stand up for your wife.' Then I have to go out and rage like a lion against my friend who has roused her anger. Some day she will make me do one of the neighbors a mischief, for I am a dangerous man to meet when I have my knife in my hand, though it is true that I dare not withstand my own wife. She is terrible to fall out with, as anyone will find who tries. But enough of this. Here we are near Rochester, and we must have another tale. My lord the Monk, be merry. You shall tell us a story next. You must not be too proud. I do not know whence you come or to what order you belong, but you have a fair skin, and feed in a good pasture, I warrant. You must be some officer of the Church—a sexton, or a cellarer, perhaps. You are a master at home, I vow—no poor dweller in a cloister, no novice, but a governor wise and cunning. That is why you are such a brawny, well-fed man, while we poor laymen are but dwarfs beside you. You

holy men take all the corn, and leave us only the chaff. But do not be angry, my lord, at my jokes. Many a true word is spoken in jest."

The worthy Monk took the Host's words very patiently. It was a great complaint of the day against his order that they lived too well and freely, and spent in luxury the great sums which were often given them. It is true that they showed great charity and hospitality to any beggars or travelers who came to their monasteries; but that, too, was a cause of complaint, because many idlers lived entirely at their expense, and never tried to work for a living. But the monks were certainly very rich, and most likely deserved a good many of the charges brought against them, and our friend the pilgrim was no worse than many of his fellows. He was no believer in the saying that a monk outside his cloister is like a fish out of water. Why should he be always poring over his books, thought he, or toiling with his hands, as so many monks did? He was far more eager to hunt with his swift greyhounds, or ride out on the splendid horses he kept in his stable. He left the strict old rules of his monastery to go their own way, and himself went out into the newer world. How else, he asked, could the world be helped by him?

His head was bald and shiny as glass, like his smooth round face. His eyes sparkled as he rolled them round. He was no thin, pale, ghost-like man, but as fat and well-kept as the swans he loved to eat. His sleeves were edged at the wrist with rich gray fur, the finest that could be got. He wore a hood fastened under his chin with a pin of gold, beautifully worked, with a love-knot for its head. His boots were soft and easy, and even his palfrey looked prosperous, for it was as sleek as its master.

"I will do my best," he answered the Host, "as far as is right,

to give you a tale, or even two or three. If you will listen, I will tell you the life of St. Edward, or perhaps, first, some of my tragedies, of which I have a hundred. A tragedy is the story of a man who is in great prosperity, when suddenly he falls out of his high degree into misery, and ends wretchedly. Listen, then, if you wish to hear them, and pardon me for my ignorance if I do not tell you them in the right order as they happened."

He went straight on without giving the pilgrims time to say anything, reeling out his short tales or tragedies of the great men of the world one after another. He told them how Lucifer was cast out of heaven, how Adam was driven from Eden, how Samson was taken by the Philistines, against whom he had done such great things.

"And Hercules, also," he continued, "slew many a tyrant, like Antæus, Cacus, Busiris, and many a monster, such as the grisly boar and the Lernæan hydra, or many-headed serpent. He was the strongest man in the world at that time, but in the end he was killed by his wife Deianira with a poisoned shirt which, I am told, was made by Nessus.

"Nebuchadnezzar, too, having been the greatest king on earth, was struck with madness from heaven, and became as a beast of the field, eating grass, his hair like an eagle's feathers, his nails as long as a bird's claws. Belshazzar also fell greatly, as you will find in the Scriptures.

"We see Zenobia, moreover, the Queen of Palmyra, a great warrior and huntress, subdued and led in chains by the Roman Emperor Aurelian. Peter, the King of Spain, was slain by his brother, and Peter, King of Cyprus, was killed in his bed.

"It is piteous also to tell the fate of Ugolino, Earl of Pisa. A little way out of Pisa is a tower in which he was shut up with

his three little sons; for Roger, the Bishop of Pisa, had laid a false charge against him, and the people rose and threw him into this prison. They left with him food and drink, but very little of it, and that poor and bad. When they had finished it one day, the hour came when more was usually brought; but Ugolino heard the jailer outside shutting the great doors of the tower and going away. At the sound he said nothing, but into his heart there fell the thought that they would be let die of hunger, and he began to weep.

"'Father, why do you weep?' asked one of the little children. He was but three years old, and the eldest was only five. 'When will the jailer bring our food? Have you no morsel of bread left over? I am so hungry that I cannot sleep. Ah, if I might sleep forever! Then hunger would no longer creep upon me!'

"Thus day by day the children begged him for food, until the youngest put himself in his father's arms, and kissed him and died. When Ugolino saw it, he began to gnaw his arms for woe; but the two children who yet lived thought that he did it through hunger, and prayed him to eat them and live. But in a little time they too lay dead in his arms, and soon he also starved to death. That is the tragedy of Ugolino of Pisa, and if you wish to hear it more fully, read the great poet of Italy, Dante."

Many other little stories were told by the Monk, all about great men whose deaths have been famous—Barnabo of Lombardy, Nero, Holofernes, Antiochus, Alexander, Julius Cæsar, and Crœsus.

"Crœsus," he said, never stopping for a moment, "was the rich King of Lydia, who in the midst of his pride and wealth was taken prisoner, and brought to a great fire to be burnt; but such

heavy rain fell on the fire that it was quenched, and he escaped for that time.

"But when he was free once more, he began again new wars and schemes of conquest. He thought that, since he had been once wonderfully saved, nothing more would harm his greatness, and he was still further puffed up because of a dream which he had one night. He fancied that he was set upon a tree, where Jupiter, the king of the gods, came and washed him, and Apollo, god of light, brought a towel to dry him.

"His daughter was very skilled in interpreting dreams, and he asked her what this vision meant.

" 'The tree,' said she, 'is the gallows. Jupiter means rain and snow, Apollo the sun's warm beams. You will be hanged, father, and the rain shall wash you and the sun dry you.'

"Thus was Crœsus warned by his daughter, and her words came to pass, for Fortune, hiding her bright face behind a cloud—"

But here the Knight at last cut the talkative Monk short. "No more of this, good Sir Monk," said he. "You have said enough, and more than enough. Most men do not love to hear many of these gloomy tales of sudden misfortunes and miserable deaths. It is more pleasant and comforting to be told of some one who climbs up from a poor estate to prosperity, and there abides in good fortune. That is the kind of story which we should tell, because it makes us glad."

"Yes," said the Host, "you speak the truth. The Monk talks loud of his 'tragedies,' and 'fortune hidden behind a cloud,' and I know not what else; and all that comes of it is grief for such heavy woes. Sir Monk, no more. Your tales annoy the company. Such talk is not worth a butterfly, for there is in it nothing

to amuse us. Tell us something else, for if it had not been for the tinkling of the bells on your bridle, I should have fallen asleep long ago during your tragedies. Let us have instead a story of hunting."

"No," answered the Monk, "I have no liking for jests. Let someone else speak. I have told my tale."

The Host turned to one of the Priests who came with the Prioress, and addressed him boldly and rudely, for he was not so grand a personage as the lordly Monk.

"Come near, John Priest, come hither. Tell us something to make our hearts glad, and be blithe, even though you ride a poor jade of a horse. What if the beast is lean and ill-groomed, so long as he serves you well? Let your heart be merry, and tell us a good story."

"Yes, Sir Host," he answered readily, "I will be merry."

With that he began his tale.

THE NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE

THE COCK AND THE FOX

A POOR widow, well on in years, once lived in a tiny cottage beside a copse, in a little valley. She had had a very toilsome life ever since she became a widow, for her stock of cattle and her money were both scanty; but she bore her lot simply and patiently, and kept herself and her two daughters by hard work and thrift. She had three large swine, three cows, and a sheep called Moll. Her cottage was a smoky little cabin, just big enough for her wants, and many a frugal meal had the poor woman eaten in it with only hunger for her sauce.

"Outside this little house lay a yard with a wooden fence and a dry ditch round it. Here dwelt her cock, Chanticleer by name. In all the land of crowing there was not his equal to be found. His voice was as sweet as a church organ, and the time of his crowing was surer than any clock. He had a comb redder than fine coral, notched like the battlements of a castle wall. His bill was black, shining like jet, his legs and toes azure blue; his nails were whiter than the lily-flower, his plumage like burnished gold.

"Under his rule Chanticleer had seven fair hens, all wondrously like him in color and beauty; but the fairest hues of all were those on the throat of her who was called the Demoiselle Partlet, a courteous, discreet, and debonair lady, who from the

first week of her life had won and kept the heart of her lord Chanticleer. I vow it was a great joy when the sun began to rise to hear them sing together so sweetly their song, 'My dear love is far away' (for in those days, as I am told, beasts and birds could speak and sing as men do).

"It chanced that one dawn, as Chanticleer sat dozing on his perch among his wives, with Dame Partlet by his side, he began to groan in his throat like a man troubled with bad dreams.

"When Partlet heard the sound, she was afraid, and said: 'Dear heart, what ails you that you groan thus? You are a bad sleeper! Fie, for shame!'

" 'Madam,' replied Chanticleer, 'I pray you do not take it amiss. My heart is still alarmed from the terror I felt in my sleep. May my dream turn out aright, and no harm come to me! This is what I dreamed: I thought that as I roamed up and down in our yard I saw a beast like a hound, who tried to seize and slay me. His color was between yellow and red, his tail and his ears tipped with black; his nose was small, and his eyes glowed like fire. I die of fear even now at the thought of his look. That is the cause of my groaning, I do not doubt.'

" 'Fie on you, coward!' quoth Partlet. 'Now you have lost my heart and my love. I cannot love a coward. I want a husband who is wise and brave, not a boaster who is dazed with fear at any trifle! Why should you be afraid because of a dream? Doubtless it comes from your ill-health. You have eaten food which is not good for you, and must take physic. I pray you, before you eat the herbs which I will search out from among those that grow in our yard, swallow a worm or so, to make your digestion fit for the plants that will restore you to

health. Do not fear your dreams. That is all I have to say to you.'

" 'Wife,' answered Chanticleer, 'I thank you for your learning and counsel. But I find in learned authors many things which show that dreams are often true. One tells a story of two travelers who went on a pilgrimage together, and came to a town which was so full of travelers already that there was no room for both of them at the same inn. So for that night they parted company. One found a good enough place in an inn, but the other could only get a cattle-stall in a stable for a bed. In the night, long before day dawned, the one who was sleeping in the inn dreamed that his comrade called him, saying, "Alas! I shall be murdered this night as I lie in an ox's stall! Help me, dear brother, or I die. Come to me quickly!" He started up in his sleep in fear, but when he was thoroughly awake he took no heed of it, thinking it only a dream. But as soon as he was asleep again he dreamed the same thing once more. Again he woke, and again he took no notice. But when he was asleep for the third time, his comrade seemed to come to him, and say, "I am slain now; look at my wounds! Arise early in the morning, and go to the west gate of the town. There you will see a cart full of rubbish, which you must stop boldly, for in it lies my body. I have been killed for the sake of my gold." As soon as it was day the traveler went to the stable where his comrade had slept, and called him. But he could not find him, and when he asked the hostler, the answer was: "Sir, your friend is gone. At daybreak he rose, and left the town." Then he began to fear lest his dream should really prove true. He hurried to the west gate of the town, and found the rubbish-cart just as he had been told in his dream. Now no longer did he doubt, but cried out

boldly: "My friend has been murdered this very night that is just past, and his body lies in this cart! Where are the rulers of the city? My comrade is slain!" What more need I tell you, Partlet? They had the cart emptied, and there, in the midst of the rubbish, they found the murdered man; and when the dream was told they hanged the hostler who had done the murder, with his accomplices. Thus we learn that dreams may come true, and that murder will out, as we can see any day of our lives. God will not suffer it to be hidden.

" 'Again,' Chanticleer went on, to prove his point more fully, 'the same author tells another tale of a dream. Two men wished to go over the sea into a far country, but were forced to stay in a certain seaport by reason of contrary winds. At length, however, towards eventide one day the wind changed, and blew just as they wished, and they made ready to start early the next morning. But in the night, about dawn, one of them had a dream. He thought that a man stood by his bedside and ordered him not to leave that town, saying, "If you go on your journey to-morrow you will be drowned." He woke up, and told his comrade the dream, and begged him to put off the voyage for a day. But his friend laughed. "No dream shall make me fear so much as to change my plan," said he. "I care not a straw for your visions. Dreams are all folly. Stay you here if you like: I go my way." He said no more. When the time came he took his leave and started on his journey without his companion. But he had not sailed half his voyage when the ship struck a rock, and sank straightway with all on board.

" 'Thus, dear Partlet,' finished the cock, 'you may see that we cannot wholly set dreams aside as vain.' And he gave her also other examples of dreams which had come true—the visions

of St. Kenelm, Daniel, Joseph, of Crœsus and Andromache, and many others. 'I am sure,' he ended, 'that I shall meet with some misfortune. Now let us talk of something mirthful, and lay aside all these fears. When I see the beauty of your face, dear Partlet, and look on your scarlet eyes, all my dread is driven away. By your side I am so full of joy and hope that I can defy my dreams.'

"With that he flew down from the perch with all his hens, for it was by now broad day, and with a 'Chuck, chuck!' called them to him, having suddenly found a grain of corn lying in the yard. He was no longer afraid, but looked as bold and grim as a lion, roaming proudly up and down on the tips of his toes, and not deigning to set the sole of his foot on the ground at all. Whenever he found any corn he chucked loudly, and up ran all his faithful hens.

"A little after, it being then past the month of March, Chanticleer was stalking about in a very grand manner, casting his eyes up to the bright sun, and holding high converse with his seven wives, who were strutting by his side.

" 'The sun has climbed up in heaven forty-one degrees and more, Dame Partlet,' said he. 'Hear how the happy birds sing, and see the fresh flowers blowing! My heart is full of mirth and high spirits.'

"But his joy was destined to end in woe, for suddenly a terrible thing came to pass. A fox, full of treachery and wickedness, who had lived in the copse near the cottage for three years past, had the night before broken through the hedge into the yard where Chanticleer and his wives dwelt. He had been lying quietly in a patch of herbs till it was well advanced in the morning, waiting for his chance to fall upon the cock. Shame

upon you, false murderer, lurking in your den—falser than the traitor Ganelon who betrayed Roland! Ah, Chanticleer, woe upon that morning when you flew so proudly down from your perch! You should have taken warning from your dreams.

"Fair Partlet lay in the yard with her sisters, bathing herself in the bright sun, and Chanticleer near by was singing as merrily as a mermaid. Suddenly, as he cast his eyes upon a butterfly among the herbs, he spied the fox lying there, and his dream came back into his mind with a rush. Not much desire had he then for crowing and singing. He started back aghast, and all he could do was to cry, 'Cok, cok!' like one sore afraid. He was about to flee, when the fox spoke and stopped him.

" 'Gentle sir, alas! why would you go? Are you afraid of me? I am your friend, and I should be base indeed if I wished you any harm. I did not come to spy upon you, but truly I am here only to hear you sing, for your voice is like an angel's. My lord your father (bless his soul!) and your mother of their grace gave me once the great joy of paying a visit to my house, and I would gladly do you, too, some service. I have been told much of what people say about good singing, but I vow that I never heard any man except you sing as well as your father did every morning. What he sang came right from his heart. He would so strain himself to make his voice stronger and clearer that his eyes winked with the loudness of his song, as he stood on tiptoe stretching out his long slender neck. And he was withal so discreet a man that we shall never again find his equal in wisdom. I have read in stories of a very famous cock who was clever enough to punish a man who had injured him, but he could not be compared with your father. Now, sir, sing, I pray you, and let me judge if you are really as good as your sire.'

"Chanticleer was so pleased with this flattery that he did not see what treachery lay hid in it. He flapped his wings, stood up on tiptoe, stretched out his neck, shut his eyes tight, and crowed lustily. But as soon as he had begun, and was intent on his song, Master Russell the fox started up and caught him by the throat, threw him over his shoulder, and ran off with him toward the woods.

"You never heard such lamentation as was raised by Chanticleer's wives when they saw their lord carried off. Not even when the famous city of Troy was taken did the mourners make so great an outcry. Dame Partlet lifted up her voice and wailed more loudly than Hasdrubal's wife, who in grief for her husband threw herself into a fire and was burnt.

"The widow and her two daughters heard the clamor, and ran out from the cottage, just in time to see the fox bearing the cock away to the woods. They hurried after him, and all the neighbors rushed out with sticks and stones to join in the chase. Forth came Colle the dog, and his friends Talbot and Garland, and Malkin the maid, with her distaff still in her hand. The cow ran, the calf ran, and even the very hogs, roused by the barking of the dogs, the shouting of the men and women, and the din of trumpets and horns and drums, trotted about squealing as if their hearts would break. The ducks quacked, the geese in terror flew away over the tree-tops, the swarm of bees came buzzing out of their hive. Jack Straw himself and his merry men never made such a noise as arose when Chanticleer the cock was stolen.

"But see now how Fortune sometimes overthrows the hope and pride of victorious conquerors. The cock, lying helpless with

fear on the fox's back, suddenly bethought himself of a plan. He began to speak to Master Russell.

" 'Sir, if I were you I should turn and mock at those who are chasing us, and say, "Go back, you proud rascals, and do not think to catch me. Look, here I am at the wood-side, and now the cock will stay with me in spite of all you can do, plague take you! and I will surely eat him very soon.'

"With such words the cock worked on the fox's vanity, and at last succeeded in his wish.

" 'Faith, I will do it,' said the fox.

"With that he made as if to call out to the pursuers. But no sooner had he opened his mouth to do so than in a trice the cock had broken away from him, and was perched up in a tree safely out of his reach.

"Master Russell saw that he had lost his prey, and fell to his old tricks again. 'Alas, Chanticleer!' he said; 'I should not have made you afraid of me at first, when I took you from your yard. I vow I did it with no wicked purpose. Come down, and I will tell you the whole truth about what I really meant to do, I promise you.'

" 'No, no, Sir Fox,' answered Chanticleer, more wary after his escape. 'You do not deceive me twice. You shall not flatter me into shutting my eyes and singing again. A man who shuts his eyes when he ought to be looking about him deserves to have his sight taken away from him.

" 'Nay,' answered the fox sadly, turning to flee, as Chanticleer's friends began to draw near: 'if a man talks when he ought to hold his peace he deserves to lose what he has gained.'

"Thus Chanticleer's dream came true, and you can learn from

it what it is to be careless and easily flattered. This is the moral of my story: 'Take the ripe grain, and let the chaff go.' Now may Heaven make us all good men, and bring us to happiness."

"A good tale, John Priest, bless you!" said the Host. "The Priest himself is very like a fine cock, is he not?" he added, turning to the others. "Look at his deep chest and his muscles and his long neck! His eyes, too, are as keen as a sparrow-hawk's, and as for his color, he needs no red dye to make him brighter in the face! Well, you have told us a good story, Sir Priest, and thank you for it!"

No more tales were told that day. The pilgrims were now quite close to Rochester, and there they are said to have stopped for the night.

THE FOURTH DAY

SOME ENGLISH ROGUES

AT the time of this pilgrimage the lower offices of the Church had in many cases fallen into the hands of very unworthy men, who lived by whatever they could get from the people amongst whom they found themselves; and there were three classes especially who had a bad name—the begging friars, the pardoners, and the summoners.

The friars were supposed to go about teaching and doing good, and to live on what was honestly and freely given them; and of course many of them were good men, who really were poor, and who really did set out to teach the common people a better way of life. But there were, perhaps, as many who were nothing of the sort, and the Friar who joined our Canterbury pilgrims seems to have been one of them. He was one of those who were limited to a certain district, within which they were allowed to collect what money they could, generally on condition of paying a fixed sum to the order to which they belonged; anything over that amount they kept for themselves. Others went all over the country begging alms on any pretext they cared to invent, using all sorts of cunning tricks to get gold, because the poor people were often very ignorant, and believed most of the lies that these impostors told.

In every village the friar might be seen, with his scrip and tipped staff and his robes tucked up for the road. He would

poke and pry into all the houses, and beg anything, even a morsel of meal or cheese or corn. Sometimes they went in couples, and one would collect while the other took down on a tablet of ivory the names of those who gave anything, so that he might be able, so he said, to reward them by his prayers.

"Give us a bushel of wheat, of malt, of rye," they would ask unblushingly, and then go on to beg for anything they saw—"a little cake, or a piece of cheese. Just a halfpenny for a prayer or two! Or let us have a corner of a blanket, dear lady. Look here, I write your name on my list! Give us some bacon or beef, or anything you can find."

But as soon as they had left the house the names would be rubbed off the tablets, and nothing would be left to show for their fine words except their own winnings, which went into a large sack carried by a servant who trudged patiently behind them. And thus, when all the villagers had been fleeced, the the parish parson, who really worked for their good, would find it very hard to hold his own.

The pardoners were a bolder kind of rogue. It was believed that pardon after death for sins committed in life could be won by doing a certain penance, and that part or the whole of this penance could be exchanged or bought off for a sum of money down. Certain men were given power by the Pope to sell "pardons" of this kind, which by-and-by were thought to have the power of remitting the actual sins themselves. But many of the pardoners—and there were a very great number of them all over England—had not had leave given them to carry on this trade, and they proved such rascals that the Pope himself had to send out letters warning people against them. They imitated the properly licensed pardoners, and pretended to come from

Rome with their pardons and relics of the saints. As often as not most of their story was false; they had never been to Rome, and their letters and pardons were forged, in spite of the bulky rolls of parchment and the big red seals which they showed to the people who were foolish enough to believe them. They would say that old nails or stones picked up from the wayside had once belonged to famous holy men of old, and had the power of working cures of all sorts.

The Pardoner who was going with Harry Bailly and the rest from Southwark to Canterbury was very like many of this class, as he showed his comrades later on in the day.

A summoner was the officer whose duty it was to summon men before the court of the Archdeacon, who had power to punish the people in his district for offenses against religion or Church law, or for not paying their debts to the clergy. If the summoner was dishonest, or the Archdeacon, or both, the poor would be badly off indeed. They would be threatened with a summons before the court, and if they did not pay a heavy bribe they would most likely be found guilty of some trifling offense, and made to pay a still heavier fine.

There was also another kind of rascal, a layman, with whom a district at that time might sometimes be plagued—the reeves or bailiffs, who were often unjust and extortionate rather than downright cheats. A reeve like our friend Oswald, who had quarreled with the Miller, in his post as steward or overseer to a great lord could easily find plenty of chances to take bribes or deal harshly with poor tenants. Of course, not every reeve was dishonest, any more than every summoner; but most likely a good many of them were not over-particular.

The Pardoner, the Summoner, and the Friar played a great

part in the doings of the fourth day of the pilgrimage. But the first to be asked for a story when the company set out that morning from Rochester was the Doctor of Medicine.

"Worshipful master physician," said the Host, turning to him, "I pray you tell us a good tale."

"That I will, if you will listen to me," answered the Doctor. "Here is a tale which I once read in a history of the olden times."

Therewith he began a story of ancient Rome.

THE PHYSICIAN'S TALE

VIRGINIA

THERE was once a knight named Virginius, a man of honor and repute, blessed with many friends and great riches. He had but one child, a daughter, Virginia by name, fairer than all other maidens of her time. It seemed as if Nature had been at pains to form her perfect in every way, so as to say, 'Thus can I make my creatures when it pleases me. Who can do better?'

"To see Virginia was like looking upon roses and lilies, and her hair shone like the bright beams of the sun himself. And if her beauty was great, greater still was her goodness. She was worthy of her high birth; all her words and deeds made for virtue and nobility, and she shunned always the company of the foolish and careless, being industrious and right-hearted.

"There was a certain judge in the town where she lived named Appius, the governor of that district. It chanced that one day, as Virginia passed by him in the street, his eye fell on her, and he was so taken with her beauty that he swore in his heart to make her his wife. But Virginia, when she heard of his wishes, would have none of him, for she knew him to be wicked and unjust.

"When Appius found that she did not care for him, but rather hated him more, his desire was only increased. Evil thoughts came into his heart, and he made up his mind to get her into his power by foul means.

"Force alone would not avail, for Virginius was powerful, and had many great men among his friends. Appius therefore had recourse to a cruel and cunning plan to gain his ends. He sent for a dependent of his called Claudius, a man whom he knew to be bold and crafty, willing to tell any lie if well paid for it. Together they made a plot to take Virginia by treachery away from her father; and when they had agreed what to do, the villain went away to carry out his part.

"A little while afterwards Appius was sitting in his court of justice to try any cases that were sent before him. Suddenly this false rogue Claudius came in with the lying story which they had planned together.

" 'My lord,' he cried, 'I claim justice against one Virginius, a knight of this town. I can prove my claim by witnesses.'

" 'I cannot give my judgment in his absence,' said Appius. 'Let Virginius be called, and I will gladly hear you. If he has done you any wrong, you shall surely be righted. There is no injustice done in this court.'

"Virginius was sent for, and came in haste to hear what was amiss, and the charge was brought against him just as Appius and Claudius had agreed.

" 'This knight, Virginius, my lord,' said Claudius, 'against all law and all justice, has stolen a female slave who is mine by right. She was taken from my house by night when she was but a child, and Virginius still keeps her, pretending that she is his daughter. I can prove by witnesses that she is not his daughter, by my slave. I beseech you to get her back for me, my lord.'

"Virginius looked at the man in amazement. But before he could say anything, or try to call his witnesses (for of course he

could have proved the charge false), Appius hastened to give judgment, cutting him short without hearing another word.

"'I judge that the girl belongs to Claudius,' he said, 'and she must no longer stay in the household of Virginius. Go and bring her forth, and give her into my charge. This fellow shall have his slave back.'

"Virginius saw that his daughter must be given up, and that she would be in the power of the wicked judge for a time, at least until he could get justice done by the aid of his powerful friends; and he thought that anything would be better than the shame she would endure at the hands of Appius. His mind was soon made up. He went home, and sat down in his hall, and called Virginia to him. As he spoke to her, his face was the hue of cold, dead ashes, and great pity rose up in his heart, though he would not swerve from the purpose on which he was now bent.

"'Daughter,' he said, 'you must suffer one of two things—shame or death. Either you must be given up to Appius the judge, and be in his power, or you must die. Dear daughter, whom I have brought up so tenderly, and borne ever in my mind, my last joy and my last sorrow in life, choose death of these two. Alas that Appius ever saw you!'

"Then he told her the whole story of the false charge and the judgment of Appius.

"'Mercy, dear father,' cried she at the end, throwing her arms about his neck, the tears streaming from her eyes. 'Must I die? Is there no escape?'

"'None, my daughter.'

"After a little, when she had mourned awhile, she said: 'Give me death, and save me from shame. Do with your child as you

will.' And she prayed him to strike her gently with his sword.

"Then her father cut off her head, and took it to the court, and gave it to Appius there before the whole assembly. When Appius saw it, he ordered the knight to be seized and hanged there and then. But the people rose at this command, and a great crowd broke into the place and set Virginius free.

"When the news of what had happened spread over the city, suspicion was soon roused, because Claudius was known to be in the pay of Appius; and in a little while the whole plot was found out. Appius was cast into prison, where he slew himself through fear of what might be done to him. Claudius also was taken, and would have been hanged if Virginius had not nobly begged that his sentence should be changed into one of exile for the rest of his life. The rest of the conspirators, who had plotted to support Claudius' claim by false witness, were all hanged."

A GENTLE PARDONER OF ROUNCIVAL

"THUS do we see," said the Physician at the end of his tale, "how sin will be found out and meet with its reward. Take this counsel from my tale: 'Leave your sins, ere they themselves leave you in the lurch.'"

"Alas!" cried the Host, in a rage, "what a false rascal Claudius was, and what a false judge! Virginia paid too dear for her beauty. It is what I am always saying—the gifts of fortune or of nature may bring great sorrow or may even be the cause of death to those who have them. Truly that was a pitiful tale to hear. Good Master Physician, you will have to use all your

medicine to set me up in health again, if I do not at once hear some merry story. Now, Sir Pardoner, tell us a tale of mirth."

The Pardoner was one whose match you could not find in all England, from Berwick to Ware. He had a voice like a goat's; his eyes were staring out of his head like a hare's, and his chin had no beard, nor ever would have; it was as smooth as if it had just been shaved. He wore no hood, but only a little cap, so that his lank hair, yellow as wax, hung disheveled over his shoulders in long thin tails. He had a vernicle—a kind of token worn by those who had been to Rome—sewed in his cap, and he thought himself dressed in quite the newest fashion.

His wallet lay in his lap before him, brimful of pardons all hot from Rome. In his hand he bore a pewter cross set with jewels, and he always carried with him pebbles and bones and the like, which he said were relics able to work miracles. If ever he found some poor man who lived by his own labor on his scanty farm, he would wheedle more money out of him in a day with the help of these relics than the parish parson could get from him in a couple of months. He be-fooled parson and people alike with pretended flattery and jests. But it was in church that he was seen at his best. He could read a lesson well, and would sing out merrily and loudly, knowing that after it he must make his tongue smooth to preach a begging sermon, to get as much money as he could.

"I will tell you a merry tale," said he in answer to the Host. "But here is an ale-stake. I must stop and drink some ale and eat a cake first, and when I am refreshed I will tell you a story."

They were passing a small wayside inn as he spoke. It was called an "ale-stake" because it was the custom to show the busi-

ness of the house by means of a long stake or pole, which stuck out straight from the wall over the road, parallel with the ground, with a bush or a bunch of leaves or a garland fastened at the end by way of a sign.

The rest of the company cried out against any more rude jests such as the Miller's and the Reeve's tales.

"Tell us some honest tale," they said, "from which we may learn something, and then we will listen."

"I grant it," answered the Pardoner; "but I must have time to think of a proper story."

So the pilgrims stopped, and the Pardoner had his cakes and ale. The refreshment seemed to loosen his tongue, for before he began his story he let out a great many tricks and secrets of his trade.

"You must know, sirs," he said, "that when I preach my voice rings out loud and clear like a bell, for I know by heart all that I have to say. My text was and is always the same—'Greed is the root of all evil.' I tell the people whence I come, showing the letters which give me my authority, and talking at large about popes and cardinals and patriarchs; I add a few words in Latin, just to flavor my discourse, and then I bring out my relics of the saints, promising all kinds of good from them. If a man puts his hand in this mitten, which once belonged to such-and-such a martyr, I cry, his crops shall prosper. Or I show them a shoulder-bone taken from some Jew's sheep. 'Good men,' I say to them, 'if your oxen fall ill of a snake-bite, wash this bone in a well, and pour a little of the water on their tongues, and they shall be healed. And if the goodman of the house fasts until cock-crow, let him then drink the water of that well, and all his cattle will increase and multiply. Or if any

of you have done any great sin, I have pardons here for them.' By such means as this I have won a hundred marks * or so every year since first I became a pardoner. I stand up in my pulpit, and stretch out my neck over the people who sit below, nodding at them like a dove on the roof of a barn. Then I tell them all these stories about my relics, and warn them that greed is the root of all evil, my arms and my tongue wagging so fast that it is a joy to see me; and thus I persuade them to yield up their pence to me instead of saving and hoarding. If anyone has offended me or my fellow-pardoners, I lash him well with my tongue from the pulpit, taking my revenge under cover of pious advice. I only want men's money, and give no thought to the forgiveness of their sins as long as my greed is satisfied. Of course, I am guilty of avarice myself, but I prevent others from it, for my text is always the same, with old stories worked in to make it clear. And what if I do cheat people? Would you have me remain poor when I can get silver and gold by my preaching? No, I will do no labor with my hands. I will not beg idly; I must have money, clothes, cheese, wheat, even if I have to get them from the poorest widow in a village, whose children may be starving with hunger. But you wish me to tell you a story, sirs, and I hope I shall tell you one to your liking; for though I like an evil life, I can yet give you a good tale, with my text for a moral—'Greed is the root of all evil.' Now hold your peace, and I will begin."

* A coin worth about $3.25

THE PARDONER'S TALE

THE THREE REVELERS AND DEATH

THERE was once in Flanders a company of young men who spent much time in drinking and rioting among the taverns, wasting their lives in gambling and dancing day and night. Such men only come to a bad end, and I could give you many a story to prove it."

The Pardoner was unable to forget his business. He broke off to warn the pilgrims at great length about the wickedness of evil living. When he had said enough on the point he went on gravely and soberly:

"Now to my story. I will tell you of a certain three of these revelers, who were the worst of all the band.

"Early one morning these three were sitting in a tavern drinking, and making a great noise with their horrible oaths. As they talked idly to one another, they heard a bell tolling outside for a dead man who was about to be buried.

" 'Run quickly,' one of them called to his servant-boy, 'and ask the name of the man whose body is being carried out to burial. Take care to tell it us aright.'

" 'I need not go, sirs,' answered the boy. 'I heard two hours before you came here that this man who is now dead was an old comrade of yours, slain last night as he lay in a drunken sleep. There came to him a stealthy old thief named Death, who kills many folk in this country; he pierced your comrade's heart with

a spear, and went his way without a word. He has slain a thousand or more in the pestilence here. I think it would be well for you, my masters, to beware of coming into the presence of such a foe, and to be ready to meet him.'

" 'Yes,' said the keeper of the tavern, 'the boy speaks truly. Death has this year slain men, women, and children, pages and peasants, throughout the whole of a great village a mile from here. I think he dwells in that place. It would be wise to be prepared before he does one any evil.'

" 'Is it so great a danger to meet him, then?' cried one of the revelers with an oath. 'I will go myself, and seek him high and low in the streets and lanes. Listen, comrades: there are three of us; let us join together and slay this false traitor Death. We will swear to be true to one another, and before night-time we will slay him who kills so many others.'

"The other two agreed, and the three swore to be to one another as brothers. Up they started, and went forth towards the village where Death was said by the innkeeper to live.

" 'Death shall die,' they cried, with many a boastful oath, 'if we once lay hold of him!'

"They had not gone half a mile on their way when they met an old, poor-looking man, who greeted them meekly and bade them God-speed.

" 'Who are you, you ragged old beggar?' cried the proudest of the rioters to him. 'Why are you so well wrapped up, except for your face? Why is an old man like you allowed to live so long?'

"The old man looked him in the face, and said: 'I must needs keep my old age myself. I can find no man anywhere—no, not even if I walked to India—who would exchange his youth for

my age. Death himself refuses to take my life. So I walk restlessly up and down the world, old and weary, tapping the ground with my staff early and late, and begging Mother Earth to take me to her again. "Look how I am slowly vanishing," I cry to her; "I feel myself wasting, flesh and skin and blood and all. Receive me into the dust again, Mother Earth, for my bones are tired." But the earth will not hear my prayer yet, and I must wander on. I beseech you, therefore, do not harm an old man, good sirs, and may the blessing of Heaven be upon you!'

"'Nay, old churl,' said one of the revelers, 'you shall not get off so lightly. You spoke just now of the traitor Death, who slays all our friends in this district. Tell us where he is to be seen, or you shall rue it. I believe that you must be one of his friends yourself, and anxious to slay us young folk, since you talk so lovingly of him.'

"'Sirs,' answered the old man, 'if you are so eager to find Death, turn up this crooked path. In that grove yonder, upon my faith, I left him, under a tree. There he will await you. He will not hide himself from you for all your boasts. Do you see the oak? You shall find Death there. God save you and make you better men!'

"Thus spoke the old stranger. They paid no more heed to him, but ran off straightway to search for Death by the oak-tree. There they found, not Death himself, but a great heap of fine golden florins piled up, well-nigh eight bushels of them. No longer had they any thought about Death, but were so glad at the sight of the fair bright florins that they sat down there by the precious heap to think what should be done.

"The worst of the three was the first to speak. 'Listen to me, brethren. I am no fool, for all that I spend my life in folly.

Fortune has given us this great treasure, so that we can live the rest of our lives in mirth and jollity. It has come to us easily, and easily we will spend it. But there is one thing which we must do to make our happiness sure: we must get the gold away from this place to my house, or else to one of yours—for, of course, the treasure is ours. But we cannot do this by day; men would say that we were thieves, and we should be hanged for stealing our own treasure. It must be done by night, as secretly and carefully as we can, and we must wait here all day. Let us therefore draw lots, to see which of us shall go to the town and bring food and drink hither as quickly as he can for the other two. The others must stay by the treasure, for we cannot leave it unguarded. Then, when night comes, we will carry it all away safely.'

"They agreed to this, and drew lots. The lot fell on the youngest of them, who left them at once and went towards the town.

"As soon as he was gone, one of those who remained with the gold said to the other: 'You know that we have sworn to be true to one another like brothers. Hear, then, how we can win profit for ourselves: our comrade is gone, and has left us here with this gold, of which there is great plenty. We are to divide it among the three of us, by our agreement. But if I can contrive that we divide it between us two alone, will not that be doing you a friendly turn?'

" 'How can it be?' asked the other. 'He knows that the gold is with us; what could we say to him?'

" 'Will you keep a secret?' said his comrade. 'If so, I will tell you in a few words what we must do.'

" 'Yes,' answered the other; 'trust me not to betray you.'

" 'Look you, then, there are two of us, and two are stronger than one. When he comes back and sits down, do you rise and go to him as if for a friendly wrestling bout. I will stab him in the side as you struggle in play: see that you also do the like with your dagger. Thus shall the treasure be divided between us two, dear friend, and we shall live in ease and plenty for the rest of our lives.'

"The two rogues agreed on this plan for getting rid of their comrade; but he, as he went on his way to the town, could not take his mind away from the bright golden florins.

" 'If only I could have this treasure all for myself,' he thought, 'no man on earth would live so merrily as I.' And at last the idea of poisoning his comrades came into his head.

"When he reached the town, he went without hesitating any more to an apothecary, and asked him to sell him some poison to kill the rats in his house; and there was a polecat also, he said, which ate his chickens.

" 'You shall have the poison,' answered the apothecary, 'the like of which is not to be found on earth. It is so strong that if a man does but taste a little piece of it, the size of a grain of wheat, he shall die at once; before you can walk a mile he will be dead, so strong and violent is this poison.'

"The man took the poison in a box and went into the next street. There he borrowed three large bottles, and into two he put the poison; the third he kept clean for his own drink, thinking that he would be working hard that night, carrying the gold all by himself to his own house. Then he filled all the bottles up with wine, and went back to his comrades.

"Why should I make a long tale of it? When he came back the other two set upon him, and killed him as they had planned.

" 'Now let us eat and drink,' said one to the other. 'When we have made merry we will bury him.'

"With that word, he took one of the bottles; it happened to be one of those containing the poisoned wine. He drank, and gave it to his fellow; and in a little while they both fell dead beside the body of their comrade.

"Thus the three revelers met Death, whom they set out to kill."

"WHO'LL BUY MY PARDONS?"

GOOD Men," the Pardoner went on, not missing any chance of plying his trade and wringing a few pence out of his companions, "you have heard my tale, which deals, as you have seen, with the sin of covetousness. What a terrible thing is avarice! May Heaven keep you from it! Yet my pardons will save you all, if you will but give me your nobles * for them. Or, if you do not wish to give money, your silver brooches or spoons or rings will serve as well for payment. Come, then, bow before the power which has been given me. I will not deceive you, but will enter your names in my roll, so that in return you will be sure of the bliss of Heaven. But I am forgetting one other thing: I would have you know that here in my bag I have relics as good as any in the land, given me by the Pope himself. If any of you, then, wish to make an offering and receive forgiveness from me, come forth and kneel down, and be pardoned here. Nay, if you prefer it, you can take a pardon at every town we come to, all new and fresh, so long as you give me your nobles and pence. It is an honor for every one of you to have so good

* A coin worth $1.60

a Pardoner with you, to forgive your sins on the way whenever you wish it; and think how terrible a thing it would be if any one of you were to fall from his horse and break his neck, and die unpardoned! Now for it! Our Host shall be the first, for he is the most wrapped up in sin. Stand forth, Sir Host! Give me your offering, and for a groat you shall kiss the relics, every one of them. Open your purse!"

"No," cried the Host, "I will have none of your false relics. You would swear a rag of your old clothes had belonged to some saint, and make me kiss it."

The Pardoner answered never a word, but rode on speechless with anger.

"I will keep company with you no longer," the Host went on, seeing his wrath, "nor with any other angry man."

But the good Knight interposed, seeing that all the pilgrims were laughing at the dispute.

"No more of this," said he; "that is enough. Sir Pardoner, be glad and merry once more, and you, my very good friend, Sir Host, make peace with the Pardoner, and let us go on our journey once more with joy and laughter."

So the two made up their quarrel, and the pilgrims went on their way peaceably for a little while.

DAME ALISON OF BATH

THE little company had ridden some way without interruption, when suddenly the Wife of Bath broke the silence.

"I will tell next," she said in a loud voice, being herself a little deaf.

The good wife had journeyed far from her home in the West

Country, where she was famous for her skill in making fine cloth such as that part of England manufactured. She knew a great deal about traveling, for she had seen many a distant land and noble city. She had visited Boulogne, Cologne, Rome, and Spain, and had been as far as Jerusalem three times. She was a good and worthy woman, well pleased with herself and charitably-minded, unless her neighbors tried to set themselves above her or take precedence of her at church; if they did that, she grew so angry that she forgot all her Christian charity.

She was gayly dressed for the pilgrimage, with bright scarlet hose and head-kerchiefs of the finest linen, weighing, perhaps, some ten pounds or more. Her shoes, too, were soft and new, and she wore a large riding skirt.

She had been married five times, she now told the pilgrims, by way of introduction to her tale. She had done with all her husbands just as she wished, but the fifth, a student from Oxford, put her to some pains before she subdued him. He was always poring over books, she said, and now and again would read out aloud to her a story about the wickedness of some woman. But one day when he did this she lost her temper, and tore some leaves out of his book, and caught him such a buffet that he fell off his stool into the fireplace; whereupon he got up in a rage and knocked her down. When, however, he saw that she lay quite still, as if dead, he was sorry, and knelt down by her side and begged her forgiveness. But she started up out of her swoon and hit him a great blow on the side of the head, and ever after that she had no more trouble with him.

All this she told the pilgrims at great length, without ever coming near her story, and the whole burden of her talk was the way to rule a husband. The Friar at last grew impatient.

"Now, dame," said he, "this is a roundabout way to tell a tale."

There was no love lost between this Friar and the Summoner. The Friar was a good man at his own trade of begging—a jolly rascal who could wring money out of anyone. Besides, he was an authorized beggar, so to speak, so that he looked with dislike and contempt on such persons as the Pardoner, his great rival in the collection of alms. The Summoner was the Pardoner's great friend, and himself something of a rascal, so that he probably felt much the same hatred towards the Friar as the Pardoner did, and he did not let slip any chance of jeering at his enemy.

"Roundabout!" he cried. "However long the way is, you will always find a meddling friar somewhere. Now, Sir Friar, trot on, or stop and rest, or go where you please, but do not check our merriment."

"I check your merriment, Sir Summoner?" said the Friar, lisping a little in his speech, as was his habit, in order to make his English sound sweet. "By my faith! before I leave you I will tell a tale about a summoner which will give all this company good enough cause for merriment."

"Before we reach Sittingbourne," retorted the Summoner, "I will tell two or three tales about friars which will make you sorry that you have lost your patience thus."

But the Host stopped the quarrel. "Peace!" he cried; "let the good-wife tell her tale. Speak on, dame."

"I am ready, sir," said Dame Alison. "I will do your bidding—if the worthy Friar will give me leave," she added, not liking the interruption.

"Yes, dame, tell on," answered the Friar; "I will listen quietly."

THE WIFE OF BATH'S TALE

THE OLD WOMAN AND THE KNIGHT

IN the old days of King Arthur all the land was filled with fairies, and the elf-queen and her merry company held many a dance in the green meadows where now you will see never one of them. But that was many hundred years ago, as I am told, and since then the friars have spread over all the land as thick as motes in a sunbeam, searching and sniffing in every nook and corner till there is not a fairy left. Wherever the elves were once wont to walk you will now meet friars peering and poking into every hole and cranny, morning and evening.

"It happened that there was at King Arthur's Court a young knight, in the full vigor and pride of his strength, who one day, as he was riding out, came upon a maiden walking all alone. She was very beautiful, and the sight of her made him forget his knighthood. He went up to her, and tried to carry her off with him by force. But before he could succeed help came, and he was seized and taken before the King.

"The King sentenced him to die, according to the law at that time, and he would surely have been put to death if the Queen and her ladies had not long and earnestly prayed for mercy. The King at last relented and granted him his life, and left it to the Queen to say what punishment should be given him.

"When the Queen had thanked King Arthur she sent for the knight. She did not wish to let him go wholly free.

" 'You are still in danger of losing your life,' she said to him. 'But I will give you your freedom on one condition: you must find me the answer to this question—"What is it that women most desire?" If you cannot now give me the answer that I have in my mind, you shall have a year and a day in which to learn it. Do your best, and take great care, for if at the end of that time you still cannot answer, you must die.'

"The knight pondered awhile, but he could not guess the answer at once. So he pledged himself to return to the Court at the end of a year and a day, and went away very sorrowfully.

"How was he to find the answer to the riddle? He thought for a long time by himself, and then asked everyone he met what it was that women loved best. But nowhere could he discover two people who agreed in saying the same thing. Some told him the answer was Honor; some, Riches; others, Fine Clothing; others, again, Flattery. But none of these replies pleased the knight, and he could not guess anyhow what it was that the Queen had in her mind as the right answer.

"He wandered far and wide in his mournful search for someone wise enough to help him. At length the time came when he had to turn homewards again, in order to return to the Queen by the appointed day. His way lay through a forest, and he was riding along sadly enough when suddenly he saw a strange sight. In a little glade just in front of him was a ring of fair ladies dancing, four-and-twenty or more of them; but as he drew nigh eagerly to look at them more closely, and see if by chance he might gain an answer from them, they all vanished.

"In the place where they had been not a living thing remained, except an old woman sitting on the grass. When he came near

to her, he saw that she was withered and ugly, and as horrible a sight as could be imagined.

" 'Sir Knight,' she said to him, standing up, 'this road leads to no place. Whither are you going? Tell me your errand, and perchance I can help you. We old folk have knowledge of many things.'

" 'Mother,' he said, 'my trouble is this: I am as good as dead if I cannot discover what it is that women love best. If you could help me, I would reward you well.' And he told her the conditions on which his life was spared.

" 'Give me your word here and now that you will do the next thing that I ask of you, whatever it is, if it is in your power,' said the hag when she heard the story, 'and I will tell you the answer.'

" 'I give my word,' the knight replied.

" 'Then your life is safe. I promise you that my answer will be that which the Queen wishes to have, and the proudest lady of all her Court will not dare gainsay it. Let us go on our journey without any more talking.'

"She whispered a word or two in his ear, and bade him pluck up heart; and together they rode to the Court.

"The knight came before the Queen, and said that he was ready to give his answer, and a great company of noble ladies gathered to hear what he would reply to the riddle. Silence was proclaimed, and he was called upon to speak.

" 'I have kept my word faithfully,' he said in a manly voice that was heard all over the hall, 'and I am here on the day appointed, prepared to answer the Queen's question. The answer she desires was that women love Power best, whether it be over

husband or lover. If that is not the right answer, do with me as you wish. I am here ready to die, if you so will it.'

"They all agreed that he had saved his life by his reply. But when their verdict was made known, up started the old hag who had told the knight the answer.

" 'Give me justice, lady Queen, before your Court departs,' she cried. 'I told the knight that answer, and he gave me his word that he would do the first thing that I asked of him, if it lay in his power. Now, before all this Court, I ask you, Sir Knight, to take me to be your wife; and remember it is I who have saved your life.'

" 'Alas!' said the knight; 'truly I gave my word, but will you not ask some other thing of me? Take all my riches, and let me go.'

" 'No,' insisted the old woman. 'Though I be old and poor and ugly, I would not let you go for all the gold on earth. I will be your wife and your love.'

" 'My love!' he cried; 'nay, rather my death! Alas that any of my race should suffer such dishonor!'

"All the knight's prayers and entreaties were of no avail. He had to keep his word and marry the hideous old hag; and a mournful wedding he made of it.

"He took his new bride home to his house, not feeling like a happy lover; and his woe was increased by her first words to him.

" 'Dear husband, will you not kiss me? Is this the custom of the King's Court, for every knight to neglect his wife? I am your own love, who saved you from death, and I have done you no wrong. Yet you act towards me like a madman who has lost

his senses, with your groans and your glum looks. Tell me what I have done amiss, and I will set it right.'

" 'You cannot set it right,' said the knight sorrowfully. 'Do you wonder that I am ashamed to have married one of such mean birth, so old, so ugly?'

" 'Is that the cause of your grief?' she asked.

" 'Yes,' answered he.

" 'I could set it right,' said his wife. 'But you speak so proudly of your high birth and old family. Such pride is worth nothing, for poverty and low birth are no sin. Look rather at him who leads the best life both in secret and in the open, who strives always to do gentle and honorable deeds; take him for the truest gentleman, and be sure that a noble nature like his is not made only by high birth or the wealth of his fathers. But you say that I am low-born, old, and ugly. Well, choose now which you would desire me to be—as I am, poor, old, and ugly, but a true and faithful wife who will obey you always; or young and fair, but fickle and fond of vain pleasures, always emptying your purse and wounding your love?'

"The knight did not know which to choose. He was moved to shame by his wife's words, and after long thought he said: 'My lady, my dear wife, I put myself in your hands. Choose for yourself; that will do honor to you, and what you wish is enough for me.'

" 'Then I have gained the mastery! I have power over you,' said she, 'if I may choose as I please.'

" 'Yes, dear wife,' he answered, 'I think that best.'

" 'Kiss me,' she said, 'and let us quarrel no longer. I will be both to you—both fair and true. I will be as good a wife as

ever there was since the beginning of the world; and if I am not as beautiful as any lady, queen, or empress in the whole earth, from east to west, then slay me or do with my life as you wish.'

"The knight looked up at her again. But, instead of the withered old crone he expected to see, his eyes fell upon the most beautiful wife that could be imagined; for the old woman was a fairy, and had wished to give him a lesson before he knew her as she really was. No longer now was he ashamed of her, and they lived together happily to their lives' end. And may all of us women find such husbands, who will be ready to be ruled by their wives' authority in everything!"

HUBERT THE FRIAR

THE Friar, who found it so hard to keep the peace with the Summoner, was a well-kept knave, by name Hubert—a great strong fellow who looked like a fighting man, but with a neck as white as a lily. His clothes were not threadbare like those of some poor cloister-monk, but lordly as an abbot's. All the inns and innkeepers in every town the pilgrims reached were known to him, for he thought that so fine a man as himself could not mix with the poor and the beggars in the ale-shops, but must go to the best houses. He was a good talker and a great gossip, and had many a friend among the rich farmers of the countryside, because he forgave sins very easily and pleasantly, and always kept his hood well stuffed with knives and pins for their wives. He was ever courteous and polite when he thought he could get any profit out of it, being the best beggar in all his order.

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"HE COULD PLAY CLEVERLY ON A ROTE AND SING A BALLAD VERY MERRILY"—PAGE 135

He was a good companion to have, for he could play well and cleverly on a rote, or small fiddle, which he carried, and could sing a ballad very merrily. His little eyes would twinkle like stars on a frosty night as he strummed on his rote at the end of a song.

But his good temper had all gone after his quarrel with the Summoner, and he sat scowling furiously at his foe. He had kept silence, out of courtesy, while the Wife of Bath told her tale, but when she had finished he hastened to have his say.

"Long life to you, dame!" said he. "You have touched upon a very hard matter in this question of authority or power; but we must leave that now, for we wish only for merriment. If the company please, I will tell a merry tale of a summoner which will satisfy you well, I hope. You can guess that nothing good can be said of summoners; they are men who run up and down every town with their lying writs, and get well beaten for their pains—"

This was unhappily so true of what sometimes happened to summoners that the Host thought it time to interfere again.

"You should be more gentle and courteous, sir," he said, "considering that you yourself beg for money. We must have no quarreling. Tell your tale, Hubert, and let the Summoner alone."

"Nay," said the Summoner, "let him say what he likes. I will pay him back every jot of it when it comes to my turn. I will tell a story to show what a great honor it is to be a smooth-tongued begging friar."

"Enough," said the Host. "Tell your tale, dear Master Friar."

With that the Friar began his story.

THE FRIAR'S TALE

THE SUMMONER AND THE FIEND

THERE was once in my country an archdeacon, a man of high degree and great justice. He was very upright in his dealings, and boldly punished the evil-doers over whom he had authority, excommunicating and fining them without mercy. Indeed, so strict was he, and so many little fines and punishments did he inflict upon his people, that they were in a sorry case, and had a very hard life of it.

"The archdeacon had in his service a summoner, who used to collect the debts and force the people of the parish to pay their tithes and other dues. This summoner was as great a rascal as any in England. He had spies in every corner to tell him where he was likely to get money, and he knew more about bribery than I could tell you in a couple of years. He—"

The Summoner here interrupted the Friar, but the Host silenced him, saying, "Peace! Let him tell his tale. Go on, Friar, and do not heed the Summoner's words."

"This false thief of a summoner," the Friar continued maliciously, "made a great profit out of his tithes and extortions, and was forever seeking someone fresh to plunder. He would summon a sinner on his own authority, without any command from the archdeacon; men were glad to fill his purse with bribes, or give great feasts in his honor, hoping thereby to escape his greedy clutches. He often forgot to tell his master how much he

had really collected, and the archdeacon did not get more than half his proper due.

"One day, as he was riding through the greenwoods on his way to wring some money out of a poor widow by a threat of some false charge or other, the summoner met a yeoman, gayly dressed in a green jacket and a hat with a black fringe, and bearing a bow and arrows.

" 'Well met, sir!' he said courteously.

" 'Good-day to you,' answered the stranger. 'Whither are you going in this forest? Have you far to travel to-day?'

" 'No,' replied the summoner; 'I have only to go and get my lord's rents from a tenant who lives close at hand.'

" 'Are you, then, a bailiff?' asked the yeoman.

" 'Yes,' answered the summoner; for it is less disgraceful to be a bailiff than a summoner, and he was ashamed to confess his real trade.

" 'That is a good thing, dear brother,' said the other, 'for I, too, am a bailiff, though a stranger to this country. In my own land I have great wealth, and gold and silver in plenty, if ever you should come that way. I am glad to meet you, and I pray you give me your friendship.'

"The summoner was as spiteful and full of chatter as a shrike, and was glad to meet one of his own trade. He swore undying friendship with the stranger on the spot, and then went on to ask him inquisitive questions, according to his custom.

" 'Where do you live, brother,' he asked, 'in case I should one day wish to find you?'

" 'Far away,' answered the other softly and courteously. 'I hope I shall see you there one day. Before I leave you I will tell you the way thither so carefully that you cannot miss it.'

"'Thank you, brother,' said the summoner. 'Now, as you, too, are a bailiff, perhaps to pass the time you can tell me some new tricks to get money out of the people here. Tell me, as a brother-bailiff, how your own trade prospers.'

"'I will tell you the truth. My profits are small indeed. My master is very hard upon me, and I have to spend much toil to get a living. I must extort every penny I can, and I take all that men will give me. Still, by trickery or force I keep myself from year to year.'

"'So it is with me,' said the summoner. 'I do not scruple to take whatever I can get, without making any bones about it; else I could not live. But tell me your name, dear brother.'

"The yeoman had been smiling a little as the summoner spoke. 'Shall I tell you, my friend?' he asked slyly and softly. 'I am a fiend, and my dwelling is below the earth. I ride about taking whatever men are willing to give me, just as you do. You win what you can, without caring by what means; even so do I, and I would ride to the world's end to gain my prey.'

"'What!' cried the summoner in surprise, 'you a fiend! I thought you were an ordinary mortal; your figure is as good as a man's. Is not your shape fixed? Need you not keep to one form?'

"'No, we can take any shape we like. Sometimes we appear as a man, sometimes as an angel, or sometimes, perhaps, as a monkey; and no one can tell that we are not what we seem to be.'

"'But why do you not abide by one shape?'

"'We take whatever form seems to be the best for catching our prey, as you will see,' answered the fiend.

"'But why do you take all this trouble over your gains?'

"'Never mind now, dear Sir Summoner,' the fiend replied. 'It is getting late; the days are short, and I have not yet won anything this morning. We fiends are sent to the earth for various purposes, which you would not understand even if I made them known to you. You shall hear all about our shapes presently, when you come to a place where you can learn by yourself far more than I could tell you. Now let us ride on quickly; I will not forsake you till you leave me of your own accord.'

"'That will never be, brother. I am a man well known in these parts, and I have given my word to be your friend; I will keep to it so long as you too are true. Let us go about our business together, you taking whatever men freely give you, and I whatever is bestowed on me. Thus we shall both make a living, and if either of us gains more than the other he can give him some of the profit.'

"'Very well,' said the fiend; and so they rode on to do their business together, the summoner quite content with his new friend.

"Presently, as they drew near the place which the summoner wished to visit, they saw a cart, loaded with hay, stuck fast in the mud. The driver was trying in vain to make the horses drag it out.

"'Come up, Brock! Come, Scot!' he shouted. 'What is the matter with you? May the fiend fly away with you both, cart and all!'

"The summoner heard these words, and thought to himself, 'Here is a fine chance to trick the carter!'

"'See, brother,' he whispered to the fiend, 'did you not hear what the driver said? Take it all, hay and cart and horses; you heard him give it to you.'

" 'No, no,' answered his friend, 'I cannot take it, because he did not really mean to give it me. Ask him yourself if he did; or wait a moment, and see what happens.'

"The carter patted and encouraged his horses. They struggled forward, straining hard, and at length drew the cart out of the mud.

" 'A good pull, thanks be to Heaven!' said the driver. 'The cart is free again!'

" 'You see, brother? What did I tell you?' said the fiend; 'the driver said one thing, and meant another, so that I get nothing out of him. Let us go on.'

"Soon they came to the poor widow's house. The summoner told his comrade in a whisper what he was going to do.

" 'There lives here an old woman,' he said, 'who would rather lose her head than give up a penny to save herself. But whether she likes it or not, she must pay what I ask, or I will hale her before the archdeacon's court. Take a lesson from me in the way to win money, my friend, as you have just failed to get your due from the carter.'

"With that he knocked at the widow's door. 'Come out, old hag!' he cried. 'Make haste! I expect you have got some priest or friar in there. Come out to me!'

" 'Who is that knocking?' said the widow, looking out. 'Bless you, sweet sir! what do you want?'

" 'I have here a writ,' answered the summoner, 'which says that to-morrow you must come before the archdeacon to answer certain charges.'

" 'Heaven help me!' said the poor old woman; 'I cannot go so far. I have been ill for many a day past, and must not move.

Can I not be told the charge, and have someone to defend me before the court?'

"'Let me think about the matter,' said the summoner, pretending to consider. 'Yes; if you pay me twelve pence * down, you need not appear. Of course, I shall make but little profit thereby; my master the archdeacon gets all the gains. But give it me quickly, and I will see that you do not suffer. I cannot wait much longer.'

"'Alas I have not twelve pence in the whole world. You know that I am poor and old. Have pity on me!'

"'May the fiend take me if I abate one jot!' answered the summoner. 'Give me the money, or, by Saint Anne! I will take away your new pan to pay for that old debt of yours which you owe me for saving you from punishment several years ago.'

"'It is a lie!' cried the old woman. 'I have never before been summoned to the court, and there is no such debt. The fiend take you, and my pan and all!'

"When the fiend heard this he said softly to her, 'Tell me, old mother, do you mean what you say in earnest?'

"'The fiend take him, pan and all, if he will not have mercy on me!' repeated the woman.

"'You old hag, it is not my way to show mercy!' said the summoner. 'Take care I do not take everything you have.'

"'Softly, brother,' said the fiend; 'do not be angry. You see that you and this pan are both mine by right, a free gift from the widow. You shall come with me now, and learn more about us fiends than all the masters of divinity know.'

* A penny, of course, meant a much greater sum then than nowadays.

"With that he seized the summoner, and carried him off with him to the place of fiends, which is the proper dwelling for summoners."

THE SUMMONER AND THE CLERK OF OXFORD

THE Summoner was boiling over with anger during the Friar's tale. He was a fierce-looking, fiery-faced man, with knobby cheeks, narrow eyes, thin black eyebrows, and a scraggy beard; children were always afraid at the sight of him. He was as hot-tempered as a sparrow, but good-natured after a fashion, none the less, though ready enough to cheat any simpleton. For a bottle of wine or so he would let any friend of his live loosely a year or more without summoning him, and he used to say that no man, unless his soul was in his purse, need fear the archdeacon's judgment; for it was his money, not his soul, which had to be punished. He tried to carry this saying out in practice, being always quite willing to take a bribe to let a man off a summons. In court he would bring out the few words of Latin which he knew—one or two law terms—and repeat them over and over again, like a jay which has learnt some phrase or other, and is always babbling it; but if you pressed him further his knowledge ran dry.

At the end of this tale about the fiend and the summoner he stood up in his stirrups, trembling all over like an aspen-leaf with rage.

"Let me tell you just one tale, sirs," he cried. "You have heard this lying Friar's story; suffer me to have my say. The Friar has told you something about fiends, and he should know

well enough how to do so; there is a special place among the fiends kept for all the friars when they die."

He described this place, and went on: "Well, so much I say by way of preface. Now to my tale, and Heaven bless you all —except the Friar!"

With that, though he was interrupted by his enemy, he told a story about the cheating of a friar by a Yorkshireman, who excited his covetous greed with the promise of a very precious jewel; but when the jewel was discovered, it turned out to be worthless.

The Friar was of course very angry at this tale, and the two might have gone on quarreling had it not been that as the Summoner's story ended the pilgrims were almost at the town of Sittingbourne, about forty miles from London. Here they stopped for a short time to rest, and when they went on again the Host prevented any more quarrels by asking the Clerk of Oxford for a tale.

The poor Clerk's life was a hard one, as his threadbare cloak showed. In those days many poor men's sons such as he used to beg the money for their education, and often by their own ability rose to high rank. But he was so fond of his studies that every penny he could get was spent on books; he would rather sleep with his head pillowed on a score or so of Aristotle's works than wear the richest robes in the world. He had not yet been made a parson or got a living, nor was he worldly enough to take any other office, so that he was badly off indeed. His face wore a hollow and sober look, and he spoke but little, though when he did open his mouth what he said was wise and pointed, and full of true goodness. He was ever ready either to learn or to teach.

"Sir Clerk of Oxford," said the Host to him when the pil-

grims were well on their way again, "you ride along as shy and quiet as a maid at her bridal feast. You have not spoken a word all day. I suppose you are thinking over something very deep and wise. But there is a time for all things, says Solomon, and it is not time for your studies now. Rouse up and be merry. Tell us a tale—something cheerful, not a sermon or a learned speech full of strange terms and long words; keep that sort of thing for higher affairs than this, and tell us a tale that we can easily understand."

"I am under your command, Host," answered the Clerk meekly, "and I must obey you. I will tell you a story I heard at Padua from Francis Petrarch, the great poet of Italy, who now, alas! is dead."

THE CLERK'S TALE

PATIENT GRISELDA

"THERE is on the western side of Italy," began the Clerk, "a large and fertile plain, wherein you may behold many a tower and town founded long ago by the men of the olden days. The name of this noble country is Saluzzo. A worthy marquis called Walter was once lord of it, as his fathers had been before him. His subjects obeyed him willingly and well, and he was loved by all, lords and common people alike. His family was very ancient and of high rank in Italy. He himself was young, strong, and handsome, and discreet enough in the government of his country. But he had several faults for which he was to blame: he took no thought for the future, but in his youth liked to do nothing but hawk and hunt all day, and let all other cares go unheeded. And the thing which seemed to the people of Saluzzo to be worst of all was that he would not marry.

"At length his subjects came to him in a body to urge him to take a wife. The wisest of them spoke on behalf of the rest.

" 'Noble marquis,' he said, 'you are ever kind to us, and so we now dare to come to you and tell you our grief. Of your grace, my lord, listen to our complaint. I speak for all of us, and have no more and no less concern in the matter than any other one here. This is our plea: We know how good is your rule over us, and there is only one thing which would make your subjects happier, and that is that you should take a wife. Bow

your head under the happy yoke of marriage, my lord, which gives you not slavery, but joy and power. Bethink you how quickly our lives pass, and that no man can stop the swift course of time. You are in your youth now, but age will creep upon you in a day which you cannot foresee. We pray you therefore to marry, that you may leave an heir to rule over us when you are gone. If you will do this, lord marquis, we will choose you a wife from among the noblest in the land. Grant our boon, and deliver us from our fears, for we could not live under a lord of a strange race.'

"Their distress and grief filled the marquis with pity. 'My own dear people,' he answered, 'you are asking of me that which I thought never to do. I rejoice to be free, and like not to have my freedom cut short by marriage. But I see that your prayer is just and truly meant, and that it is my duty to take a wife. Therefore I consent to marry as soon as I may. But as for your offer to choose a wife for me, of that task I acquit you. The will of God must ordain what sort of an heir I shall have, and be your choice of a wife never so wise, the child may yet be amiss, for goodness is of God's gift alone. To Him, therefore, I trust to guide my choice. You must promise also to obey and reverence my wife, and not to rebel against her so long as she lives, whosoever she may be. As my heart is inclined, so will I choose and wed her, and if you will not agree to what I say, speak to me no more of the matter.'

"With hearty goodwill they promised to do as he bade them, and obey his wife, being glad that he should have heard their prayer so graciously. But before they went away they begged him to fix a day for the wedding, for they were still doubtful lest he might not marry after all.

"Walter granted this boon also, and appointed a day for his marriage, saying that this, too, he did because they wished it; and they fell on their knees and thanked him, and went away to their homes again, while he gave orders to his knights and officers to prepare a great wedding-feast, with every kind of splendor and magnificence. But he told no one who was to be his bride.

"Near the great palace of the marquis there stood a small village, where a number of poor folk dwelt. Among them lived a man called Janicola, the poorest of them all. But Heaven can give grace even to the meanest things. Janicola had a daughter named Griselda, the fairest maiden under the sun, and the best. She had been brought up simply, knowing more of labor than of ease, and she worked hard to keep her father's old age in comfort. All day long she sat spinning and watching sheep in the fields; when she came home to their poor cottage in the evening she would bring with her a few herbs, which she would cut up and cook, to make herself a meal before she lay down to rest on her hard bed; and she had not a moment idle till she was asleep. Thus she lived from day to day, tending her old father with kindness and reverence.

"Walter had often seen this maiden as he rode out a-hunting, and he was filled with pleasure at the sight of her loveliness and her gentle, kindly life. In his heart he had vowed to marry none other than her, if ever he did marry.

"The day appointed for the wedding came, but still no one knew who would be the bride. Men wondered and murmured and gossiped secretly. 'Will our lord never give up his idle way of living? Will he never marry? Why does he betray us by breaking his word?'

"But the marquis had ordered all kinds of costly gems, brooches, and rings to be made ready, and rich dresses were prepared for the bride (for there was a maid in his service about Griselda's stature, so that they knew how to measure the cloth for the wedding-garments). Yet still, when the very hour for the marriage arrived, no one but Walter knew who would be the bride.

"All the palace was put in array, and the board set for the feast. The bridal procession started as if to fetch the bride, the marquis at its head, dressed in gay attire, and attended by all his lords and ladies. They set out in all their pomp and magnificence, to the sound of joyful music, and rode until they came to the little village where Griselda lived.

"Griselda, all ignorant of what was to happen, went that morning to the well to draw water, according to her wont, for she had heard of the procession which would take place in honor of the wedding.

" 'I will do my work as soon as I can, and go and stand at the door as the other maidens do,' she thought, 'to watch the marquis and his bride pass, if they come this way to the castle.'

"Just as she went to the door the procession reached the cottage, and the marquis called her. She set down her waterpot by the threshold in the ox's stall (for they were so poor that their one ox lived in the hut with them), and fell on her knees to hear what the marquis wished to say to her.

" 'Where is your father, Griselda?' he asked soberly and gravely.

" 'My lord, he is within,' she answered humbly, and went in and brought Janicola before him.

"Walter took the old man by the hand, and led him aside.

'Janicola,' he said, 'I can no longer hide the desire of my heart. If you will grant me your daughter, I will take her with me to be my wife to my life's end. You are my faithful liege subject, and I know that you love and obey me. Will you, then, consent to have me for your son-in-law?'

"The sudden question so amazed the old man that he turned red and confused, and stood trembling before the marquis. All he could say was: 'My lord, my will is as your will, and you are my sovereign. Let it be as you wish.'

" 'Let us talk privately a little,' said the marquis, 'and afterwards I will ask Griselda herself to be my wife, and we three will speak of the matter together.'

"So they went apart to confer privately about it. Meanwhile the courtiers were in the yard of the mean little cottage, marveling at the care and kindness which Griselda showed in tending her old father. But their wonder was not so great as hers, for she had never before seen so splendid a sight as these richly-dressed lords and ladies, nor received such noble guests; and she stood in their presence pale with astonishment.

"But her father and the marquis called her. 'Griselda,' said Walter, 'your father and I desire that you shall become my wife. I wish to ask you whether you give your consent now, or whether you would like to think further of it. If you marry me, will you be ready to love and obey me, and never to act against my will, even so much as by a word or a frown?'

" 'My lord,' Griselda answered, fearing and wondering at his words, 'I am all unworthy of so great an honor; but as you wish, so will I do. Here and now I promise that I will never willingly disobey you in deed or thought—no, not if I die for it.'

" 'That is enough, my Griselda,' said the marquis; and with

that he went gravely to the door, with Griselda following him.

" 'This is my bride,' he cried to all the people. 'Honor and love her, I pray you, if you love me.'

"Then, that she might not enter his palace poorly dressed in her old clothes, he bade the women robe her fitly and honorably; and though these ladies did not like even to touch the old rags which Griselda wore, still, at his orders, they took them off her, and clad her afresh from head to foot. They combed her hair, and set a crown on her head, and decked her with precious stones and jeweled clasps, so that they hardly knew her again; and in this rich array she seemed more lovely than ever. The marquis put a ring on her finger, she was set on a snow-white horse, and they all rode to the palace, where they feasted and reveled till the sun set.

"Thus Griselda was married to Walter. By her marriage her gentleness and beauty seemed only to increase, so that folk who had known her many a year would not believe that she was the same Griselda, the daughter of Janicola, who had lived in a mean hut in a poor village. Everyone who looked on her loved her, and her fame spread all over Walter's realm, so that young and old used to come to Saluzzo merely to see her, or maybe to lay their wrongs before her; for in her simple goodness she could often settle a quarrel where the wisest judges had failed.

"Thus for a time Walter and Griselda lived together in great happiness. At length Griselda had a daughter, and though they would have liked a son better, Walter and Griselda were very glad and joyful at the event, and so were all their subjects.

"But when the child was still quite young, a strange desire came upon the marquis to try his wife's goodness and obedience, though he had tested it in many ways times enough already, and

had discovered no faults in her. It was a cruel deed to put her to such pains for no need, but he could not rid himself of the wish, and he set about carrying it out.

"One night, as she lay alone, he came to her with a stern, grave face. 'Griselda,' he said, 'I think you have not forgotten the day when I took you from your poor home and set you high in rank and nobility. This present dignity which you now enjoy must not make you unmindful of your former low estate. Take heed to my words, therefore, now that we are alone, with none to hear what I am going to say. You must know that you are very dear to me, but not to my people. They say that it is shameful to be subjects of one of such mean birth; and since your daughter was born their grumbling has not grown less. Now, I wish to live my life with them in peace, as I have always done, and I cannot but give ear to their words. I must deal with your child as seems best, not for my own sake, but for my people's. Yet I am very loth to do what must be done, and I will not do it unless you consent. Show me, therefore, the obedience and patience which you promised at our marriage.'

"Griselda never moved when she heard all this false tale. She did not reveal her grief in look or word, but simply answered: 'My lord, it is in your power to do as you please; my child and I are yours, willingly enough. Do with us as you wish. Whatever you do cannot displease me, for all my desire is to obey you, and no length of time can change it—no, not even death itself—nor move my heart from you.'

"Walter was filled with gladness at this gentle answer, but he hid his joy, and went mournfully out of her room.

"A little while after this he told his plan to a faithful servant, a harsh and fierce-looking officer, whom he had often before

trusted greatly; and when this man understood what was to be done he went to Griselda, and stalked into her chamber, silent and grim.

"'My lady,' he said bluntly, 'I must obey my lord, and you must forgive me for doing that which I am ordered to do. I am commanded to take away your daughter.'

"Not a word more did he say, but seized the child and made as if to slay it there and then. Griselda sat obedient to the commands which she thought to be those of her lord, and uttered no sound. The man's looks, his words, his manner, his very presence, were full of dread foreboding to her, and she feared that he would kill the babe before her eyes. Nevertheless she endured, and waited meek and still as a lamb.

"At last she spoke, and gently prayed him to let her kiss her child before it was slain; and he granted her prayer. She clasped her little daughter to her bosom, kissing it and lulling it to rest, and saying softly, 'Farewell, my child; never again shall I see you. May the kind Father above receive your soul!'

"Then she spoke again to the officer, so meekly and humbly that it would have stirred any mother's heart to see her. 'Take the little child again, and go and do whatever my lord has bidden you. Only one thing more I ask you of your grace—that, unless my lord forbid it, you bury the babe so that no birds of prey and carrion creatures can reach her little body.'

"But he would promise nothing. He took the child, and went his way again to Walter, and told him all that Griselda had said and done.

"The marquis was touched a little by remorse when he heard of his wife's gentle obedience, but none the less he held to his cruel purpose like a man who is resolved to have his own way.

He bade the officer take the babe with all care and secretly to his sister, who was Countess of Bologna, and tell her the whole story, asking her to bring the child up honorably, without saying whose it was.

"The man carried out his orders, and the little babe was taken to Bologna, and brought up there. But Walter's mind was not yet softened from his wicked intent. He looked eagerly to see if what he had done would make his wife show in her face any signs of grief or anger. But Griselda did not seem to be changed in the least. She was always gentle and kind, and still as glad, as humble, as ready to obey him as she had ever been; and not a word either in jest or earnest did she say of her little daughter.

"Thus there passed four years or so more, until Griselda had a little son, at which Walter and all his subjects were overjoyed, giving thanks to God because now there was an heir to the kingdom.

"But when the boy was some two years old Walter's heart again became cruel and perverse, and he made up his mind to test his wife's patience once more. Her gentle obedience seemed only to make him wish to torment her still further.

" 'Wife,' he said to her, 'I have told you that my subjects did not like our marriage, but now, since our son was born, their murmuring has been worse than ever before, so that I am greatly afraid of what they may do. They speak openly of the matter. "When Walter dies," they say, "we shall be ruled by Janicola's grandson." I cannot but hear their words, and I fear them. So, in order to live in peace, I am resolved to serve our son as I did his sister before; and I warn you now, so that you may have patience to bear his loss when the time comes.'

" 'I have always said, and always will say,' answered Griselda, 'that I will do nothing but what you wish. I am not grieved that both my son and my daughter are slain, if it is you who order it. You are my lord, and can do with me as you will. When I left my home and my poor rags I left there my freedom also, and took your clothing, and became obedient to your commands. Therefore do as you will; if I knew beforehand what you wished I would do it, and if my death would please you I would gladly die.'

"When Walter heard these words he cast down his eyes, wondering at the patience of his wife. Yet he went away from her with a stern and cruel face, though his heart was full of joy at her goodness.

"The fierce officer came to her again in a little while, and seized her son. Again she prayed him to give the babe proper burial, and kissed its little face, and blessed it, without a word of complaint or bitterness. Again the child was taken to Bologna, to be brought up there.

"The marquis watched for signs of grief in his wife, but found none, and the more he regarded her the more he wondered. If he had not known how she loved the children he would have thought her gentleness was a pretense to hide some evil plot or other. But he knew that she loved her son and daughter next to himself, and he could only marvel at her courage. Between the two of them there was but one will, and that his own; whatever he wished, that she too desired.

"Meanwhile rumors crept about among the people that Walter had murdered his two children secretly because their mother was nothing but a poor village maiden of low birth. The report spread far and wide, so that the marquis began to be

hated by the subjects who had formerly loved him so well. Nevertheless, he did not change his purpose, but sought to try his wife's obedience to the utmost. Very soon he sent a secret message to Rome, asking that a decree from the Pope should be forged, which would allow him for the good of his subjects to put away his wife Griselda and wed another.

"In due time the false decree arrived. It said that, since great strife had arisen between the Marquis of Saluzzo and his people because he had married a poor wife of humble birth, he was to put away this wife, and be free to marry another if he pleased.

"The common people believed these lying orders, but when the news came to Griselda her heart was full of woe. Yet she resolved to endure patiently whatever was done by the husband whom she loved so dearly.

"But she did not yet know all Walter's plan. He sent a letter secretly to Bologna to the Count who had married his sister, asking him to bring to Saluzzo Griselda's son and daughter, openly and in state, but without saying to any man whose children they really were, and to proclaim that the young maiden was soon to be married to the Marquis of Saluzzo.

"The Count did as he was asked. He set out with a great train of lords and ladies in rich array, bringing the girl with her brother riding beside her. She was decked in bright jeweled robes, as if for marriage, and the boy, too, was nobly and fittingly dressed. Thus they started to go to Saluzzo, which was distant a journey of many days.

"When all this plan was being carried out, the marquis, according to his wicked design, put yet another trial upon Griselda's patience by saying to her boisterously, before all his Court: 'Griselda, I was once glad to marry you for your good-

ness and obedience—not for your birth or your wealth. But now I know that great rulers have duties and hardships of many kinds; I am not free to do as every plowman may, and marry whom I please. Every day my people urge me to take another wife, and now I have got leave to do so to stop the strife between me and them. I must tell you that even now my new wife is on her way hither. Be brave, then, and give place to her, and of my grace I will restore to you again the dowry you brought me when I married you. Return again to your father's house; remember that no one is always happy, and bear steadfastly the buffeting of misfortune.'

" 'My lord,' answered Griselda patiently, 'I knew always how great was the distance between your high rank and my poverty. I never deemed myself worthy to be your wife, nor even to be your servant. May Heaven be my witness that in this house whither you led me as your wife I have always tried to serve you faithfully, and ever will while my life lasts. I thank God and you that of your kindness you have so long held me in honor and dignity when I was so unworthy. No more will I say; I will go to my father gladly, and dwell with him to my life's end. With him I lived since I was a babe, with him I will live from now henceforth till I die, and never will I wed any other man than you. May God of His grace grant you and your new wife happiness and prosperity! I give place to her readily, since it pleases you, my lord, to whom I have ever given all my heart. But as for the dowry which you say I brought with me, I remember well what it was: it was my poor clothes that I wore in my father's house. Let me, then, go in my old smock back to him. Ah, how gentle and how kind you were when you took me from him! Love when it is old is not the same as when it is

new; nevertheless, though I have lost your love, I will never in word or deed repent that I gave you my heart.'

" 'You may take the old smock and go,' said Walter. Scarcely another word could he speak, but went away with great pity in his heart.

"Before them all Griselda stripped off her fine clothes, and went forth clad only in her smock, barefoot and bareheaded. The people followed her weeping and railing at her hard lot, but she made no complaint, and spoke never a word. Her father met her at his door, lamenting the day that he saw her cast off thus. He had ever looked askance at the marriage, and thought that as soon as the marquis had wearied of Griselda he would begin to despise her, and would in the end send her away.

"So Griselda went home and lived for a while with Janicola as though she had never left him. She was as gentle and humble as of old, and never showed that she remembered the days of her high estate.

"At length the Count drew near from Bologna with Griselda's son and daughter. The news spread among the people, and everyone talked of the grand wife who was coming to be married to the marquis with such splendor as had never been seen in all West Lombardy.

"When Walter heard of their approach, he sent for Griselda. She came humbly and reverently, and knelt before him.

" 'Griselda,' said he, 'I desire that the lady whom I am to wed shall be received to-morrow as royally as may be. I have no woman who can make all the preparations for this, and arrange that every one shall be placed according to his proper rank, and I have sent for you to do it, since you know my ways of old.

Your garments are poor and mean, but you will do your duty as well as you can.'

" 'I am glad always to do your will, my lord,' she answered. With that she turned to her task of setting the house in order for the guests of the marquis.

"The next morning the Count of Bologna arrived with Griselda's son and daughter. All the people ran out to see the fine sight, and when they looked at the girl, whom they supposed to be Walter's new wife, they thought that he had done well and made a change for the better. She was younger and even fairer than Griselda, and the fickle people, ever changeable as a weathercock, were full of praises for the choice of the marquis.

"Griselda had made everything ready, and went into the courtyard of the palace with the other folk to greet the marquis and his bride. When the procession reached the banquet-hall, she took no shame in her torn old clothes, but went busily about her work with a cheerful face, showing the guests each to his appointed place. They wondered who it was that was so prudent and courteous and skillful in spite of her poor appearance.

"At length, when they were all sitting down to the feast, Walter called out to her as she busied herself in the great hall.

" 'Griselda,' he cried, as if in jest, 'what think you of my wife?'

" 'Never have I looked upon a fairer maiden, my lord,' she answered. 'I pray that you may have all prosperity to your lives' end. One thing only I ask of you—that you do not torment her as you did me; for she is tenderly brought up, and could not bear hardship as well as I, who was poorly bred.'

"When Walter heard her gentle answer, and saw that even now she had no discontent or malice for all the wrong he had

done her, he relented at last, and blamed himself sorely for his cruelty.

" 'Enough, Griselda,' he said, 'be not ill at ease any longer. I have tried and tested your faithfulness and goodness, and I know your true heart, dear wife.'

"He took her in his arms and kissed her, but she was so filled with wonder that she hardly heard what he said till he spoke again.

" 'Griselda, you are my wife, and I will have no other. This is your daughter, who you thought was my new bride, and this your son, who shall be my heir; they have been kept and brought up secretly at Bologna. Take them again, and see for yourself that your children are safe. Let no one think evil of me for my cruelty; I did it but to make trial of my wife's goodness and show it the more brightly.'

"Griselda swooned for joy at his words. When she came to her senses again, she thanked Heaven for restoring her children to her. 'And I thank you, too, my lord. Now I fear nothing, not even death itself, since I have truly won your love. Dear children, God of His mercy has brought you back to me.'

"But suddenly she swooned again. Walter raised her up and comforted her till everyone wept at the touching sight. Then the ladies of the Court took her into a chamber apart, and dressed her in splendid robes again, and set a golden crown on her head, and brought her back into the banquet-hall, where she was honored as she deserved with feasting and rejoicing that lasted all that day.

"Full many a year Walter and Griselda lived together in happiness and peace. Janicola, too, was brought to the Court, and dwelt there with them till at last the soul crept out of his body.

Their daughter was married to one of the greatest lords in all Italy, and their son succeeded Walter at his death, and ruled well and prosperously; but when he married he never put his wife to such a test as Walter did Griselda."

"GRISELDA IS DEAD, AND HER PATIENCE TOO"

I HAVE told you this story," the Clerk went on at the end of his tale, "not to prove that all wives should be so very humble as Griselda was, nor to contradict the Good-wife of Bath's opinion that women should rule their husbands, but to show you a noble example of courage and patience under misfortune. If Griselda could endure so much at the hands of her husband, how much the more ought we to bear patiently whatever God sends us! Yet I think, sirs, that it would be hard to find in any town nowadays even so few as two or three Griselda's."

Then the Clerk sang the pilgrims a little song which he had made about the duty of wives.

When he had at last made an end, the Host praised the moral of the tale, and said he would be glad if that one also could be told to his wife to teach her gentler manners.

"Yes," said the Merchant, whose solemn face, with its forked beard, showed how grave and wealthy a man he was—"yes, we have many troubles. I, too, have a shrew for a wife, as unlike patient Griselda as well could be. Look you, Host, I have only been wedded these two months, but a man who had lived single all his life long would not have such a tale of sorrow to tell as I can, and all through my wife's cruelty."

"Well, since you know so much, tell us a story on this subject," said the Host, perhaps surprised at such words from the Merchant, whose talk usually ran all upon his money and his profits.

But that worthy man was very skilled at hiding his real thoughts and doings; he was so grand and overbearing in his way of doing business that no one ever guessed that he was really deep in debt.

"Gladly," answered the Merchant; "but it would give me very great pain to tell you my story. Listen to a tale of a young wife who tried to cheat her old husband."

The tale which followed was about an old knight named January, who married a fair and false young wife called May. January was blind, and May at length plotted to take advantage of his blindness, and run away with her true lover, one Damian; for she did not love January, but only married him for the sake of his wealth. One day, then, as she walked with her husband in their garden, she ran off to Damian, who was hidden close by. But by a strange miracle the old knight's sight was suddenly restored to him, so that he saw her going; and though she made a clever excuse, he took her home again, and kept her more safely.

The Merchant and the Host, as you see, were completely ruled by their shrewish wives; and the Host's thoughts, now that he was for a little while away from home and free from this tyranny, were continually running on the subject. He broke out again at the end of the Merchant's tale.

"I am glad to think that my wife would not do such a thing as that," he said; "but she has a tireless tongue, and many another bad habit which it would be foolish of me to tell you, for she would be sure to hear of it from some one of this company.

And, besides, I am not clever enough to reveal all her faults to you, so that I must hold my peace; but I tell you that I am sorry I ever married her."

It was now growing late, and the pilgrims ceased story-telling for that day. They stopped for the night, so we are told, at Ospringe.

THE FIFTH DAY

THE SQUIRE

THE knight's son was a fine, well-built young man, about twenty years of age, and as fresh as the month of May itself. His hair was curled, his clothes embroidered all over with red and white flowers, like a meadow. All day long he was singing or whistling on his flute, for his mind was always running on his ladylove, and at night he was as wakeful as a nightingale through thinking of her. He was very strong and active, and had been to the wars in Flanders, Artois, and Picardy, where he had borne himself well in the hope of winning his lady's favor by his prowess.

He was wearing a short gown with long wide sleeves, and showed himself a skillful rider, sitting his horse well; and he was ever courteous and gentle in his mien.

It was to him that the Host first turned for a tale on the fifth morning of the pilgrimage, knowing that he was clever at making songs and ballads, as well as at jousting and dancing.

"Come nearer, Squire," said Harry Bailly, "and tell us some love-story, if you will. You must know as much of love as any man."

"Nay, sir," answered the Squire. "I will tell you the best that I can, with hearty good-will. I cannot rebel against your orders. Hold me excused if I speak amiss, for I can but try to do well. Here is my tale."

THE SQUIRE'S TALE

"THE STORY OF CAMBUSCAN BOLD"

I.—The Magic Gifts and the False Tercelet

AT Sarray, in the land of Tartary, there once dwelt a king who made war on Russia, and did many other deeds of valor. His name was Cambuscan, and he was the most famous monarch of his time. Nowhere was there so good a ruler to be found, for he was just, wise, and prosperous, as well as strong and manly, and he lacked nothing that a king should have.

"His wife's name was Elpheta, and they had two sons and one daughter. The elder of the sons was called Algarsif, and the younger Camballo. The daughter was named Canacee, and she was the youngest of them all; but I know no words good enough to tell you of her beauty.

"When Cambuscan had reigned twenty years, he made up his mind that the feast which was every year held upon his birthday should this year be more splendid than ever before. He caused a holiday to be proclaimed throughout his kingdom, and made everything ready for a great festival on the fifteenth of March, just at the time when spring is beginning and men (like birds in the sunshine) are rejoicing in being free from the keen sword of cold winter.

"It would take me a full summer's day if I were to tell you of all the marvels of this birthday's feast, all the dainty dishes that

were served up, the swans and herons that were cooked with all kinds of wonderful sauces. But it is nigh upon nine o'clock, and I must turn to my story.

"Cambuscan was sitting on a high daïs in the great hall where the feast was being held, clad in royal robes, with a diadem upon his head. The third course was done, and the minstrels were playing their sweetest music, when suddenly the doors were thrown open, and a strange knight rode in all alone. He was mounted upon a steed of brass; in his hand he carried a broad mirror of glass; on his thumb was a golden ring, and a naked sword hung at his side. He was fully armed, save that his head was bare.

"He rode straight up to the daïs where King Cambuscan sat. In all the hall not a word was spoken; old and young alike stood silent, marveling at the sight, and watching to see what the knight would do. When he reached the daïs he saluted the king and queen, and then all the knights and ladies in the hall in turn, so honorably and reverently that not even Sir Gawain the Courteous could better it, if he were to come back from Fairy-land. Then he turned again to the king, and in a clear, manly voice told his errand.

" 'My liege lord the King of Arabia and India greets you on this your birthday, sire,' he said, 'and sends by my hand these gifts in honor of it: first, this Horse of Brass, which will carry you whithersoever you please, however far, within the space of twenty-four hours; or if you wish to fly in the air as high as a soaring eagle, this Horse will carry you thither without harm, and take you back again at the mere turning of a pin. On his back you are always safe, even if you go to sleep.

" 'This Mirror that I have in my hand has the power of show-

ing when any misfortune is about to fall on you or your kingdom. In it also you can see who is your friend and who your foe. Or if any lady has set her heart on a lover, and he is false to her, she will see in the mirror all his treachery.

" 'The Mirror, with this Ring, my lord sends as gifts to honor your fair daughter the Lady Canacee. The Ring has this power—that if she puts it on her thumb, or carries it in her purse, she can understand the voice of every bird under the sun, and know all plants that grow, and which of them will heal the deadliest wounds.

" 'This Sword hanging by my side has such strength that it will cut and bite through any armor, even if it be as thick as oak; and whoever is wounded with it will never be healed till his wound be stroked with the flat of the blade. If that be done, the place will close instantly.'

"When the knight had thus told his tale, he rode the horse out of the hall and again dismounted, and was taken to a chamber to array himself for the feast. The Mirror and the Sword were put in a high tower under charge of a guard, and the Ring was given to Canacee then and there.

"But the Horse of Brass remained in the courtyard where the knight had left it after dismounting. No one could move it; it stood stock-still, as if glued to the ground. The people swarmed round to gaze on the wonderful gift, and marveled at its beauty, for it was as well-fashioned as the finest Lombard steed, and tall and strong as well. They pressed to see it, murmuring like a swarm of bees, and there were as many opinions about it as there were people. Some guessed that it had been made by magic; others recalled old legends about famous horses.

" 'I am terribly afraid,' said one. 'I think there must be men-

at-arms hidden inside the beast, as there were in the Greek horse by means of which Troy was taken.'

" 'Nay, not so,' said another. 'It is no horse at all, but some shape made by magic to deceive us.'

" 'I think it is Pegasus, the winged horse of Bellerophon,' said a third.

"And so they went on guessing about the horse and the other gifts until the king was ready to leave the feast, which was being renewed and continued more joyously than ever.

"When at length the great banquet was ended, Cambuscan went down from the daïs, with his minstrels playing before him, to his council-chamber, where they danced and reveled all the afternoon. After the dancing, they went to a temple to worship, and then came back to a great supper; and last of all, in the evening, when the supper was done, the king and all his lords and ladies came down to see the horse go through its paces.

"The knight laid his hand on the beast's rein, and it began to prance and paw the air.

" 'That is all you need to do, sire,' said the knight. 'If you wish to ride anywhere, turn a pin which is hidden in his ear. I will show it to you exactly in secret. You must tell the horse to what country you wish to go, and when you get there bid him descend, and turn another pin. He will do as you command him, and will stay there until you order him to go again. Or, if you do not wish him to be seen, turn this pin, and he will vanish altogether from sight; but he will come back again, be it day or night, whenever you call him in a way which I will tell you.'

"So the king was given the horse and kept it, and thus his birthday came to an end. The knight took his leave and went

back to his master, and when all the merriment was ended everyone went to bed.

"The day had been a long one, and the people, wearied after their revelry, slept soundly far into the next morning. But Canacee had such joy in her curious Ring and her Mirror that she could hardly take her eyes off them, and as soon as she slept she dreamed of them. So her slumber was light, and she awoke early, and called her old governess, who slept beside her.

" 'I wish to rise,' she said, when she had roused the old woman; 'I can sleep no longer, but would walk about.'

" 'Why so early?' asked the nurse; 'all other folk are still resting.'

"But Canacee would have her way, and she went forth with five or six of her maidens about the time when the bright sun was beginning to show. They walked down a little path in the park of the palace, playing and talking together all the way; Canacee was as fresh and lovely as the light itself. The sun seemed red and swollen through the mist which was gliding from the earth as the day broke; none the less his beams filled their hearts with gladness as they heard the little birds greeting the morn.

"Canacee could understand all that the birds were saying, for she was wearing the Magic Ring, and she delighted to listen to their merry notes. But suddenly she heard a voice which struck her with deep sorrow.

"Right before her, on a bough of a withered tree, sat a peregrine falcon, as white as chalk, and seemingly from some far-off land, wailing and weeping most pitifully. She was beating her wings and pecking her breast till the blood ran down on to the tree, so that even a tiger would have been moved to compassion at the sight.

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"'WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF YOUR SORROW?' ASKED THE PRINCESS GENTLY"—PAGE 169

"Canacee heard and understood the falcon's lamentations, and went and stood under the tree, with the lap of her dress held out to catch the bird if she swooned and fell from weariness and loss of blood.

" 'What is the cause of your sorrow?' asked the princess gently, speaking in the falcon's own language, by virtue of her Ring. 'Why do you thus wound yourself? Come down from the tree, and, on my word as a king's daughter, if you will tell me the reason of your distress, I will aid you if it is in my power, and will choose herbs to cure your wounds.'

"But the falcon only cried the more bitterly, and fell down from the tree in a swoon. Canacee caught her and comforted her, and at length the bird was able to speak again.

" 'I see that gentle hearts are easily moved to pity, as the proverb tells us,' she said. 'Though your help can avail me little, I will reveal to you my story and the wrong that has been done me, that others may take warning by it.'

"Canacee was weeping for very compassion, but the falcon bade her dry her tears, and told her tale thus:

" 'Once I dwelt (alas for that sorrowful day!) by a marble rock in a far-off land, living tenderly and honorably, with no knowledge of adversity; there I had lived all my life, and there it was that I loved another falcon, a tercelet, whose dwelling was hard by. He seemed to be gentle and noble, but in truth he was full of treason and falsehood, which he hid skillfully under a mien so humble and courteous that none would have thought his love feigned. To me he was a serpent lurking unseen amid flowers, for by his arts he won my love, and I gave him all my heart. And when he saw that I thought of nothing else than himself, he did but add to his loving ways and gracious tender-

ness, so that my whole life seemed to hang upon him. Thus for a year or two we continued, until one day it was needful for him to depart and go to another place. I cannot tell you my woe thereat, but surely it was as the pains of death. So one day he took leave of me, so sorrowfully that I believed he felt as much grief as I. I thought that he was true, and that he would come back to me again in a little while; and since honor bade him go, I made a virtue of necessity, and bore as well as I could what could not be helped. Why should I tell you all that he said to me? Who sups with a fiend needs a long spoon, they say, and I was easily beguiled. When he was absent from me, for all that he was nobly born, and fresh and gay and courteous enough to me, his love for me all vanished clean away at the sight of a kite whom he saw flying one day. Thus he has been false to his troth, and I know not where he is now.'

"With that the falcon fell to weeping once more. Canacee told her maidens the story, and they, too, wept at the tercelet's cruelty. Then Canacee took the falcon home with her, and bound up her wounds with herbs such as she knew by virtue of the Ring to have healing powers. A little nest was made for the bird close by her bed, and it was lined inside with blue velvet, for blue is the color of constancy such as the falcon's; but all outside it was painted green, to signify the treachery of her lover.

"Now for a time I will leave the falcon, and speak of the wedding of Canacee, whereat Camballo fought in the lists with three brothers; and afterwards I will tell you how the tercelet was found again, and how Algarsif won the Princess Theodora for his wife, and other marvelous adventures."

II.—The Brethren Three *

"Canacee was the loveliest and wisest princess of her time, well seen in every science and every secret work of nature, in prophecy, and in the powers of herbs and the notes of birds and beasts (for she knew many of these things even without her Ring), and many great lords and knights had sought to win her hand. But all in vain. In spite of all her beauty and wisdom and gentleness she would neither marry nor give any of them so much as a word or even a look of hope. Yet the more she refused to love any one of them the more they sought to win her, so that unquiet strife moved often among them, and brought about great quarrels, and many a time they fought deadly battles for her sake.

"Camballo, her brother, was a knight of prudence and courage, and he feared that some mischief would spring from their jealousies. At length he bethought him how to prevent the peril that might arise, and to turn their quarrels to account, so as to bring honor both to Canacee and to himself. He ordered it to be proclaimed to the suitors, as they were all assembled one day together to dispute about the hand of the princess, that he would hold a great tournament: the suitors were to choose the three most valiant knights out of their number, who should fight with him one after another, and the victor should wed Canacee if he could overcome Camballo.

"The challenge was bold, for Camballo himself was a bold knight, but he had good hope of victory, for Canacee lent him the

* Part II. of this story is taken from Spenser's continuation of the Squire's tale, which Chaucer left unfinished.

Magic Ring, by whose aid he would be able to heal his wounds in a moment.

"The Ring's power was well known to all, and it struck such fear into the suitors that none of them would essay the fight, for it seemed to them that they could not possibly conquer against such odds. So they all withdrew, one after another, and gave up their hopes of winning the princess until only three were left who dared take up Camballo's challenge.

"These three knights, whose great love for Canacee made them disdain all dangers, were named Priamond, Diamond, and Triamond. They were brothers, the sons of a fairy named Agapé.

Diamond was stronger than Priamond, but not so wondrously brave, though brave enough, but Triamond was braver and stronger than either. Triamond liked best to fight on horseback with spear and shield; Priamond, on foot with a sword; but Diamond did battle either on foot or mounted, with spear or sword.

"These three brothers loved one another dearly, and were bound together by such firm affection that it seemed as if they had but one mind and one heart between them. Their mother the fairy had brought them up with her in the forest where she dwelt, and taught them ever to stand by one another in love and friendship, because she herself knew how soon their lives might end, having learnt their fates in this wise.

"As they grew to be young men she had seen how fond they were of war and arms; they were always seeking new dangers and rash adventures wherever they could be found, so that she feared they might meet with sudden death in some chance fight. She made up her mind to go below the earth to the regions of

the dead, where live the Fates who spin the threads of men's lives, and inquire of them concerning her sons.

"Her magic arts led her safely down the dark abyss where Demogorgon dwells, far from the sight of gods and mankind. There she found the home of the Three Sisters whom men call the Fates. They were sitting with the distaff of Fate in their midst, drawing out from it with unwearying fingers the threads of life, which no mortal man can know. Sad Clotho held the distaff, grim Lachesis spun the thread, and Atropos ever and again cut the lines short with her cruel knife. When a man's thread was cut, then it was fated for him to die.

"Agapé saluted the dread Sisters and stood silent, watching the threads spun out. When she had looked her fill she began to tell the reason of her coming, trembling at heart, her face pale and wan.

" 'Bold fay,' answered Atropos, 'are you come here to see the secret of man's life? You deserve that your children's thread should be broken for your daring!'

"Agapé was sore afraid, yet nevertheless she besought the Fates to grant her boon, and let her see her sons' threads, and know the span of their lives.

"The Sisters yielded, and Clotho drew out the three threads. But when she saw them Agapé was filled with woe, for they were as thin as spiders' webs, and so short that they seemed to come to an end almost at once. She fell to begging and praying the Fates to draw them out further, and twine them more strongly, so that her sons might live longer.

" 'Nay,' answered Lachesis, 'these are not human things that can be altered at will. What the Fates once decree not all the gods can alter, not even great Jove himself.'

" 'Then if the term of no man's life may be lessened or made longer, grant me this one thing,' said Agapé—'that when you cut with your deadly knife my Priamond's thread, which I see is the shortest, his life and strength may pass into Diamond, and when Diamond's turn comes also, that Triamond may have the lives of both joined on to his own.'

"They granted it, and she went away content. Ever after she strove to increase the love the three brothers bore to one another, though she told them nothing of what she knew of their fates. And thus through all their days discord never came between them, not even when they all three loved Canacee.

"Priamond, Diamond, and Triamond, then, made up their minds to fight Camballo for Canacee. A day was fixed for the tournament, and the knights gave pledges that they would be present and obey the judges, and at length the time came.

"A barrier was set all round the lists to keep back the press of people who had come to see the combat. On one side sat the six knights who were to be the judges of the deeds of arms done that day; on the other Canacee was seated in fresh array on a richly-decked throne, waiting to see who would prove his right to her by his valor in the fray.

"Camballo came first into the lists, with fearless mien and stately steps, as if sure of victory. A little afterwards the three brothers advanced, bearing themselves nobly and proudly, with escutcheons brightly gilt and banners displayed. They did each a low reverence to Canacee, while shrill trumpets and loud clarions filled the air with music.

"The challenger, Camballo, stood forth fully armed to uphold his challenge, and Sir Priamond came out to oppose him. A trumpet sounded, and the tournament began.

"The two knights were doughty and well matched, and it was hard to tell which would prove the stronger. Many a mighty blow did they aim at one another, but for a long time without avail, until at last a fierce thrust of Priamond's spear pierced Camballo's armor on the shoulder, and caused him to lower his shield. The pain filled him with mad rage, and he drove his spear so terribly against Priamond's shield that it passed it and ran deep into his side, and the blood began to pour from the wound.

"Priamond staggered and reeled like an old withered oak in a storm, and Camballo, seeing his distress, drove at him again and wounded him in the side once more. The spear stuck, and Camballo broke the shaft off short, leaving the head in the wound.

" 'Villain!' cried Priamond, 'you shall have your desert! So far I have spared you not for your own sake, but for your sister's. Take now the reward of your proud challenge!'

"With that he thrust at Camballo with his spear. The point struck him full in the lower part of his helmet and became fixed in the joints of the metal, and the shaft broke in half. Camballo bent back with the force of the blow, but recovered, and tore the broken point fiercely out of his helmet, and cast it back at Priamond with such might that it clove right through his throat armor and pierced deep into his neck, slitting the windpipe in its course. Priamond fell back and sank to the ground, the blood rushing from his wounds, and in a few moments he was dead.

"But though he was slain his life and strength passed into Diamond, who came forward next to oppose Camballo. Camballo was soon ready afresh, the trumpets sounded once more,

and the two knights fell furiously upon one another with great axes, for they had chosen those weapons for the second combat.

"They fought like two tigers, and soon their armor was cut and hewed to pieces under their tremendous blows; each had the blood streaming from his wounds, but none were mortal, and the spectators looked on in wonder and terror.

"At length Diamond resolved to end it one way or the other. He heaved his great ax up, and aimed a terrible blow at his enemy. But Camballo contrived to ward it off, and the ax glanced aside and fell harmlessly. Diamond overbalanced himself with the force he put into the stroke, and his foot slipped. He stumbled and hardly recovered himself, and as he strove to stand upright Camballo let drive at him with all his power, leaving his own side unguarded to do it; his ax swung round and struck Diamond on the neck, and shore his head clean off his shoulders. For a moment the headless body stood upright; then it fell, and the brave knight's life and strength passed to the third brother, Triamond.

"Camballo, by the aid of the Ring, stanched his own wounds, and was soon able to continue the fight. Triamond leapt lightly forth to meet him, and poured blows on him as thick as hail till the sparks flew from his sword like drops of water dashing against a rock. Camballo had to give way before his attack until he had spent his strength a little, and then it was Triamond's turn to retreat, and he began to grow faint and feeble after his former fury.

"But Camballo only seemed to grow stronger as Triamond grew weaker; he pressed him hard, and at length drove his sword through the joint at the top of his armor into his throat. Triamond fell, and lay seemingly lifeless, but his brothers'

strength was still in him, and suddenly he started up again with his second life, like one waking out of a dream, and attacked Camballo fiercely once more.

"And now Camballo could do little more than defend himself, for he was growing weary. When Triamond saw this he swung his sword up over his head to end the fight by one great blow, and the blade came crashing down on Camballo's helmet; but Camballo at the same time drove his sword into Triamond's side, under his guard, as his arms were lifted to strike. Nevertheless he could not avoid the other's blow, and though he broke its force with his shield it crashed heavily on his head, and the two knights both fell to the ground together.

"They lay for a time insensible, and the judges were beginning to declare the end of the tournament. Suddenly, almost at the same moment, they both started up again—Triamond with his new life, and Camballo recovered from the swoon into which Triamond's blow had thrown him. In a moment they fell to as furiously as ever.

"While the issue still hung in the balance, and all men's eyes and hearts were busy with the combat, watching every stroke, and eagerly waiting to see which would conquer, a noise was heard as of some tumult, mingled with the cries of women and children.

"The two knights stood still for a space to learn what the sudden clamor meant, and when they looked towards the quarter whence the noise arose they saw a strangely-equipped chariot whirling towards them in great haste. It was bedight with gorgeous ornaments of gold, and drawn by two grim lions. In it sat a lady passing fair, in whom beauty seemed to vie with wisdom; she was the daughter of a fay, the daughter, in fact, of

Agapé herself, and knew all magical lore, and by these acts she had learnt the sore danger in which her brother Triamond lay.

"She came to still the deadly strife of Triamond and Camballo, and as she urged her chariot towards the lists the people scattered and fled headlong in terror before her lions, thinking that she would deal death among them. But soon their fear abated, for in her right hand she carried a rod of peace, whereon two serpents were entwined, crowned with a peaceful olive-wreath, and in her other hand was a cup filled to overflowing with nepenthe—a drink of sovereign grace devised by the gods to assuage grief and rage and set up peace in the troubled mind.

"When the fairy, whose name was Cambina, reached the barrier of the lists she smote the rail lightly with her wand, and it straightway flew open and let her ride through. She hailed her brother and then Camballo, for whom she had secretly in her heart deep love.

"The two knights returned her greeting none too readily, for they were both eager to continue the battle. But when she saw their passion she began to pray them earnestly to cease from strife, and last, finding her entreaty vain, she smote each one lightly with her magic wand.

"At the stroke a wonderful change befell them: their swords dropped helplessly from their hands, and they stood dumb and amazed. Then she offered them her cup to drink, and they quaffed the nepenthe. As soon as they had tasted it they lost all thought of fighting. Instead they hastened to embrace one another, and plighted their troth to be fast friends for evermore, and when the multitude saw peace made between these two who had but now been mortal foes they shouted aloud for joy till the sky rang.

"Canacee descended from her throne and greeted Cambina courteously when she saw that the strife was ended, and then all the four, the two knights and the two princesses, went together to Cambuscan's palace, where Camballo married Cambina, and Triamond married Canacee; and never were such lovers anywhere as these two knights and their brides."

III.—Fierce Wars and Faithful Loves *

"When Canacee was wedded, Triamond, her husband, persuaded her to go with him and roam over the world in quest of adventures, and with them there also went Camballo and his bride Cambina. Thus only Algarsif was left at Sarray with his father King Cambuscan, whose power and prosperity still continued unbroken.

"After a time Algarsif also desired to see the world. He begged Cambuscan to let him go for a long ride on the Brazen Horse, and by dint of much entreaty he won his father's consent. He mounted the horse, turned the peg, and in a moment the steed had borne him out of sight.

"From Tartary he turned towards Persia, and was flying high over that country, when suddenly he saw far below him in a spacious plain two armies engaged in a fierce battle; each side seemed to win or be defeated alternately, and the issue was doubtful. Algarsif turned his course downward towards the plain to view the fight more nearly.

"As he descended his eye fell upon a richly-dight pavilion

*** Part III. is taken from an inferior writer of the eighteenth century named Stirling. It is given here so as to provide some sort of end for the tale, which both Chaucer and Spenser left unfinished.**

not far from the field of battle. Over it a royal standard floated, and in the shade of an awning just outside it Algarsif could see slaves hurrying to and fro in attendance upon some royal personage, to whom messengers continually brought news from the battle.

"Algarsif turned towards the tent to pay his duty towards this king, if king it were. But when he drew near he saw, not a king, but the most beautiful princess he had ever set eyes on. He fell in love with her at the mere sight, and hastened to get off his horse to address her. He fastened the steed to a tree, and went up to the awning, and fell on his knees before the princess, declaring to her his name and rank; nor did he stop there, but poured out his love in a torrent of passionate words.

"The princess was deeply moved, for she, too, had been struck with love at the sight of the handsome young prince. Her name was Theodora, and she was the daughter of one of the Sultans engaged in the battle which Algarsif had already seen. All this she told him, and would have said more, but suddenly a messenger arrived from the fight bringing the terrible news that the Sultan, her father, was slain by the enemy, and his army in full retreat.

"Theodora was almost overcome by the news, and implored Algarsif to save her. He bade her farewell hastily, and rushed off, with the messenger as guide, to join the defeated troops.

"He soon found them, and putting himself at their head, led them back to the fray. Himself he did marvelous feats of valor (for he had with him the Magic Sword), and slew the opposing Sultan with his own hand; but it was all in vain: the enemy outnumbered his new allies by four to one, and even his valor could do nothing against such odds, while his comrades were

soon being driven again to headlong flight. He remembered that he had still the Brazen Horse, and he retreated, fighting still, towards the tree where he had left it.

"Not far from the tree was Theodora's pavilion; he ran to her, told her in a few words how hopeless was the battle, and begged her to fly with him. In a moment they were safe on the back of the horse, and as he turned the peg the good steed mounted high into the air far from the pursuit of the enemy.

"For a little time they were silent, having hardly recovered from their sudden flight. The Brazen Horse meanwhile was bearing them east with incredible swiftness when suddenly a tremendous shape, black and threatening, arose in the air before them.

" 'Who art thou, rash mortal, that darest invade the home of the genies?' cried the monster. 'Know that I am Eblis, chief of those evil spirits whom Suleiman the Great imprisoned in this spot! Go hence, or be slain!'

"Theodora shrank in fear from the sight of the terrible winged genie, who bore in his hand a flaming knotted mace. But Algarsif faced him undauntingly, and attacked him at once.

"Long and fierce was the combat, but the magic gifts in the end prevailed. The Brazen Horse mounted and descended so swiftly, wheeled so quickly, and seemed to have such clear foresight of the genie's tremendous blows, that the blazing mace struck nothing more than air in spite of all the efforts of Eblis; and presently, when the genie seemed to be growing weary, Algarsif put all his strength into one terrible sweep of the Magic Sword. The blade flashed in the air, beat down the mace, and cut deep into the side of the evil spirit, who with a howl of rage and pain vanished into the depths below.

"The lovers hastened to leave the accursed spot, and the horse was soon bearing them still further east, over Thibet and Kashgar. At length they drew near a high mountain with pleasant trees growing on its sides and a stream flowing from a waterfall at the foot.

" 'Let us alight here and rest, dear princess,' said Algarsif. 'I am weary from my fighting, and would sleep. To-morrow we will cease our wandering, and go back to my father in Sarray.'

"Theodora agreed, and they got off the horse and went to a little grove some distance up the mountain-side. Here they lay down to sleep, all ignorant of the terrible place to which they had come, for they were on the Dismal Mountain, in the power of the wicked enchanter Demshack, by whose arts the trees and woods and flowers seemed to travelers at first very lovely and inviting, but in a little while became withered and poisonous.

"Algarsif and Theodora were soon asleep, for their weariness was great. But their slumbers were short, and broken by terrible visions of awful shapes and strange deaths, and each dreamed that the other was dead. They awoke shivering with fear, and looked round. Instead of the pleasant green shady trees and soft grass, they saw gnarled withered trunks and bare branches, which rattled and creaked in a moaning wind. The ground was hard and stony, and at the foot of the mountain the little stream had become a dark eddying river, from whose waters rose a poisonous mist.

"They ran up and down seeking some way to escape from the mountain, for the Brazen Horse was nowhere to be seen, and in this enchanted place Algarsif had forgotten the magic word

which would recall it. But the gloomy river ran round the foot of it on all sides. They turned in despair, and hastened up towards the summit in the hope that there they might find some relief from the numbness that was now creeping over them. As they ran they grew weaker and weaker; their steps tottered and became languid, and all strength left their limbs. Last of all, the bloom of their cheeks and the light of their eyes faded, their lips and tongues turned black and shriveled, and they fell down unconscious, forgetful of one another and of all else.

"Meanwhile Cambuscan heard nothing of either of his sons and daughter, and knowing the powers of Camballo and Algarsif, he did not dream of any evil befalling them. He was happy with his queen Elpheta, and spent his days in the government of his people, secure in prosperity, and not looking for ill fortune.

"But one day the great seer Chosroës came to him and bade him give up his kingdom.

" 'Sire,' he said, 'great misfortunes await you. Leave your realm, and go on a pilgrimage to Mecca.'

"Cambuscan was amazed at the words of the seer, and at first would pay no heed to him. But Elpheta heard what was said, and went to look at the Magic Mirror. Then she brought the Mirror to Cambuscan.

" 'See, my lord,' she said, 'the seer speaks truth. Look in the Mirror and know your fate.'

"Cambuscan looked, and saw himself reflected in the Mirror surrounded on all sides by a great host of enemies, who were pressing him hard. Then he believed Chosroës, and did as he was bidden. He gave over the cares of state to his chief officers, and joined a caravan of pilgrims who were on their way to

Mecca. He believed that by going he would avert the danger of Heaven from his kingdom, and so he robed himself humbly for the pilgrimage, and set out with Elpheta and the rest of the pilgrims across the desert. The Magic Mirror he left in the charge of Chosroës.

"The caravan traveled slowly and laboriously for many days across the barren sands. Suddenly, when they were in the midst of the desert, they saw far off a cloud of dust on the horizon, and as the cloud drew nearer they perceived that it was a band of fierce Arab robbers who were swooping down to attack them. Hastily they prepared to defend themselves, and had only just time to make ready when the Arabs were upon them. They resisted bravely, and there I will leave them fighting while I tell you how it came about that they were rescued in the end.

"Camballo and Triamond with their princesses were at this time not far from the very spot where Cambuscan and the pilgrims were being attacked. They had had many adventures in their wanderings, and were now on their way home to Sarray, after having restored Canacee's falcon to her false love; for Canacee had begged them to try to find the faithless tercelet before turning homewards, and they had succeeded, as you shall now hear.

"They could not at first discover where the tercelet was likely to be found, although Canacee, by the aid of the Magic Ring, asked all the birds they met if they had seen him. But at length, when they were about to give up the search, Camballo bethought him that perhaps the Ring might have other powers which they did not yet know; he wondered who had given it its magic virtues, and what spirits it obeyed. He took it in his hand, and solemnly called on the spirit of the Ring to appear.

"Even as he finished speaking a huge genie stood before them.

" 'I know your wish,' said the spirit, 'and can tell you where the tercelet may be found. He has flown to the Paradise of Shedad, which Shedad built by magic so that no mortal can enter save the wearer of that Ring. Put on the Ring, and I will lead you thither.'

"Camballo put the Ring on his finger, and the genie took him by the arm. In a moment he found himself on the outside of Shedad's Paradise. Before him he saw the enchanted palace of Shedad himself, built of silver and gold and precious stones, which blazed like the sun and all the stars. Round about were enchanted gardens, where it was always summer and the flowers always blossomed; grassy walks ran among the trees, and little streams rippled past flowery banks with a noise like that of tinkling silver bells.

"Camballo entered the lovely garden, and soon found the tercelet sitting on a tree, all alone and very sad, for he was beginning to long for his old love again. Camballo told his errand, saying how piteous was the falcon's state, how cruel it would be to let her pine away, how well she loved him, and how readily she would forgive his faithlessness. In the end the tercelet begged Camballo to take him back to the falcon. The genie of the Ring was bidden to carry them both to the place where the others had been left, and in a few moments the tercelet and the falcon were lovingly making up the quarrel.

"Thus by the aid of the Magic Ring the falcon's love was restored to her, and the two flew away, to live happily together for the rest of their lives.

"The two knights and their ladies now set out for Tartary, and their way lay, as I have said, right across the desert where

the Arabs were attacking the caravan of pilgrims. They soon reached the scene of the fight, and seeing that Cambuscan and his friends were hard pressed, Camballo and Triamond rushed into the fray, and turned their swords against the robbers. The combat was now more even, but the Arabs outnumbered the pilgrims, and would have proved victorious but for the sudden arrival of yet another knight.

"This was no other than Algarsif on the Brazen Horse. His help changed the day, and the Magic Sword soon put the robbers to flight. Then for a day or more the pilgrims and the knights rested, no longer fearing an attack, and thankful for their safety. The next day Chosroës also arrived with Theodora, and, in answer to the questions of Cambuscan, told how it was that they and Algarsif were there, for Algarsif so far had refrained from telling his story.

" 'When you left the Magic Mirror with me, sire,' began Chosroës, 'I looked into it and saw the terrible danger in which Algarsif and Theodora were placed. They lay on the Dismal Mountain enchanted by the wicked magician Demshack, and I knew not how to reach them. Nevertheless I trusted in Heaven, and set out to wander over the earth in the hope of finding some means to save them; and my hopes were fulfilled. I came one day to a lovely grove, where I lay down and was resting, when suddenly I saw before me a maiden of the most surpassing beauty.

" ' "I am Alzobah, the fairy of this grove," she said, "and I know the object of your wanderings, and will aid you. Take this apple, and go to the Dismal Mountain, at the top of which you will find a talisman to break the enchantment. I can tell you no more. The mountain you will find easily while you have

the apple, which also will help you when you least expect it."

"'With that she vanished, leaving the apple in my hand. I rose, and began my wanderings afresh. In a little time I found myself at the foot of the Dismal Mountain, which I had seen reflected in the Mirror. But it was in vain I tried to climb its sides; they had become as smooth as glass, and after many attempts and failures I flew into a passion, throwing away the apple in my anger. But it was my rage which helped me, for the apple, flying from my hand, was broken to pieces on the hard ground, and out of it there fell the most perfect silken ladder, which, when I cast it up the mountain-side, held fast, and thus I speedily reached the top, and seized the talisman which I found there. The mountain trembled and rocked, and a rumbling noise was heard; then the trees and shrubs bloomed again, the glassy sides became good firm earth, the murky river vanished, and I saw Algarsif and the Princess Theodora coming towards me with the Brazen Horse. When we had heard each other's adventures I looked again in the Mirror, which I had still with me, and saw that the king Cambuscan was surrounded by the Arabs in the desert. We agreed that Algarsif should go to his aid at once with the Horse and Sword, while Theodora and I followed as quickly as we could; and thus it came about that the pilgrims were saved.

"'And now, sire,' added the seer, 'you can return to your kingdom. The will of Heaven is once more favorable to you. Return, therefore, and drive out the enemies who are now on your borders.'

"The whole party now turned back to Sarray, where they arrived without further adventure. They found the kingdom being attacked by enemies on all sides, as Chosroës had said,

but the valor of the knights and the power of the magic gifts soon put them all to flight, and Cambuscan once more reigned with Elpheta in peace and prosperity to their lives' end. When he died the kingdom was divided between Camballo, Algarsif, and Triamond, who lived long and happily with the ladies they had won in such strange fashion."

EPICURUS' OWN SON

FAITH, Squire, you have quit yourself well," said the Franklin at the end of the tale of Cambuscan.

The Franklin was one of those who held their land free without any rent or dues, and were no man's tenant or servant but the King's. He was very well-to-do and prosperous, and kept open house in his own county, where he had been both sheriff and knight of the shire. He loved comfort and fine living, and his house overflowed with meat and drink and every good thing that could be imagined. He changed his dainties according to the seasons of the year, and to that end had many a fat partridge cooked up for eating, while his fish-ponds were always full of bream and pike. Woe be to the cook if the sauces were not piquant and sharp, or the meal not properly spread at the right time! He had a great fixed table standing always in his hall—a sign of great wealth in those days, when all but the very rich were content with a board put on trestles and taken away again after use.

He was a rosy-faced man, with a beard as white as a daisy, and he wore at his girdle a dagger and a pouch of milk-white silk.

"You are a young man, Squire," he went on, for he was not a very clever or well-educated man in spite of his wealth, "and you have spoken very well, I must say. If you live you will one day far surpass all of us here in eloquence, in my opinion. I like your words vastly well. I have a son myself about your age, and I would give twenty pounds' worth of land—yes, twenty pounds' worth—to see him a young man like you. Wealth and ease are no great things unless they have goodness to back them. I am always having to rebuke him for his idle ways; he does nothing but play with the dice and spend money, and he would rather talk to our page-boys than to a man of good birth from whom he might learn something of gentle manners."

"A fig for your 'gentle manners,' Franklin," cried the Host, with a rough laugh. "Remember that you have all got to tell tales, and do not waste time."

"I know, good sir," answered the other. "Do not laugh at me for saying a word or two to the Squire."

"Tell a tale, and do not talk," ordered the Host.

"Of course I will gladly obey you," the Franklin replied. "I will do as you ask, so far as my poor wits allow me, and I hope that I shall please you. The tale I will tell is one of those which the ancient folk who dwelt in Brittany used to sing to their musical instruments. But remember that I am only a rude and unlettered man, sirs, and excuse my rough and ready words. I never was taught to speak well, and I know nothing about Cicero or the 'colors of rhetoric' which scholars talk of. The only colors I know are those which I see in the fields, and those with which men dye or paint. But now for my tale."

THE FRANKLIN'S TALE

THE ROCKS REMOVED

THERE once dwelt near Penmarch Point, in Armorica, the ancient Brittany, a knight named Arviragus, who loved a lady of that country, and did his best to serve her and show her honor. Many a toil did he undertake and many a perilous enterprise did he carry out in the hope of winning the favor of Dorigen (for that was her name); but she was the fairest lady under the sun, and of high birth, so that the knight hardly dared to tell her of his love; and when he did so she would not at first give him any hope of success in his suit.

"Nevertheless he was not discouraged, and at length, because of his knightly conduct and his constancy, Dorigen at last consented to take him for her husband; and he, in order to make their lives still happier, of his own free will swore on his honor as a knight that he would never force her to do anything against her wish, but would obey her in all things as a lover should, except that for the sake of his knighthood's honor he must keep the name of being her lord and master, according to custom.

" 'Sir,' answered Dorigen, when he made this promise, 'since of your gentleness you offer me such freedom, I pray to God that nothing may ever come between us through my fault, and I vow to be your humble and true wife to my life's end.'

"Thus they plighted their troth and were married, and lived for a time happily and in peace; for Arviragus had no desire

to constrain his wife's love to obedience, since patience and endurance profit a man more than all else; and so these two kept their word to one another honorably, and dwelt in all joy together in the knight's castle.

"But when they had been married a year or more it fell to the lot of Arviragus to go to England for a year or two to seek honor in arms, and he left Dorigen, and was away from her two years. She loved her husband as her own life, and at first wept and mourned sorely when he was gone. But ever and again she received tidings and letters from him, and her friends also came to her and begged her to join them in their mirth and play, so that at last she began to be comforted, and to go with them in their walks, and take part in their pleasures once more.

"But the castle of Arviragus lay near the sea-coast, and very often the company of ladies would wander along the high cliffs by the shore; and in spite of all her brave endeavors to be merry and cheerful as her friends were, Dorigen could not but sigh for her dear husband when she saw the vessels sailing far out at sea.

" 'Is there no ship among all those that I see which is bringing my lord home to me?' she would think. 'Ah, if there were my grief would speedily be gone!'

"Or perhaps she would stand on the edge of a cliff, and look down on the grim, black rocks far below till her heart quaked with fear, and she could no longer stand upright on her feet, but sank on to the grass, crying piteously, 'Alas! what cruel rocks! Does not God, who made the wind to blow, know what harm they do to mankind, and how they wreck ships and destroy the crews utterly? Can my Arviragus escape them? The sight of them strikes dread into my very heart; would to Heaven that they were all sunk into the depths beneath!'

"Her companions soon saw that she was distressed whenever they walked by the sea, and thenceforth they went with her only in the gardens of their castles, and by rivers and fountains, and in like places of many delights, where they could pass the time in playing chess and backgammon and other games.

"One morning they were all in a fair garden, gay with green trees and fresh flowers, for it was the sixth of May. The garden was laid out like Paradise itself, so that the ladies and the young knights and squires with them took great joy in its beauty, and after dinner fell to singing and dancing, all for lightness of heart. Dorigen alone held aloof from their mirth, for her husband was not among the dancers.

"Among the young knights who were dancing was a certain squire named Aurelius, who could sing and dance better than any man since the world began. He was young and strong and honorable, rich, wise, and held in great honor; and, to cut my story short, he had long loved Dorigen, even from the time before she was wedded to Arviragus. He had ever kept his love hidden, like an honorable knight, and all the more since she was married; but now, since he could no longer hope to win her, his life had become wearisome to him, and he was overcome with despair; only in the songs he made and sang could he show his sorrow, and in all else he had to hide and keep down his love, which did but grow stronger the more hopeless it became.

"But to-day, in that fair garden, as he looked on its delights and the happiness of his friends, his passion mastered him, and he resolved to speak to Dorigen. Perhaps it was because he looked at her so beseechingly, like a man who asks for grace, that she was moved to a certain compassion of him; at any rate, though Dorigen knew nothing of his intent, they fell in talk

together that evening, for he was her neighbor, and a man of worship and honor, and they had long been friends.

" 'Madam,' said the poor squire, 'would to Heaven that when Arviragus went over the sea I too had gone and never come back; for I love you, knowing that my love is in vain, and that all I could do to serve you would be but for the breaking of my own heart. Have pity on me, dear lady, for with a word you can slay or save me!'

"Dorigen looked on him with deep pity, and strove to show him how hopeless and impossible it was that she should be untrue to Arviragus and give herself to him.

" 'I knew not that your mind lay thus,' she said; 'but now that I know I can but tell you the truth. I can never be untrue to my dear lord in word or deed; I am his now and always, and that will ever be my answer to you. Lay aside this folly; I could as soon give you my love, Aurelius,' she went on, hoping to turn his thoughts with a jest, 'as that those grim rocks which are all along the coast could be removed, every one, stone by stone, till not one is to be seen. Cause that to be done, and I will be yours.'

"Thus she spoke, knowing that what she said was impossible, and saying it only in jest. But Aurelius, thinking that she meant it in all seriousness, was only filled with blacker despair, and went away from her sorrowfully, leaving her with her friends to revel out the day until the horizon stole away the sun's light.

"When Aurelius reached his home he was half mad with distress. He fell on his knees, and began to pray to the ancient gods, to Apollo, the god of the sun, and his sister Diana, queen of the night, begging them to bring a great flood which would rise high above the tallest rocks round Brittany, and hide them

so long that Dorigen would believe them to be removed. But his prayers were vain, and his frenzy grew so violent that he fell down in a swoon, which lasted till his brother found him and nursed him back into health again; and then for two years or more he dwelt quietly at home, with grief raging at his heart.

"Meanwhile Arviragus came home again, and Dorigen was right glad to see him; and now that they were once more together, all their days were full of mirth and rejoicing.

"But poor Aurelius pined and languished in despair, and his brother, who was a great student, began to have fears for his life; he knew all Aurelius's sorrow, but could find no remedy for it. At last he bethought him that once, when he was studying at Orleans, his fellow-student had by chance left upon his desk a great book of magic and spells; for the young students loved to pore over strange subjects and curious knowledge which they had no business to learn. He remembered also tales of what had been wrought by necromancy; how magicians could make a lake and barges rowing upon it appear in a banquet-hall, or a grim lion come roaring in, or flowers spring into life and blossom as in a meadow, or a vine grow with red and white grapes, or could build a lordly castle of marble and stone, and destroy it again in a moment.

"'If I could find one of these magicians at Orleans,' he thought to himself, 'perhaps he would help my brother; and thus, perchance, he might bring it about that all the rocks round Brittany should vanish, and ships sail over the place where they stood; and then my brother could claim the Lady Dorigen according to her word.'

"Why should I make a long story of it? He told Aurelius about the book of magic he had seen, and they started together

for Orleans, full of hope, for Aurelius was still bent on doing as Dorigen had jestingly bidden him.

"When they drew near their journey's end, and were only two or three furlongs from the city, they met a young student roaming by himself, who greeted them courteously in Latin, and then said a strange thing—'I know the cause of your coming hither.'

"Aurelius and his brother were astonished at these words, and still more when the stranger went on to tell them who they were and what they had in their minds. Neither of them had ever seen him before, and they knew in a moment that he must be a magician, and that their journey would not be in vain. They returned his greeting gladly, and followed him to his house, for he was in truth a student of magic and a great wizard. There they were entertained well with every kind of food and dainty, and the magician showed them the wonders of his art.

"He made forests and parks full of wild deer appear before them, and harts with the largest horns that ever were seen; and there came huntsmen with hounds and slew a hundred or more of the deer in the chase. Then the scene vanished, and they saw instead men hawking and hunting herons by a river; and next they were shown knights jousting in a plain, and then a dance in which the magician himself seemed to be taking part. But in the midst of it he clapped his hands, and lo! the revel vanished suddenly, and they were alone again in the wizard's study, where they had been sitting all the time without ever having to move to see these wonderful sights.

"Then they sat down to supper and feasted again, and after that Aurelius began to treat with the magician about the price to be paid for the removal of all the rocks round the coast of

Brittany, from the Gironde to the Seine. The wizard vowed that he must have a thousand pounds for the task, and Aurelius in his eagerness made light of the sum.

" 'What is a thousand pounds?' he cried. 'If I had the whole wide world, I would give it you. It is a bargain, and you shall surely be paid! We will set out to-morrow.'

"So they agreed about it, and went to bed. Aurelius slept soundly that night, for now he thought that his woe was likely to be ended at last.

"The next day all three went straight back to Brittany. It was the cold, frosty season of December, when all the green land is destroyed by sleet and rain; and the rocks looked grimmer than ever that bitter Christmastide. Aurelius hurried the wizard with prayers and threats to carry out his promise; and he set to work with all haste, toiling night and day at his spells and incantations and magic tables and calculations of the sun and stars, until he hit upon the right moment to work his charms; and then at length he accomplished his task, and all the rocks round Brittany seemed to have vanished.

"Aurelius had been doubtful and impatient while the spell was yet working, but now, when he saw the rocks really gone, he went straight to Dorigen, and fell at her feet, saluting her humbly and courteously.

" 'Dear lady,' he said, 'whom I love and honor above all the world, have pity on me ere I perish for love, and remember your word that you gave me. Not that I ask anything of you as by right, for you are my sovereign lady, and your will is mine; but in a garden here you made me a certain promise. I have carried out your commands. Do as you will, but remember your word, for lo! all the rocks are removed.'

"With that he went away, leaving Dorigen amazed; all the bright color fled from her face when she saw that the rocks were indeed removed, and knew into what a trap she had so innocently fallen. 'Alas! that this should ever have come to pass!' she cried. 'I never dreamed that such a wonder could happen.'

"She went home, almost unable to walk through fear; but Arviragus was away, and would not return for some days, and she had to wait and bear her grief in silence, for she dared not tell it to any but her husband; and thus for a day or two she mourned by herself, thinking of all the famous ladies who had been given up against their will to those they did not love. At last, however, Arviragus returned, and as soon as he saw her asked her why she wept so sorely.

"Dorigen did but weep more bitterly. 'Alas! that I was ever born!' she said. 'Thus and thus have I said and promised.' And she told him all about her rash words, and how Aurelius had caused the rocks to be removed, so that she must go to the garden and give herself over to him.

"Her husband heard her gently and patiently, and at the end asked, 'Is there aught else but this, Dorigen?'

"'No,' she answered; 'Heaven knows it is too much.'

"'Let us not raise up for ourselves any further evil,' Arviragus said. 'You must keep your word; I would rather die than that you should be held in dishonor for breaking your promise, such is the love I bear to you. Truth is the highest thing that man can keep.'

"But with that word he burst into tears at the thought of what a loss this cleaving to truth and honor would bring them. 'I forbid you, on pain of death,' he said, 'to tell anyone else of this

matter. Let me endure my woe as well as I can without any open show of grief, or any sign which may bring your name into ill repute.'

"Then he called a squire and a maiden. 'Go forth with Dorigen,' he bade them, 'and take her to such-and-such a place.' But he said no word of why she was going; and thus he kept his promise to her, that he would never act against her will, and refused to make her break her word.

"Do you think him hard and cruel to put his wife in such peril?" asked the Franklin of the pilgrims, breaking off for a moment. "Remember that it would be dishonorable for her to break her word, however lightly given, and that he, too, was but keeping strictly to his own word in letting her go. Moreover, hear the end of the tale; she may fare better than you expect. When you have heard all the story, think what you will.

"The squire Aurelius happened by chance to meet Dorigen as she was bound for the garden where she had given him her word, in order to give herself up to him. He greeted her gladly, and asked her whither she went.

" 'To the garden, to keep my troth, as my husband has bidden me. Woe is me!' she answered, weeping and distracted with grief.

"Aurelius felt great pity in his heart for the distress which he now saw that he had brought about, and he honored her and the worthy knight Arviragus for their constancy and truth; and as he went by her side to the garden he began to think that he, too, would do well to be generous and give up his desire, rather

than keep Dorigen to her troth, and so wrong his knightly gentleness and honor.

" 'Madam,' he said when they were come into the garden, 'hear how I will carry out my share of our bond. Go to your lord Arviragus, and say to him that I see his great nobleness of heart and your distress, and how he would rather have the shame and sorrow of sending you away than that you should break your word; and therefore I would liefer suffer woe all my life than destroy the love that is between you two, and I here free you wholly of our agreement, and take my leave of you, for you are the best and truest lady that ever I knew. Only let all wives beware how they give their word, seeing to what a pass you came. Say thus to Arviragus; for surely I who am but a squire can do a gentle deed as well as any knight.'

"Dorigen fell on her knees and thanked him; and then she went back to Arviragus, and told him all that Aurelius had said, and how he had generously freed her from her word. And I need tell you no more of those two, save that Arviragus loved and honored Dorigen as his queen, and she was ever true and constant to him; and so they lived happily to their lives' end.

"But Aurelius, when he came to think of what he had done, saw that for all his generosity he was in a strait.

" 'Alas! I promised the magician a thousand pounds of gold!' he lamented. 'What shall I do? I must sell my possessions and turn beggar to get the money; I cannot stay here and disgrace all my kindred. I must beg for grace, and pay my debt by degrees, and keep my word to him honorably.'

"He collected all the money which he had by him, some five hundred pounds or so, and took it to the student of magic, begging him of his gentleness to grant him time to pay the rest.

'I have never yet failed in my word,' he said, 'and I will quit myself of my debt, if I have to go a-begging in a threadbare tunic to do it. Will you grant me two or three years if I give security? Else I must sell my inheritance to get the money.'

" 'Have I not fulfilled my covenant to you?' asked the magician gravely.

" 'Yes, well and truly,' answered Aurelius.

" 'Have you not won your lady, as you desired?' asked the other, not yet knowing what had happened.

" 'No, no,' replied Aurelius with a sigh, and told him all that he had done. 'I could not but have pity,' said he; 'for Arviragus wished rather to die in sorrow and distress than that his wife should be false to her troth; and I saw Dorigen sad and forlorn, yet keeping to her word; and so I sent her back freely to her husband, as he had freely let her fulfill her promise to me."

" 'Dear friend,' said the magician, 'each of you has dealt nobly by the other. You are a squire, and he is a knight; but God forbid that I, a humble student of magic, should be below you in gentle and generous ways. I, too, can do an honorable deed as fearlessly as any of you, and here I release you of the whole of your debt as freely and utterly as though you had but this moment crept out of the ground and never before set eyes on me. I will not take a penny of you for all my labor, sir; you have paid well for my living here, and it is enough. Farewell, and God be with you!'

"With that he took his horse and rode on his way. And now, which of them, Arviragus, Aurelius, the magician, or Dorigen, was the truest and most generous, do you think?"

THE SECOND NUN'S TALE

ST. CECILIE

THE Franklin ended his tale, and the pilgrims thanked him heartily for it; for they liked to hear stories which dwelt particularly on some one single virtue, such as truth-keeping in this tale, or patience and obedience in the Clerk's tale, or constancy and endurance in the Man of Law's.

The next tale was told by the Nun, who came as attendant upon the Prioress Eglantyne. But before beginning, she spoke to her companions at some length about Idleness, "who," said she, "is the doorkeeper of the Garden of Delights; and to keep us from idleness, which is the cause of much confusion, I will give you the story of St. Cecilie, the maiden martyr." Then she explained to them the meaning and derivation of the name Cecilie, as she understood it, and at last began her tale.

ST. CECILIE

CECILIE was a maiden of Rome, of noble birth, and she had been brought up as a Christian from her cradle, though it was then the early days of Christianity, and those who held that faith were persecuted and hated. But Cecilie was steadfast in her belief, and ever bore Christ's Gospel in her heart, never ceasing to pray to God and fear Him.

"As soon as she was of age to marry she was betrothed to a

youth named Valerian. But when the day appointed for their wedding came, she had made up her mind to give her life to the service of God only, and not to marry; and she called Valerian and spoke thus to him: 'Beloved, there is a certain secret which concerns me, and I am to tell it you; you must swear not to betray it.'

"Valerian vowed that, come what might, he would never betray the secret, and she went on:

"'I have an angel who loves me with a great love, and guards me at all times, sleeping or waking; and if ever he perceives that your love towards me is base or dishonorable, he will straightway slay you, and you shall die then and there. But if your love is true and honorable, then he will love you as he does me, and will show you all his joy and brightness.'

"This she said, meaning to persuade Valerian to become a Christian, for he was not yet of that faith. But he was amazed at her words, and did not know how to understand them.

"'If I am to trust you,' he said, 'let me see that angel and look upon him; and if he is a very angel, then I will keep your secret; but if he is another man whom you love, I will slay you both with this sword.'

"'If you wish it, you shall see the angel,' said Cecilie; 'but you must believe on Christ and be baptized. Go forth three miles upon the Appian Way, and say to the poor folk who dwell there that I, Cecilie, send you to them to find good Urban the Old, for a secret purpose; and when you see this Saint Urban, tell him what I have told you, for as soon as he has purified you from your sin you shall see the angel.'

"Valerian went to the place as she bade him, and found there

the holy Urban living secretly, for fear of persecution, in the Catacombs where the saints are buried; and he told him his errand, and Urban, when he heard it, lifted up his hands in joy, with tears falling from his eyes.

"'Thanks be to Almighty God!' he said. 'O Lord Christ, Shepherd of us all, what good fruit is borne by Thy seed in Cecilie! Lo, her spouse whom she was to marry, who was like a fierce lion, now comes here to us to seek Thee, as meek as any lamb!'

"As he spoke there appeared suddenly the form of an old man, clad in clear white robes, bearing in his hand a book with letters of gold; and he stood before Valerian, who fell down as if dead. But the old man raised him up, and began to read to him from the golden letters of the book concerning the one Lord Christ, one faith, one God, one baptism, one Father of all things who is above all and over all everywhere.

"When he had read thus he asked Valerian, 'Believest thou this thing?'

"And he answered, 'I believe it all, for no man can think of any truer word under heaven.'

"Then the old man vanished, and Urban christened Valerian there upon that spot.

"As soon as he was baptized, Valerian went back, and found Cecilie in his chamber, with an angel standing by her side. The angel had in his hands two garlands, the one of roses, and the other of lilies; one he gave to Cecilie, and the other to Valerian, saying thus: 'Keep these garlands with pure hearts and bodies. I have brought them to you from Paradise, and never more shall they fade, nor lose their scent, neither shall any man be able to

see them who is not pure and honorable. And thou, Valerian, since thou hast so readily believed the faith, ask a boon, and it shall be given thee.'

" 'I have a brother,' answered Valerian, 'whom I love better than any man on earth. I pray that my brother may have grace to know the truth as I do.'

" 'Thy prayer is pleasing to God,' said the angel, 'and both of you shall come into His peace with the palm of martyrdom.'

"Even as the angel was speaking, Tiburce, Valerian's brother, came into the chamber, and immediately was aware of the scent of lilies and roses; and he wondered, for he saw no flowers, and it was not the season for them.

" 'Whence at this time of the year comes that sweet savor of roses and lilies which I smell?' he said. 'If I had the flowers in my hands, I could not perceive the scent more clearly; and with that scent I too seemed to be all changed in another way.'

" 'Two garlands have we,' answered Valerian, 'snow-white and rose-red, that shine brightly, though your eyes have no might to see them. And since through my prayer you smell their scent, you shall also see them, dear brother, if you will straightway believe aright and know the true faith.'

" 'Do you say this to me really, or do I dream?' asked Tiburce.

" 'Formerly we dwelt in dreams, brother,' Valerian replied, 'but now we live only in the truth.'

" 'What mean you by this?' asked Tiburce.

" 'I will tell you. An angel of God taught me the truth, and you too shall know it, if you will renounce your false idols and be pure in heart.'

"Then Cecilie showed him plainly that all idols are vain, for they are but deaf and dumb images; and she charged him to give

them up and become a Christian. He marveled at the truth of her words, and at length answered that he believed; and Cecilie, full of joy, bade him be baptized at once.

" 'Go now with your brother,' said she, 'and be baptized and purified of your sins, that you too may look upon the angel whom your brother has seen.'

" 'Tell me now, dear brother,' said Tiburce, 'whither and to what man I must go.'

" 'To what man?' replied Valerian. 'Be of good heart; I will take you to Urban.'

" 'To Urban?' said Tiburce in surprise. 'Do you mean that Urban who has so often been condemned to death, and who is always lurking in dark corners, not daring to show his face? He would be burnt to death if he could be caught, and if we join him and seek this God who is hidden from us in Heaven, we too shall suffer for it in this world!'

" 'Nay, but men might well fear to lose this life if there were no other to come after it,' said Cecilie. 'But there is a better life in another place which none can lose.' And she explained to him more fully the Christian faith, until he was convinced and went with Valerian to seek Urban.

"Urban thanked God for his coming, and baptized him; and he so increased in the grace of God that every day he saw the angel, and every boon he asked of Heaven was granted.

"It would be a long story to tell you how many wonders were wrought in Rome through the holy lives of Cecilie and the two brothers; but at last the rulers of the city grew angry at their teaching and the numbers they converted, and they were sent for, and brought before the prefect Almachius.

"The prefect questioned them long and severely, and learnt

what faith it was that they taught; and in the end he set them before an image of Jupiter, the king of the Roman gods, proclaiming, 'Whosoever will not do sacrifice to Jupiter, his head shall be struck off!'

"The Christians would not bow down to the idol, and they were seized by one Maximus, an officer of the prefect; but when he laid hands on them he could not but weep for pity. They began to teach both him and the executioners, so that very soon these hard-hearted Romans themselves began to lose their old heathen faith, and to learn the teaching of Christ; and in a little while they were all baptized and became Christians.

"The next day the three were once more led to the image of Jupiter, and ordered to worship it or to burn incense before it; but they refused, and fell on their knees, and prayed humbly to God; and thereupon the heads of Valerian and Tiburce were cut off, and they died.

"But Maximus, who had been present at their death, spread the news of it far and wide, and said that as they perished he had seen their souls gliding up to Heaven in the care of bright angels; and with his words he converted many. But when this came to the ears of Almachius, he commanded Maximus also to be seized, and beaten with whips of lead till he was dead.

"Cecilie caused his body to be buried beside that of Valerian and Tiburce, and herself (for she had been let go free) continued teaching and doing good. But soon the prefect again sent his servants to seize her; and, though she converted them also to Christianity, she was nevertheless brought before Almachius.

" 'Do you care nothing for my power?' he asked her, when he had questioned her about her faith.

" 'Your might is little to be feared,' she answered. 'All mortal power is but as a bladder full of wind that is emptied and shrunk at the prick of a needle's point.'

" 'You persevere in wrong-doing,' said the prefect. 'Do you not know that our emperors have commanded that Christians shall be punished unless they renounce their faith?'

" 'The wrong-doing is yours, and your emperors and nobles err grievously. It is you who make us commit a crime; yet, because we know the name of Christ to be good, we cannot deny it.'

" 'Choose one or the other—do sacrifice, or deny your faith and so go free,' said Almachius impatiently.

"Cecilie laughed a little. 'Over-subtle judge,' she cried, 'do you fancy that I shall give up my innocence, and save my life by wickedness?'

" 'You know not how far my power stretches,' said Almachius. 'Life and death are in my hands; why, then, do you speak so proudly to me?'

"But Cecilie would not yield, and began to show the judge the Christian faith, till he grew angry and cried, 'Take her home to her house, and burn her in a bath of flame.'

"It was done as he ordered. Cecilie was put in a bath, and night and day they heated a great fire underneath. But a great miracle came to pass, for, in spite of all the flames, she suffered no hurt, nor even was warmed by them.

"Nevertheless her fate was to die. Almachius heard what happened, and sent a servant to slay her as she still lay in the bath. The man came, and smote her neck with a sword; three times he struck, wounding her at every stroke, and yet failed to sever her head from her body; and with that his courage failed

him, and he durst lift his sword no more, but went away, leaving her wounded to death.

"But there was one more marvel before she died, for in this state she remained alive three days, teaching the Gospel and exhorting her household to faith and hope; and on the last day she sent for Urban, and spoke thus to him:

"'I prayed the King of Heaven to grant me these three days of life, that I might strengthen and comfort my friends and brethren in faith; and now I commit them to your charge, with all my possessions.'

"Thus she died, and Urban and his deacons fetched her body secretly, and buried it with those of the other saints; and her house was consecrated, and became the Church of St. Cecilie."

THE COURTEOUS STRANGERS

BY the end of the Nun's tale the pilgrims had ridden some five miles or more, and were at Boughton-under-Blean. Here two travelers overtook them. The foremost of them, who seemed to be the other's master, wore a long black cloak with a white surplice underneath. His horse, a dapple-gray hackney, was steaming and almost tired out, as if from a hard ride, and his servant's was in no better case. He himself was splashed with foam till he looked like a magpie, and his hat was dangling by a string at his back, for it had blown off as he rode. He had a wallet, nearly empty, folded double behind him on the crupper, and he seemed to be traveling in light array, being dressed as if it were summer, and in threadbare garments at that. He must have been riding like a madman, for he was in a wonderful heat, in spite of a burdock-leaf which he had

under his hood to keep him cool. The pilgrims could not make out his rank till they saw that this hood, which was fastened at the back of his cloak, was sewed on, and then they knew that he was a canon, a member of a properly-registered body of clergy, because that was the dress ordained for them to wear when away from home.

He drew near, and addressed the travelers very politely.

"God save all this merry company!" he cried. "I have ridden fast to overtake you, because I wanted to go with you on your way."

His yeoman, or servant, joined in:

"Yes, sirs, I saw you starting from your inn this morning, and told my master. He would like very much to ride with you and share your merriment. He loves mirth."

"Thank you, friend," answered Harry Bailly. The Host desired to find out a little more about these polite strangers. The Yeoman was riding by his side, the Canon having fallen in among the other pilgrims. "Your master shows his wisdom in joining us. I dare say he is a cheerful enough man himself. Could he tell us a tale or two to amuse us?"

"A tale? My master tell a tale? Yes, sir, he is the man for merry stories! Trust me, you would be amazed at his skill and cleverness if you knew him as well as I do. He does many a great work which all of you here would find it hard to do unless you learnt the way from him. Look at him now; he is riding among you now so humbly and quietly like any ordinary man, and yet if you knew him well you would not fail to get great profit thereby. I will wager all I have that you would not forego his friendship for a good deal. He is a great and wise man, I tell you—a man a long way out of the common."

"Well," said the Host, growing rather suspicious of all this fine talk, "who *is* he? Tell me, is he a scholar?"

"He is a greater man than that," answered the Yeoman. "You shall hear a little about his business. Of course I cannot tell you everything, though I myself am able to help him a good deal in his work. You see this road on which we are riding? Well, I tell you my master is so clever that he could turn it clean upside down from here to Canterbury, and pave it all with silver and gold!"

"Bless me!" said the Host, now certain that the Canon had joined the pilgrims only in order to cheat money out of them somehow or other. "I wonder that such a clever man, one to whom men should look up with such reverence, thinks so little of his position; his cloak is all dirty and torn and useless. Why does your master go so poorly clad, tell me, if he can do such wonders as you say?"

The Yeoman began to think that he was found out, and the Host's question startled him. The thought of the life which he was praising so boldly, but which was really one of endless hardship, overwhelmed him for the moment, and he lost his presence of mind.

"Why do you ask me such questions?" he said hastily. "Heaven help me, my master will never make a living for us!" Then he collected his senses, and tried to undo what he had said. "But you must not believe every word I say, and so I beg you to keep our poverty a secret, if you can. The reason why we seem so poor is that my master is too clever. He has great wisdom—too much, indeed, for he misuses it. It grieves me that he does so, but I can do no more than pray that he may become a better man."

"Never mind that, good Yeoman," said Harry Bailly, "but since you know your master's business, tell us how he uses this cunning of his. Where do you live?"

"In the suburbs of a town," replied the Yeoman, giving up the attempt to deceive the Host any longer, "lurking in terrible dark corners and blind alleys, where robbers and thieves who dare not show their faces are hidden. That is where we live, if you must have the truth."

"Very well. Now another thing: why is your face so pale?"

"From blowing the furnace. I do it so much that it has changed my color. We are alchemists, if you must know, always seeking to turn everything into gold; and hard work I have over it. We cram our heads with calculations till we are stupid, and then pore over the fire endlessly, but nothing ever comes of it. We borrow money—a pound or so, or ten or twelve, or even more, and tell the people we will make them two pounds out of every one which they lend us. Yet we always fail, though we are forever groping and searching hopefully after success. We cannot do as we promise, and the money slips away so fast that we are beggars in the end."

While the Yeoman was talking the Canon drew near. He had a guilty conscience, and was always suspicious of what men said out of his hearing. As soon as he caught a few words he guessed what was happening.

"Hold your peace, knave!" he burst out. "Not a word more, or you shall rue it! You are slandering me to this company, and revealing all our secrets."

"Tell on, Yeoman," said the Host, "and never heed his threats."

"Faith, there is little more to tell," said the Yeoman.

The Canon saw that he was betrayed, and that his servant would let the pilgrims into all his secrets. He turned his horse round angrily, and rode away in a fury of shame and rage, and they saw no more of him.

"Now I will speak freely, and give you something to laugh at," said the Yeoman. "I will tell you all I can now that he is gone. Bad luck to him! I hope he will be well paid out for taking me into his trade. I would not go back to serve him again for any wages you could give me. All the tricks I had to play in his service were deadly earnest for me, for our living hung upon them, and I never had a chance to leave him before in spite of all my toil and misery. But now that he is gone I will not spare him. You shall learn something about the secrets of alchemy.

"I was with the Canon seven long years, and am none the better off after it all. All that I had I have lost, and so has many another man who trusted him. When I first went to him I was fresh and red-cheeked and gayly clad; now my face is pale and lead-colored, and my eyes all sore from the fire, and I have to use an old stocking to cover my head. I have toiled unceasingly, and have got no good out of it, and I shall never be free from the debts for the gold I have borrowed. So much for the profits of the slippery science of alchemy! Anyone who becomes an alchemist first of all loses his own money, and then tries to make others do the same.

"This is how we would set to work. We talked to everyone very wisely and glibly about our wonderful science, using strange terms, though for my part all I had to do was to blow the fire till I was tired out. We kept our furnace burning all day and all night too, and made use of all sorts of drugs and powders. We

ourselves, as well as our dupes, were always full of fresh hope after each failure. Men grow so eager in this kind of learning that if they had but one coat to cover their bodies with they would sell it in order to be able to continue their search."

Then the Yeoman gave a long list of all the strange mixtures they had to buy and make up. But it was all in vain; they never succeeded in turning other metals into gold. And when they had done everything according to their calculations, "the pot would blow up and burst all over the room, and good-by to all our labor and all our money! Pieces of metal would fly into every corner, and some would even break holes in the wall with the force of the explosion. Then the people who had lent us the money or metal would be discontented and blame us. One said that the metal was too long in the furnace; another, that the fire was not properly blown, and that would make me feel a little afraid, for the blowing was my share of the work; but a third would laugh at such a reason, and say that it was because the heat was not properly regulated, or because the fire was made of beech-wood.

" 'Well,' my master would answer them, 'there is nothing to be done. The pot must have been cracked; I will be more careful in future. Pluck up your spirits, and let us sweep the pieces together.'

"The pieces would be collected, and each one would search them and think that he had come upon a little piece of his own particular metal among them (they used to bring us bars of metal to turn into gold, besides paying for our acids and drugs). 'Never mind that,' my master used to say; 'if I do not set it all right next time put the blame on me. Trust me, sirs, there must have been some little mistake, I am sure.'

"It was all of no avail. Yet we kept to it like madmen in spite of failure, and we were all as wise as so many Solomons when we talked about it together.

"Well, all that glitters is not gold, they say, and he who seemed to be the wisest of us often turned out a fool when it came to the work, while the most honest-seeming might after all be a thief, as you will see by the tale I will now tell you."

THE CANON'S YEOMAN'S TALE

THE ALCHEMIST

THERE is a certain canon of whom I have heard whose cunning would be great enough to corrupt a whole town, though it were as big as Nineveh or Rome, or Troy, or Alexandria, or any other three put together. No man, even if he wrote for a thousand years, could tell of all this canon's subtlety and falseness. He has only to speak to a man to wheedle him out of his senses, and though he has beguiled many a one ere now, and will beguile many more, nevertheless people are still ignorant enough to flock to make his acquaintance and be taken in by him.

"But you must not think," said the Yeoman gravely, breaking off for a moment, "that I mean this canon to stand as a type of all canons; God forbid that a whole community should get a bad name from one man's folly! I do not mean to slander canons in general, but only to show what is amiss, for you know that there may be one traitor even among the best of men. As for this canon who is the subject of my tale, my tongue is too feeble to describe all his wickedness; still, I will do my best that it may be a warning to you."

"Is this canon of whom you tell your master who has just left us?" asked the Host.

"No, my master was a cunning and treacherous rogue, as even my poor discolored cheeks show by blushing when you speak of him; but this canon was a hundred times more subtle than he,

and what I will tell you is only one little one of all his tricks.

"There was a certain salaried priest living in London who was very well off for money. He made himself so pleasant to the good-wife of the house where he lodged that she charged him nothing for board, and let him take whatever clothes he liked from her store, however rich or gay, so that he had enough silver and to spare for spending as he wished.

"One day the crafty canon came into his chamber.

" 'Lend me a mark,' * he asked, 'for just three days. I will be sure to pay you back in good time. If I do not, why, I give you leave to hang me by the neck.'

"The priest was nothing loth, and gave him a mark with all speed, and he took his leave and went away. On the third day he brought the money punctually and repaid the priest, who was very glad to have it back again.

" 'I am always ready,' he said in his joy, 'to lend a friend a noble or two, especially when he is so true to his promise as never to put off the day of payment; I can never refuse such a man.'

" 'I would not be so false as to delay in repaying you,' said the crafty canon. 'That would be against my nature, for truth is a thing that I will always hold by until the day when I creep into the grave. No man was ever sorry for lending me gold or silver, and I have never been untrue to anyone. And now,' he added, 'since you have been so good to me, and have treated me so kindly, I will show you some of my secrets to repay you, and if you care to learn them, I will teach you some of the ways of science. I will do a master-stroke ere I leave you.'

" 'Indeed,' said the priest, 'will you? Pray do so.'

* A coin worth about $3.25.

" 'As you will,' answered the canon. 'I will not do anything against your wish.'

" The priest knew nothing of the canon's roguery, and was altogether deceived by his artful politeness and promises, and his cunning offers of friendly service.

" 'Let your servant go and fetch some quicksilver as speedily as possible,' said the canon—'two or three ounces of it. When he has brought it I will show you a marvel the like of which you never yet saw.'

" 'It shall be done as you say, sir,' answered the priest, and sent his man in haste on the errand. When the quicksilver arrived the servant was set to work to bring coals to make a fire, and the canon produced a little crucible from the folds of his garments.

" 'Take this vessel,' he said to the priest, 'and put in it an ounce of quicksilver, for now it is time for you to learn science and become a philosopher. There are not many men to whom I would show so great a secret as this, for what I am going to do is to work upon this quicksilver in such a manner that it will turn before your very eyes into real refined silver, as pure and good as any you carry in your purse; and I shall accomplish this by means of a certain powder, very dear and rare, which I have with me. Let your man leave the room, and shut the door fast, for we can have no spies upon such a secret as this.'

"Everything was done as the canon ordered, and the priest set the crucible with the quicksilver in it on the fire, and fell to blowing up the flames busily. The canon cast into the crucible a powder made of chalk or powdered glass, or something else quite worthless, for it was only meant as a blind to deceive the priest.

" 'Pile the coals and charcoal all round and over the crucible,' he said. 'To show the regard I have for you, you shall yourself with your own hands do the greater part of this marvel.'

" 'Thank you,' answered the priest, glad to be taken into the canon's confidence, as he thought.

"But while the priest was busily tending the fire the canon took out of his pocket a carefully-prepared lump of beech-wood charcoal, which had a hole in it containing about an ounce of silver filings. The hole was stopped up with wax.

" 'You are not arranging the fire aright,' said the canon, holding the lump of charcoal concealed in his hand. 'I will soon see to it. Let me come for a moment, for I see you are hot with your work, and would like to wipe your face.'

"As the priest was wiping his face, and could not see clearly what was done to the fire, the canon laid his charcoal well over the crucible, and covered it up with other pieces of coal and charcoal. Then he began to blow the fire vigorously till it flamed and burnt up furiously, so that the wax in the beechen charcoal was melted, and the silver filings fell out of the hole into the crucible.

"Meanwhile the canon and the priest sat down and feasted, so as to let the fire cool, and at length they looked at the result of their work. The priest was amazed when he saw the silver filings, for of course he had noticed no difference between the extra piece of charcoal and the rest.

"As soon as the canon saw that the time was ripe for another trick, he said to the priest: 'I know that you have not such a thing as a silver ingot. Go out now and get a piece of chalk, and I will make you an ingot out of it. Bring also a bowl or pan full of water. But perhaps to prevent you thinking that I

am preparing some trick in your absence, I had best come with you.'

"So they went out together, and presently came back with all that was required. The canon took the chalk and scraped it into the shape of an ingot which he had hidden in his robes; the real ingot was of silver, an ounce or so in weight. He threw the chalk-stone into the crucible, and managed to put in the silver ingot also without the priest observing it. Then after a time he turned the whole contents of the crucible into the pan of water, and called to the priest: 'Look in the bowl! Put your hand in and grope, and you will find silver, I expect.'

"The priest put his hand in, and of course brought out the bar of silver.

"'A blessing on you, Sir Canon!' he cried joyously. 'If you will be so kind as to teach me all this noble science and its subtlety, I will serve you as well as ever I can.'

"'Well,' said the canon, 'try this experiment a second time, that you may watch it and learn it carefully, and some other day, when I am not here, you may try it for yourself. Take another ounce of quicksilver, and do as you did the first time.'

"The covetous priest needed no second order, but fell to blowing the fire again, having put the crucible and quicksilver in the midst. Meanwhile the canon brought out a long stick which he had ready for the purpose; the end of it was hollow, and in it were put silver filings, the hole being stopped up with wax. The canon cast in a powder, and began to poke the fire with the stick till the wax was melted and the silver dropped out.

"Once more the poor deluded priest was overjoyed, and offered himself as a servant for life to the canon.

"'Yes,' said the canon complacently, but with a meaning

which the priest could not then understand, 'though I am poor I am clever; but there is more to come. Have you any copper?'

" 'Yes, sir, I think so,' answered the priest.

" 'If not, buy some,' said the canon.

"The priest procured some copper, and they weighed it; it came to about an ounce. It was put in the crucible, and the canon cast in a powder while the priest tended the fire, stooping low over the coals. The canon slipped a piece of silver into the crucible, and afterwards turned the whole again into the pan, and once more the priest groped and found the silver.

"The canon thought that he had done enough to get what he wanted out of the priest; he had worked each trick twice, and it only remained to test the silver which he had pretended to make.

" 'Let us go to some silversmith with this metal,' he said to the priest, 'and find out if it really is silver.'

"So they went and had the silver tested, and were told that it was good metal. And now the priest was at the height of his joy; he was as glad as a nightingale in May or a bird at sunrise, and no gay knight was ever more eager to do deeds of prowess for the honor of his lady than this priest was to get from the canon the recipe for making the powder which had done such wonders, and he begged him to say how much he should pay to learn it.

" 'Well,' answered the canon, 'it is very expensive, I warn you, for except myself and a certain friar no one else in England knows how to make the powder.'

" 'No matter,' said the priest, 'for Heaven's sake tell me what I am to pay.'

" 'It is very dear, as I said,' replied the other, 'but if you *will*

have it you must pay me forty pounds for the secret; and if it were not that you have done me a kindness you would have had to pay much more.'

"The priest somehow collected forty pounds and gave them to the canon, who in return provided him with a long parchment, which he said contained the recipe. "I do not wish to lose anything,' he added, 'and so I beg you to keep this secret. If men knew that I could do these wonders they would be so jealous that they would kill me.'

"'Heaven forbid!' answered the priest. 'I would rather spend all I have, and not use this precious recipe, than that you should meet with such a fate!'

"'Well, good luck befall you, and farewell!' said the canon.

"With that he went his way, and the priest never set eyes on him again. But when the priest came to examine his recipe and tried to make silver with its aid, all his toil came to nothing, and he found that he had been tricked.

"Let this, then, be a warning to you all," ended the Yeoman, "never to meddle with alchemy, or with those who are forever seeking to find the philosopher's stone which will turn all things into gold. It is Heaven's will that that stone shall not be found, and if you search for it you will never thrive. My tale is ended."

A QUARREL AND A MISHAP

SOON after this the pilgrims reached a little town close under Blean Forest, near Canterbury, called Bob-up-and-Down. As they were passing through it the Host caught sight of the Cook, who was overcome with sleep, rolling from side to side on his horse, and in great danger of falling off.

"Ho, ho!" cried the Host, "will someone wake our comrade behind there? He is asleep; he will fall from his horse, and any thief might rob him. Can it be a Cook of London that I see sleeping thus? Make him come forward, and let us look at him. He shall tell us another tale, or pay the penalty which he knows well enough. Wake up, Cook! Why are you slumbering in the day-time?"

The Cook's face was all pale, and he answered drowsily: "I am so heavy with sleep that I would rather have a nap than anything you could give me."

"Well," the Manciple broke in, "I acquit you of your tale, Cook. Who wants to hear a story from him? Look at his dazed eyes, and his mouth gaping as if he would swallow us all! See how unsteady he is on his horse! How would you like to go tilting at the quintain now, Cook? You would fall off before you reached it, I warrant!"

The quintain was a cross-bar with a broad, flat surface at one end and a sand-bag at the other; it spun on a pivot at the top of a pole, and men used to tilt at the broad end (or fan) with lances, showing their skill in avoiding the sand-bag as it swung round when the fan was struck; it was a common pastime in Chaucer's day. A quintain is still to be seen at Offham, in Kent, some thirty miles or so from where the pilgrims now were.

The Cook was so angry at the Manciple's taunting words that his rage made him speechless, and he could find no words to answer him, but only nodded his head furiously, and in his wrath he swayed to and fro so violently that the horse threw him, and he fell to the ground.

The pilgrims picked him up, and got him on horseback again with great pains, shoving him this way and that to make him

stay on. At last they got his unwieldy body fixed in the saddle, and the Host turned to speak to the Manciple.

A manciple, you must know, was an officer who had charge of the food of a college or of one of the Inns of Court, and had to order victuals for all their meals. The one who went with the pilgrims was a model of what such men could be, and his accounts were always correct, with a balance on the right side, whether he paid ready money or took his goods on credit. Many of his masters—for he had thirty or more of them, all of whom he found time to serve—were clever enough to manage any sort of business, and yet this manciple contrived to befool them all.

"It is no use to ask the Cook for a tale," said Harry Bailly to him, when the Cook was once more safely on his horse; "he will have trouble enough to stay where he is, and, besides, he has a cold in his head, and does nothing but grunt and puff. But you should not have spoken so rudely to him, Sir Manciple. Remember, he is a cook, and may be able to pay you back some day, when you come to buy the food which he is to roast or bake. He might speak up about little things in your business, and make you be careful to spend your money honestly."

"That would be a great misfortune," answered the Manciple. "No, I must not quarrel with him; I would rather pay for that great horse of his than make an enemy of him. See, I have here some very good wine in a flask. Perhaps the Cook will drink some of it; he would not say no."

The Cook was nothing loth. He drank the wine, and thanked the Manciple as well as he could; and so the quarrel ended. Then the Host asked the Manciple for a tale, which he began forthwith.

THE MANCIPLE'S TALE

HOW CROWS BECAME BLACK

WHEN Phœbus, the god of light, dwelt formerly on earth (as old books tell us), he was the finest and comeliest man in all this world, and the best archer. He slew the serpent Python as it lay asleep in the sun, and did many another noble deed with his good bow; moreover, he could play on every instrument of music so surpassingly that it was a delight to hear his melody. In fact, he was the seemliest man that ever was since the world began, full of gentleness and honor and perfect uprightness.

"He kept at home in his house a crow, in a cage, and taught it to speak, as men sometimes teach jays. This crow was white as a snow-white swan, and could imitate any man's speech and talk well himself; and he could also sing as merrily and well as any nightingale.

"Phœbus had a wife whom he loved more than life itself, and night and day did his best to please her and do her reverence, thinking that he was high in her favor, and that she loved no one else. But he was deceived in her, for, in spite of his comeliness, she really loved another, a man of little repute, worth nothing by comparison with Phœbus, whom she had married only for his position, though in truth she pretended to be loving enough to him.

"It happened that the white crow one day saw the woman and her lover conversing very fondly together when Phœbus was

absent. He made no sign, and said never a word to them then; but when Phœbus came home he began crying out loudly and calling him names.

" 'What evil song is that that you are singing, bird?' asked Phœbus, startled. 'You used to sing so merrily that my heart rejoiced to hear you; but what is this?'

" 'I sing aright,' answered the crow. 'Phœbus, for all your uprightness, for all your beauty and gentleness, for all your songs and minstrelsy, you are deceived; you are despised by your wife, who loves a mean fellow of poor estate, not worth a gnat by comparison with you!'

"The crow made Phœbus know for sure that his words were true, and Phœbus, his heart full of sorrow and anger, set an arrow in his bow, and shot his wife; and then in his woe he broke up all his instruments of music—his harp, lute, cittern, and psaltery—and then his bow and arrows. But when he had done this in the heat of his anger, he grew cool again, and turned to the crow (who was watching the effect of his rash words), and spoke thus:

" 'Traitor! with your scorpion's tongue you have brought me to confusion. Dear wife—you who were so true to me—you are lying dead, all guiltless, I vow. Why did I trust such a hasty rumor as this false crow told me? Where was my wit? where my discretion? You false thief of a bird, I will pay you out! You used to sing like a nightingale; now you shall lose all your song, and with it every one of your white feathers. Never in your life shall you be able to speak again; you and your offspring forever shall be black, and shall have no sweet voice, but shall only cry as a warning against tempests and rain, in token that it was through you that my wife was slain.'

"With that he laid hold of the crow, and pulled out every one of his white feathers, and took away his voice and speech, and made him black, and flung him out of doors; and for that reason all crows have ever since been black and harsh-voiced.

"Take heed, therefore, how you speak about other people, sirs. Just as a sword cuts an arm off, so does a sharp tongue sever friendship; keep a guard on it, then, and remember the crow."

THE PARSON

BY the end of the Manciple's tale the afternoon was drawing to a close, and with it the journey to Canterbury. It was nearly four o'clock when the pilgrims reached a little village through which their road lay, and the Host spoke again to them.

"We want only one tale more now, sirs," he said. "My task is nearly over for this half of our journey. Sir Priest," he went on, turning to the Parson, "it is time that you told a story. Open your wallet of learning, and let us see what you can give us. You ought to be able to tell a fine tale."

But the Parson would not fall in with the jests and mirth of which the other pilgrims were so fond. "You get no tale out of me," he answered. "Why should I sow chaff for you when I could as well sow wheat? If you would like an honest discourse on virtue and goodness, to show you the way on that perfect, glorious pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem, I can give it you; but as for a story, I am a man of the South Country, and you know that we Southerners cannot spin out sounding rhymes—'rum, ram, ruf'—as endlessly as you others do."

The good Parson meant that in his part of the country men did not want to hear or sing the jingling poems, all filled with words beginning with the same letter, which many folk liked so much. But the pilgrims were willing to hear him, none the less.

"Say what you like, Parson," the Host told him, "but lose no time in beginning. The sun will go down in a little while."

Then the Parson spoke to them as he had wished. He gave them a noble sermon to remind them to repent of their sins, and remember the purpose for which they had come on this pilgrimage; and this was a fit ending to their journey, for they saw the spires and battlements and city walls of Canterbury itself before them as he was finishing it.

AT CANTERBURY

THE CHEQUER OF THE HOOP

WHEN the pilgrims reached Canterbury, they entered the city gate, and made their way to a well-known inn called the Chequer of the Hoop. Here they stopped for the night, meaning to go the next morning to the Cathedral, and pay their vows at the shrine of St. Thomas.

On the morrow they rose in good time, and all had breakfast together. But the Pardoner found that he fared very badly, because the inn-servants paid such respect to rank that the poorer members of the company were neglected, and a Pardoner was not a very great person socially. He was passed over by the attendants, while the grander people avoided him and did not speak to him. Only one person seemed at all willing to serve him, and that was the tapstress, the girl who drew the ale and wine for the guests; and even she was too busy to do much for him, for the innkeeper was all in a bustle at receiving so many customers, and rated his servants soundly if they were not quick and diligent in their duty.

At last she managed to beckon to the Pardoner to follow her into the little taproom.

"This is my room," she said, "and here I sit by myself all alone since my husband Jenkyn Harper died. Did you know him? Ah, he was a fine man, from top to toe, and you would never find a better dancer anywhere!"

She began to weep at the thought of him, and wiped tears as big as millstones from her eyes with a corner of her clean white apron. She made such a show of grief, wailing and sighing and wringing her hands, that the Pardoner might well have been suspicious of her; but even a clever rogue can sometimes be taken in.

"You make as much noise as if you were going to die yourself," was all that he said, however. But he soon began to be overcome by her bright eyes, and presently made her a fine long speech, saying how much he admired her.

"Thank you, sir," she answered at the end of it. "You must be a very great and noble man to talk so grandly! Sit down, and let me pour you out some drink."

"Nay, it is not drink that I want," he said. "I am hungry; I have had nothing to eat yet."

"Nothing to eat!" she cried. "Ah, I can soon put that right."

With that she ran out quickly into the town, and brought back a pie, all hot, and set it before him. While he was eating it, they conversed together; she told him that her name was Kit, and talked to him so artfully that the silly Pardoner quite lost his head in admiration of her.

He looked up at her and sighed, and muttered to himself, and began to hum a love-song—"Now, love, do thou me right."

"Eat and be merry," said she, not wishing to encourage him too far. "It is only waste of time to wait for more company. Why are you so low-spirited and dull? Are you thinking of your lady-love at home?"

"Nay, my dear, it is for you only that I am sighing."

"You eat your breakfast; time enough to talk of love presently," said she.

So the Pardoner finished his meal in silence. When he had done, he rose, and threw down a groat by way of payment.

"What is this for, gentle sir?" asked the artful tapstress. "You shall not pay a penny for this little breakfast."

The Pardoner vowed that he would pay no less than a groat, good payment for those days.

"It is too much," she said, with a curtsey; "but, since you wish it, I will put the money in my purse, lest you take it amiss that I refuse your kindness."

"It is you who are kind," said the Pardoner. "If you had charged me strictly, I should have thought you unkind and disdainful and likely to forget me; but now I know that you care for me."

"You are a very good and wise man," said Kit admiringly. "I am moved to ask you a favor: I wish you could interpret a dream I had last night. I thought that I was praying in church when the parson and his clerk came up, and angrily bade me begone, and turned me out. What does that mean?"

"May it fall out well for you!" said the Pardoner fervently. "I will interpret it as well as I can. You know that very often dreams go by opposites; well, yours means that you will soon find a gay lover to console you. Pluck up heart; you shall have a husband who will wed you and love you with all his heart. The parson who put you out of church will lead you in again, and help you with all his might and main to marry. That is your dream, Kit: how do you like it?"

"Wonderfully well, i' faith; a blessing on you for explaining it!"

Then the Pardoner took his leave of her, and rejoined the other pilgrims, thinking over in his mind various plans for see-

ing more of her, while she, on the other hand, was anxious to get more money out of him somehow before he left Canterbury.

The pilgrims were now all ready to go to the Cathedral to pay their vows and make offerings of silver brooches and rings and the like, according to their means and their piety; and they set out together very decorously. At the church-door a dispute arose as to who ought to take the place of honor and enter first; but it was settled by the Knight putting forward the good Parson, who therefore went in first, followed by the rest.

The Knight and the better disposed of the company went at once to the shrine to do that for which they had come; but the Pardoner and the Miller and some others of the more disorderly pilgrims clearly had not learnt the way to conduct themselves in a church. They loitered along like stray goats, staring at the rich gifts stored in the Cathedral, and peering up at the stained-glass windows with loud exclamations of wonder and surprise.

"Look at the man in that window," said the Pardoner; "he has a quarter-staff."

"No," cried Robin Miller, "it is a spear; you can see the point."

"Peace," said the Host; "let the windows alone. Go up and give your offerings, and now that you are in good company in a sacred place, let your bad manners disappear for a little."

So they went up to the shrine, some of them still audibly disputing about the windows, and pretending to read the coats of arms emblazoned on them, after the fashion of the gentlefolk, whose duty it was to have a good knowledge of such things.

They all kissed the relics one after the other, a monk standing

by and explaining everything to them; and after the service they went round the Cathedral, and saw other famous treasures. When they had seen all the sights it was getting towards noon and nearly dinner-time, and they began to think of returning to the Chequer of the Hoop. But first they had to buy pilgrims' tokens to put in their caps and show as a sign of their journey—little flasks said to contain water mixed with the tiniest drop of blood of the martyred Thomas à Becket, or stamped images of his head, or the small bells from which the flower called "Canterbury bell" takes its name, or Canterbury brooches, and the like.

The Miller, always a dishonest knave, contrived to fill his cloak with a number of tokens which he stole from those who were selling them; and as soon as possible he and the Pardoner divided the spoils, and put them in their pouches, without anyone seeing them, as they thought.

Suddenly the Miller was startled to hear a voice whispering in his ear, "I want half."

He looked round, and saw the Summoner. "Hush!" he said, in terror; "do not speak so loud. Look at our friend the rascally Friar, how he is lowering at us under his hood! It must indeed be a secret that he would not find out, bad luck to him!"

"Amen to that!" said the Summoner. "You heard the tale he told about a Summoner. If we tell more stories on the way home, I will have no mercy on him. But I want my share in your brooches, or I will betray you."

The Miller had to give up part of his winnings, which he did with an ill grace; and they all went on proudly displaying their new tokens (the honest ones, at least) till they reached their inn, where basins were brought, and they washed in due order before sitting down to dinner.

The Host was standing for a few moments in the doorway of the house, when a stranger came riding up on a tall lean horse with a rusty bridle; he was wearing a black cloak instead of the more usual green one, and seemed thin and worn.

"Ho! Sir Dominic, Sir Clement, or whatever you call yourself!" cried the noisy Host, bluff and headstrong as ever, "you are welcome into Kent, even though your hood is threadbare and your bridle and bit poor ones, without bells or trappings. I pray you tell me your name and whence you come, and why you look so pale and worn."

"My name is John Lydgate," he answered, "and I am a monk of Bury, nearly fifty years of age. I came hither as a pilgrim for the good of my health, and to return thanks to God for the preservation of it. I am nowise ashamed of myself or my name."

The Host thanked him for his answer, and asked him to have dinner with the company from Southwark. "You are all alone," he said; "join us, and eat your fill of pudding and haggis, and, if you will, be our companion on our return to-morrow. If you will go with us, do not trouble about waking yourself early in the morning, when you go to bed; I will be sure to call all my flock in good time. That is my business, for you must know that everyone here obeys me and dares not gainsay me; and we have made a custom of telling tales on the journey, so that if you join us when we set out, you too must take your part."

Lydgate agreed, and joined the rest at their meal, which was an exceedingly merry one. The table was a large board set on trestles, well spread with food and drink. The Squire, according to the usual custom, carved before his father, and did it very dextrously. The Franklin thoroughly enjoyed his food,

and the Monk's eyes sparkled as he did his share in the feasting. The Prioress was noticeable for her delicate way of eating; she was very clean and dainty over it—not a very common thing in those days, when there were no knives and forks, and people used their fingers for their food. They ate off trenchers—large, flat plates of bread which could be themselves eaten or bestowed on the poor when done with—and the scraps were thrown freely to the dogs hanging about in expectation of them.

For a little while the pilgrims were rather silent, being, perhaps, too busy to talk; but very soon their spirits became more lively, and they made good cheer. The Host at length thought it time to speak.

"I thank you all, sirs," he said, "for being so courteous and obedient on the road to this town; you have been very good subjects to me. But you must not forget that we have to tell tales on the way back."

"And you, too, must remember, Host, that we are all to sup with you at Southwark," cried the Friar. "That is true, is it not, Sir Knight?"

"True enough," the Host at once agreed. "No witnesses to that are needed: you hold to your promise, I to mine."

"Well said, Host!" said the Knight. "I am satisfied."

"Now that we have all dined," continued the Host, "let us amuse ourselves till it is time for supper. We must go to bed early to-night, to start in good time to-morrow."

They rose from the table, and all who had fresh clothes with them put them on, and then they scattered to various places. The Knight and his son the Squire, with a few others, went to look at the fortifications of Canterbury. The Knight carefully

explained everything to his son, and pointed out the loopholes and points of vantage in the wall; and the Squire listened, and took it all in, for, though his thoughts still ran on his lady-love, he was interested and skilled in everything connected with war and arms.

As they were walking about, the Clerk took occasion to speak to the Summoner about his quarrel with the Friar.

"You ought not to be offended," said he. "All men and all trades are not perfect. There is a great deal to be said for both of you; and, besides, if the Friar knows the evils about which he speaks, he is therefore able to avoid them."

"What a good thing it is to be a Clerk!" said the Knight slyly; "he can favor both sides alike."

As for the other pilgrims, the Monk had gone off with the Parson and the Friar to visit an acquaintance of his who had long ago asked him to come and see him at Canterbury. The Wife of Bath, on the other hand, was so weary that she had no wish for further wanderings, and she went up to the Prioress and took her by the hand, saying, "Madam, will you walk with me in the inn garden to look at the flowers? Afterwards we can talk to the mistress of the house in her parlor."

So they went into the garden, which was pleasant and neatly kept, and there they talked and amused themselves all the afternoon. And now, out of all the pilgrims, only the Pardoner was left in the inn, and he had stayed behind on purpose. He went straight to the taproom as soon as the others were out of the way, and found Kit lying down.

She pretended at first not to see him, and then started up as if angry.

"You should have coughed when you came in," she cried, "to let me know that you were coming. Where are your manners?"

"Never mind, Kit," answered the Pardoner. "How have you been since I saw you last? It would go to my heart if you had not been well."

"Ah, you clever men!" sighed Kit. "By a mere look you can make us do as you please!"

They went on talking, and very soon the Pardoner told her why he had come. He wanted her to have supper with him that evening privately, and he left her his purse to provide for it. He was rather reluctant to part with his money, but consoled himself with the thought that very likely he could pick her pocket and steal it back again. Then he left her, and soon found some of the other pilgrims, whom he joined without saying where he had been.

It was a very cheerful company that sat down to supper that night. The Knight was appointed by the Host marshal of the hall, and it was his duty to see that the pilgrims sat down at table in their proper rank, without undue noise or brawling. They ate a good, hearty meal, and after it most of them went to bed. But the Miller and the Cook and a few others sat up late drinking the good ale of the inn, and the Pardoner thought that he would never be able to get away to his own supper; for he had sat down and eaten a little with the rest to avoid any awkward questions.

He began to sing at length, hoping that Kit would hear his merry note and not grow impatient. But his friend the Summoner, and the Reeve, the Yeoman, and the Manciple as well, all joined in, and their merriment increased into an uproar, un-

til at length the Host and the Merchant came down and hurried them all off to bed.

And now at last the Pardoner managed to slip away by hiding himself behind a chest till the lights were out, the others thinking that he had gone to bed. Then he made his way in the dark to the tapstress's room; he could see a light under the door, and longed for the good supper which was awaiting him within.

But Kit had tricked him, as she had intended all along. His supper was already being eaten by her and two of her friends—her real lover and Jack the ostler—and they were making merry over a fine goose which the Pardoner's money had bought. Kit had told the others that the Pardoner might presently appear. "But if he comes up here making a noise," she added, "I pray you dub him a knight with your cudgel."

"I will give him a supper he will not want to have again," said the ostler.

The Pardoner came groping upstairs in the dark, and tried to open the door, but found it shut. Then he fell to making a noise like the whining of a dog, to let Kit know that he was there. A man's voice shouted to him from inside to go away. He guessed by the voice that something had gone amiss with his scheme and knocked again, vowing vengeance secretly the while if he had been cheated.

"What dog is that whining?" said Kit's lover, pretending not to understand the strange noises, and enjoying his meal.

"It is that false thief of a Pardoner," said the tapstress.

"I am no thief," cried the Pardoner outside. "Give me my staff; I left it in this room." He meant to get inside by an excuse which would serve.

"Go to bed quietly," said the lover. Then he opened the door quickly, and struck at the Pardoner with his staff, hitting him two great blows on the forehead and the back.

"Who is that?" called out Jack Ostler, pretending to hear the noise for the first time.

"There is a thief here," answered the other.

"A thief? Well done! Have you caught him? Break his bones if you have. I will hold the door so that he will not get out."

"If we had a light, we might catch him," said Kit's lover, for the Pardoner had slipped away in the dark.

"Yes, but we must not wake the mistress; she would be terribly angry," answered the ostler. "You go and look for him; he cannot have gone far. Try the dust-heap."

But the other did not want to leave the ostler alone with Kit and the supper.

"No, you go," he replied; "you know the way better than I."

"No, you hit him; it is none of my business. But look, let us both go—you one side of the house, I the other. Mind the pots and pans which are on your side."

"Oho!" thought the Pardoner, overhearing this—for he had not gone far, and dared not seek his own room, for fear of rousing the other pilgrims who shared it with him—"are there pots and pans about? It is well to know that."

He groped about, and soon found a huge ladle. Presently Kit's lover came stealing along in the dark. The Pardoner swung his ladle round, and hit him such a blow on the nose that his eyes watered for a week afterwards. The ostler heard the

noise, and came in a hurry to help his friend; but he trod on the edge of a pan, which tilted up and broke his shin.

"By St. Amyas!" he muttered, as loud as he dared, "I will not spare the rogue when I catch him!"

"Where is the thief?" asked the other.

"I know not," answered the ostler. "How shall we find him?"

They searched a little longer, but were unsuccessful. Happily for the Pardoner, there was no moon, and the house was very dark.

"Let us go to bed," said the tapstress's lover at length. "Make the gate fast. We can catch him to-morrow; besides, I hit him twice."

"Very well," answered the ostler; and they went to bed, leaving the Pardoner in peace. But he dared not go upstairs again, for fear of rousing the whole house and being suspected of theft. His face was bleeding and his back very sore from the blows he had received, and he was very hungry and tired. He wandered about trying to find some safe place to lie down for the night, and at length came upon the dog-kennel, where a huge Welsh dog was kept. He crept in, hoping that the beast would let him lie quietly there; but the dog was a fierce, bad-tempered brute, and in spite of a big log which was tied to him to keep him still, he flew at the Pardoner, and bit him in the thigh. However, the poor man stayed where he was, only moving a little farther from the dog; and there he spent a most uncomfortable night.

THE JOURNEY HOME

JOHN LYDGATE'S TALE

THE next morning the Host's rallying cry was heard early, and the Pardoner, you may be sure, was not late in rising. He got out of the kennel, and managed to wash and make himself tidy at the pump without being seen; he joined the rest as though nothing had happened, though he had a terrible headache, and his notes, when he sang, were weak and low. As they left the inn, he got well into the middle of the company, and kept his face turned away from the ostler, who was on the watch; and so he got away safely, with only the loss of his purse and a few bruises.

It was a lovely spring morning when the pilgrims rode away from the Chequer of the Hoop. Most of them were in the highest spirits, but the Pardoner was very uneasy till they had passed the city gates. He might have been sure that Kit and her friends would be quite satisfied with merely keeping his purse, but he was not over-brave, and fancied that everyone in the inn was still looking for him.

The sun was shining, and the birds were singing merrily as they set out. They had hardly ridden a bowshot beyond the walls of Canterbury when Harry Bailly leaned forward and caught at Lydgate's bridle, calling on the new member of the company for the first tale of the return journey.

"Now, Master John," he cried, "make merry and tell us a story—no sermon, but a tale of mirth and gladness."

Lydgate complied a little unwillingly.

"Sirs," said he, "since you have let me join you, and your ruler, the Host, bids me do my duty and give you a tale, I will tell you one as well as my poor wit will let me. It shall be about the royal city of Thebes, and how it was destroyed in the days when Greece was filled with famous heroes and warlike kings."

THE DESTRUCTION OF THEBES

I.—Edippus the Parricide

THE mighty town of Thebes was begun and built in times of great antiquity. Some say that it was the handiwork of the good King Amphion, and that he wrought it only by the power of his music, for he played so sweetly and harmoniously upon his harp that the stones moved of themselves, and the walls were raised without the craft of any man's hand. But others aver that this story means nothing more than that Amphion was very eloquent and smooth-tongued, so that the 'song' of his fair and gentle speech, as one might say, built the city by persuading neighboring kings to lend him aid. And that may well be true, for by humble and courteous words a prince can win love from the hearts of his people more readily than by gold or pride or tyranny.

"There are yet others who say that long before Amphion came King Cadmus built the city, obtaining the land by bargaining for as much earth as a bull's hide would enclose; for he took a hide, and cut it into thin strips, which, when they were laid end to end, enclosed a space great enough for a city. And they say that the name of the whole country in which Thebes is—to wit, Bœotia—arose from this device of its first king.* Cadmus, however (so this story runs), could not keep his kingdom, for Amphion came and, by his valor, drove him out.

"But all this is none of my story. You will find the whole

* Because the name "Bœotia" resembles the Greek word for a bull.

matter in books written by learned clerks, and to them I leave it, for my purpose is to tell of the destruction of Thebes many generations after its foundation.

"After the reign of Amphion, whether he founded Thebes or not, the kingdom was handed down from father to son, one after another, in an unbroken line, and the city grew continually more glorious and powerful and proud, until there came to the throne a king named Laïus; and in his day men might have seen, had they known it, the first signs of the downfall of Thebes.

"Laïus and his wife Jocasta reigned wisely and prosperously, but for many a long year they had no son. At length, however, Laïus did sacrifice humbly to the gods Apollo and Jupiter, and to the three goddesses Pallas and Juno and Diana. His prayer was granted, and a son was born. But it was thought necessary at the birth of the child to consult all the philosophers and wise men and magicians, that they might by their arts foretell the boy's fate; and when these augurs and diviners had cast his horoscope and made their calculations, they found at last that the child, if he lived, was fated to kill his own father Laïus; nor was there any escape from this doom.

"King Laïus, when he heard this dread prophecy, was bowed down with grief and fear; he knew not how to provide against the terrible death which was to come upon him by the hands of his own son, and at length he made up his mind to do what was wont to be done in those days with deformed or sickly children who would be a trouble to rear—to take the babe and leave him all helpless and alone in some wild spot where either he would soon die of cold and hunger or the wild beasts would devour him.

"Laïus could find no other way to save his own life and the

honor of his kingdom, and the cruel deed was carried out. The boy was taken from Jocasta, who obeyed the king's command with woeful heart and piteous looks, and he was carried without delay to a forest not very far away, and there left exposed. But at the last the men who had charge of the matter, moved by the beauty of the little babe, pierced his feet, and tied him by a cord put through the wounds to a bough of a tree, beyond the reach of wild beasts; for they might not slay him outright, and they thought that thus he would either die more speedily or perhaps be found by some stranger before any animal could succeed in reaching him.

"It fell out as they hoped. King Polibon of Arcadia chanced to come that way while hunting, and his attendants heard the child's cries. They cut the thongs which bound him, and brought him before the king, who took him home to Arcadia. There the boy was brought up at the king's Court, and the name Edippus, or Swollenfoot, was given to him, because the cords had injured his feet and made him lame.

"Edippus was treated as the King's heir, for Polibon had no son of his own, and as he grew up he became proud and overbearing, not knowing that he was an outcast whose lineage no man could discover, but thinking that he was really the offspring of the great King of Arcadia. But one day he quarreled fiercely with a companion, who at length turned on him and upbraided him.

" 'What reason have you to be so proud, Edippus?' he asked scornfully. 'You act as though you were lord and master of us all, and descended of royal blood, whereas you are in truth no kin to Polibon at all, but only a babe unknown, found in a forest long years ago.'

"Edippus turned pale, and was so amazed that he could give no answer, for he had never yet been told the true tale of his birth. He went to the King, and spoke with him secretly, begging him to tell him whose son he was. Polibon at first, out of the kindness of his heart, tried to evade the questions, but Edippus vowed that if he were not told he would straightway go and roam over all the world till he discovered the truth. And at length Polibon told all that he knew—how Edippus was found abandoned and tied by the feet to a tree, with no sign or mark to show whose son he was, or why he was treated thus.

"When Edippus heard this story he could no longer bear to stay in Arcadia, but longed to go forth and learn more. Polibon prayed him to stay, and succeed to the kingdom at his death, but all in vain. Edippus left him, and rushed to the temple of Apollo to ask how he should unravel the secret of his birth.

"In the temple of Apollo there was set a statue of the god, mounted in a chariot of gold, fiery bright and glistening, and within this statue dwelt an unclean spirit, which by false and wicked arts gave cruel answers to all prayers. This spirit it was that drove Edippus upon his fate, for when he had prayed and done the customary rites he was bidden by the spirit in a terrible voice to go to Thebes; there he would learn for certain what was his lineage.

"Edippus did as he was told. He set out for Thebes at once, and journeyed day after day till he came to a rich castle named Pilotes, not far from Thebes. There King Laïus chanced to be holding a tournament with his own knights and any others who wished to throw down or take up a challenge. Edippus was willing enough to do battle, and there, at the gate of the lists, in a great press of men, he unwittingly slew Laïus, his own father,

and thus began the woes which ended in the destruction of the great city of Thebes.

"Edippus knew that he had killed the king, but not that it was his own father; and though no one could tell for certain, except Edippus himself, whose hand it was that dealt the blow which slew Laïus, he deemed it well to withdraw himself, and remain hidden for a time until the anger of the people at the death of their king should have abated. So while the Thebans held solemn funeral rites, and burnt the body of Laïus according to custom, and built him a rich sepulcher, Edippus was going thence with all speed; and being a stranger to that country, in a little time he had lost himself in a wild waste desert that lay near a mountain upon the sea-coast.

"In this place there was the lair of a terrible monster called the Sphinx, which had the head and face of a maiden, but the body and feet of a fierce lion. This Sphinx ravaged all the country round Thebes and struck terror into the city, for whenever a man passed it came down from its mountain lair and set him a riddle to answer, and if the man could not find the answer the Sphinx tore him in pieces.

"Edippus knew nothing of this. Suddenly as he rode by the mountain he was aware of the monster rushing down upon him.

"'It is a great joy to me,' said the Sphinx, for she could speak like any other human being, 'that you have come to my home to try your skill. Be wise and wary, and win the prize, for life and death are staked between us.'

"Then the monster set Edippus this riddle:

> "'There is a beast upon the earth
> Which goes on four legs at its birth;
> But as it grows in years and might

It walks and stands on two upright,
And as it ends its little day
On three. What beast is this, I pray.'

"Edippus set his wits to work, and thought deeply over the riddle, and at length gave this answer:

" 'This beast is man, who at his birth
Goes crawling four-legged on the earth;
But as he grows in years and might
He walks and stands on two upright;
While as he ends his little day
A staff helps two-legs on his way.'

"The monster was all amazed to find a man skillful enough to answer her cunning question, and as she stood dismayed and disconsolate Edippus drew his sword and smote off her head.

"The news soon spread over the land that the Sphinx was slain, and when Edippus, according to his plan, returned to Thebes, it became known that it was he who killed the monster. He was welcomed royally, and when the people saw that he was a seemly knight, well-favored in the sight of all men, they were fain to make him their king, for Laïus had left no son behind him that anyone knew of. The lords of Thebes held a parliament, and set to work to treat with the Queen Jocasta to know if she would continue to reign, and wed the stranger-knight who had delivered them from the Sphinx.

"Jocasta consented, and great preparations were made for the marriage ceremony. But one day, as Edippus talked with the queen, he perceived that she had some great sorrow hidden secretly in her heart, and he asked her what it was.

"She sighed and turned away. At last she spoke sadly: 'My

lord,' she said, 'now that Laïus, my king, is dead and has left no heir, I am filled with sad memories of my dear son who should have been reigning now.' And she told him how her only son had been left to die in the wilds by reason of the prophecy which said that he should kill his own father.

"At that Edippus gave a great cry, and fell a-trembling. He knew that he, too, had been exposed as this child was, and now he knew also that he had taken his father's life in the tournament at Pilotes. Jocasta saw shame and terror rising in his face, and asked him what ailed him; and at length he burst out into the whole story, saying that the oracle had truly told him that he should discover his lineage at Thebes.

"I cannot tell you all that passed between these two when they learnt thus the awful doom that had befallen them, nor will I repeat to you how Edippus very soon, bowed down with grief, fell into a kind of madness, and how his sons afterwards despised him and mocked him, until at length, when he was become an old man, in despair and rage he plucked out his own eyes, and they set upon him and killed him.

"Thus Edippus died, and his sons Ethiocles and Polimite took the kingdom; and now the doom of Thebes was coming swiftly upon the city, as I will show you when we get to the other side of this little valley."

Lydgate broke off his tale here, as the pilgrims were going downhill into Boughton-under-Blean. At the village they stopped and rested, and about nine o'clock took the road again. The sun was well up in the heavens by now, shining like silver through the little pearls of dew on the green leaves, and a soft west wind made the air fresh and cool for the pilgrims as they listened to the monk of Bury continuing his tale.

II.—The Treachery of Ethiocles

"When Edippus was dead his sons Ethiocles and Polimite fell out as to who should succeed him, and neither would abate one jot of his claims, though all the lords and commons of the land strove to assuage their quarrel. At length, however, peace was made between them on condition that each should reign in turn for a year. While one was king the other could go where he pleased, so as he came not to Thebes. With this they were fain to be content, and Ethiocles began to reign for the first year, he being the elder of the two.

"Polimite took his way out of Thebes all alone, armed from head to foot, and riding a royal steed. He went by byways and secret paths, for he feared that his brother Ethiocles, now that he was in power, might treacherously waylay and slay him. As he rode in a wild forest by the sea, full of hills and high mountains and cruel rocks, where fierce beasts lay hid, a great storm suddenly came on; the sea roared, a wind and tempest arose, and the rain beat down mercilessly, and Polimite, uncertain of his way in that deserted land, terrified, too, by the beasts which, maddened by the storm, were raging all around him, spurred his horse on recklessly, and rode without knowing whither until at last he came to the gate of a great city, where he drew rein.

"The city to which he had come thus blindly was Argos, and its king at this time Adrastus, son of Cholon, the wisest and best king in all Greece. He had no son, but two daughters, named Argivé and Deiphilé, and his hope was that he should win for them noble husbands who would strengthen his kingdom and rule when he was dead. But of late he had been troubled by a

strange dream, in which he seemed to see his daughters wedded to a wild boar and a fierce lion both on one day.

"Polimite, as I have told, came to the gate of Argos, and rode through the town till he came to the entrance of the king's palace, a great arched portal built of huge stones, whereon were written the dooms or laws decreed by the king. The porter was asleep, and Polimite could not wake him because of the howling of the tempest; so he alighted from his steed and lay down there in the porch and slept.

"While he slept there came to the palace gate yet another knight seeking refuge from the storm. The new-comer's name was Tideus, son of the King of Callidoine, a most valorous, gentle, and courteous knight. He was exiled from his country because he had slain his brother Menelippe by letting an arrow slip carelessly from his bow.

"Tideus strode into the porch of the gate as Polimite had done.

"But the noise of his entrance woke Polimite, who started up fiercely, and cried out to know who it was.

" 'I am driven here by the stress of the storm and the night,' answered Tideus humbly and graciously. 'I come here because I can go nowhere else. I have no evil intent, and mean you no harm.'

"But Polimite fell into a rage.

" 'You shall not abide here!' he cried angrily. 'I was here before you, and I will keep this lodging all night for all that you can do.'

" 'It is not courteous, but rather it is ungentle, to keep me out,' Tideus replied, showing no resentment at Polimite's rough words. 'You seem a knight of gentle birth, and I think that

you have no more right to this place for a lodging than I. It can do you no hurt to let me shelter here.'

"But fair words were of no avail. The more gently Tideus spoke the more Polimite's passion grew, and there was nothing for it but that they should fight.

"They rode a course on horseback, and at the first shock both their spears were broken. Then they fell to with swords, fighting so furiously that the whole palace was roused by the clash and din of their arms. King Adrastus himself awoke, and hearing the noise, called in haste for his chamberlains and squires, and bade them find the cause of it.

"When the two knights were discovered fighting the King came down and ordered them to cease, saying that it was folly to put two lives in jeopardy over so little a thing, and all the more on such a dark, stormy night when neither could see fairly.

"When Tideus and Polimite—or rather Polimite alone, for Tideus had only fought to save his life—grew calmer, they saw how rash and hotheaded their quarrel had been, and at the king's bidding they made peace, and from that day they were friends, true as steel to one another to their lives' end.

"When they were reconciled, Adrastus, having heard from them their noble lineage, held a great feast in their honor, and they reveled far into the night. But when the feasting was over Adrastus began to think further of these two knights, and then again of his daughters. In his sleep that night his dreams were troubled, and he continually called to mind his former vision of the boar and the lion.

"On the morrow, full of uncertain thoughts, he went to the temple of Apollo in Argos to pray and to seek advice, and the god bade him hie homeward at once, and look at the shields of

the two knights, for thus he should learn what he wished to know. He hastened back and did as he was commanded, and there on the shields he saw the interpretation of his dream, for on Polimite's shield was the sign of a fierce lion, and on Tideus's that of a wild boar. Adrastus doubted no longer, but sent for the knights, and spoke to them apart.

"'I do not doubt, sirs,' he began, 'that it is fresh and green in your thought how God's ordinance has brought you both to this land together, and I see that there is a special purpose in your coming.' He told them of his dream and the answer of the god, and went on: 'My desire is to make an alliance in marriage between you and my daughters, if your hearts are in accord with this plan. You shall have half of my kingdom while I live, and when I am in the grave the whole shall be divided between you. I am old now, and long for rest and ease; younger men than I must defend this realm against its foes. If, then, my purpose is pleasing to you, delay not to answer me.'

"Tideus replied, as became a gentle knight, with bowed head and courteous words, thanking Adrastus, and agreeing with his desire, and Polimite did the same. Then Tideus made Polimite choose which of the princesses he would wed, and Polimite chose Argivé.

"So Tideus married Deiphilé and Polimite Argivé, and the wedding was royally celebrated with great rejoicings and splendor. But when Ethiocles at Thebes heard of it he became jealous and afraid, fearing that Polimite, now grown so powerful, would drive him out of Thebes utterly, and he called all his vassals and allies and retainers, and told them plainly that he would not rest content till his brother Polimite was slain; and he began to take counsel to that end.

"In the meanwhile his year of rule ran out, and Polimite considered how he should best take over his succession in Thebes. He did not wish to go armed with a great force, for thus the citizens might become suspicious of him; but he feared to go alone, knowing that his brother was treacherous and crafty. Therefore he consulted King Adrastus, who held that it were best to send another knight first, to be, as it were, a herald of his coming, and to discover whether Ethiocles was minded to leave Thebes peaceably; let someone go, therefore, and speak with Ethiocles for him.

"Tideus, hearing this, said that he would gladly do his brother (for so he considered Polimite) this service; but Adrastus and Polimite were both anxious to dissuade him, for the task was likely to be full of peril to any knight, however valiant. Nevertheless Tideus persisted, and having persuaded them, made ready to set out. But Deiphilé, his wife, mourned sorely when she saw him go.

"He journeyed to Thebes with all speed, and in a few days' time saw the high towers of the city before him. He entered the gates, and having asked where the King's palace stood, went straight thither. He strode bold as a lion into the hall where Ethiocles and all his council were sitting.

" 'Sir,' he said to the king, 'you doubtless have in mind that when the old king Edippus died you and your brother strove for the crown, and that you agreed in the end to rule each in turn for a year. Since your year's reign now draws to its end, Polimite, your brother, requires you of right to acquit yourself as a true knight, and by keeping your oath to avoid strife and war. You are to leave this city, therefore, and let Polimite reign in your stead for a year. Do this, and all Greece will praise you for

your truth-keeping. I have said my message, and I look for your answer.'

"When Tideus had thus told his tale, Ethiocles, downcast and pale, angry at heart but courteous in outward mien, answered him: 'I marvel that my brother desires to reign in Thebes, seeing the great plenty and power which he has won for himself in Argos. I think the lordship and dominion of this little town of Thebes should be of small account with him now. I trust to him as a brother to help me in any time of need, and I look to him, of his graciousness, not to deprive me of this my poor possession.'

"Thus far he spoke smoothly and courteously, but now he could contain his jealous anger no longer, and broke out furiously: 'There is no bond between Polimite and me; there is no pledge that he should govern as he claims either for a year or for a day. He shall not have so much as half a foot of land in Thebes. Let him keep what he has won for himself, for I will reign in Thebes till I die, even though all my enemies should strive together against me. Let him call together all his friends and councilors: I dread him not. You show yourself proud and bold to take upon you this haughty message, but I say to you that it is folly and presumption, and he shall have no land nor rule here while the walls of this city stand. That is my answer; take it to him.'

"Tideus was amazed at this rough and treacherous reply. For a while he stood silent and sad, but presently answered calmly: 'I know now that you are untrue to your word, fickle and forsworn. Whatever be the cause of it, I say to you that you will rue this perjury. All Greece shall rise up against you for it, and King Adrastus will lead the host of his lords and

allies until you are utterly defeated and your falsehood stands proved before the whole world. Here and now I defy you on my brother Polimite's behalf. And you lords that are present, I call on you to witness that your king has broken his word which he gave before you, and to remember that you yourselves vowed to obey Polimite in his year of rule which is now due. Let no time pass before you come and escort him hither as your right and lawful king.'

"With that he turned and went away, not as one afraid or overcome, but proudly, with hand on sword, ready to resist any who would prevent him. Thus he strode sternly down the hall, and mounted his horse and rode away with all speed.

"When he had gone Ethiocles was left staring angrily upon his council, too amazed at his valor to stop his going. At length he broke out into furious speech, and ordered the chief constable of his chivalry to pursue Tideus with fifty of his bravest knights and waylay and kill him.

"Fifty knights set out, armed all in stout, glittering steel, and rode quickly by a short path to the Sphinx's hill, where they lay in ambush hard by the road by which Tideus must pass.

"Very soon Tideus came riding along with no suspicion of treachery. But it chanced that as the moon was rising (it being then evening) the light glanced upon the armor of the knights in ambush, and caught his eye. He guessed at once that there was some plot against him, but nevertheless he went boldly on, holding his shield before him, with his spear in the rest, ready for attack.

"In a few minutes the knights were to be seen clearly, standing full in his path. He charged them, undaunted, and unhorsed and slew their leader at the first shock. Then they fell

upon him all at once, but he laid about him so manfully with his sword that he cut his way clear through them to a narrow passage where they could come at him only one at a time. But they dared not let him go so easily, for they feared the wrath of Ethiocles if they returned with the tale of how one man had put fifty of them to flight, and they attacked him one after the other, hoping soon to weary him. But he fought like a wild boar at bay, and kept them off, killing some and wounding others, till at length he saw a huge overhanging stone close at hand, which by a sudden jerk he loosened so that it fell upon them and crushed ten of them to death. Then he set upon the remainder with such a will that they were all slain save one, who fled. This one, wounded and faint, made his way as best he could back to Thebes and told Ethiocles how grievously his knights had fared at the hands of Tideus.

"Tideus, too, was faint and weary with his fighting, but when his enemies were all got rid of he made a shift to mount his horse, and rode on at a gentle pace.

"It was a moonlight night, but nevertheless he wandered from the road, and all unknowingly strayed into the country of King Lycurgus. He came at length to a great castle on a hill, and hastened to go up to it, for by now he was well-nigh fainting from his journey and from loss of blood. He entered at a little gate and found himself in a garden, wherein was a pleasant arbor, sweet and fresh. Here he alighted, and left his horse to pasture on the soft grass of the garden, and himself lay down in the arbor and slept till he was roused by the song of the lark as it flew up high into the clear heaven the next morning. Even as he woke he heard footsteps, and there came into sight a princess walking amid the fresh flowers in the garden.

"The princess was the daughter of Lycurgus, and when she saw Tideus all wounded and untended she was filled with pity. She went up to him and bound his wounds, and had him carried within the castle and cared for till he was rested.

"But Tideus would stay no longer than a bare day. When he learnt where he was, and was refreshed, and his wounds bound up, he desired immediately to set out for Argos, and he did so as soon as he had thanked the princess, and vowed to be her true knight, and serve her in whatsoever way she commanded.

"When he reached Argos, having met with no further adventure, Adrastus and Polimite were enraged at the treatment he had received, and swore to be avenged. But first of all they must wait till he was wholly healed of his wounds, and then at length a great armament was prepared to overcome Ethiocles."

III.—The Doom of Thebes

"And now the doom of Thebes began to draw nigh indeed. The cruel god of war had marked the city out for destruction, and strife and hatred were to possess it. All Greece was stirred up into battle by the quarrel between the two brothers who were rightful lords of Thebes.

"Adrastus sent letters and messengers to all the kings and princes of the land telling them of the wrong-doing of Ethiocles, and calling them to arms, and they came readily and gladly to take service under him in so just a cause. Prothonolope, and Gilmichenes, and Ipomedoun, Campaneus, Genor, Meleager, Locris, Pirrus, and Tortolonus, and Palenon—all these were kings who took the side of Polimite, with many another knight and lord. Tideus also, and Polimite himself, summoned their

friends to their aid. All the flower of Greek chivalry was gathered together against Thebes, so that it seemed as if on the one side were all the Greeks and on the other the Thebans only.

"But Ethiocles also made great preparations, knowing what a host was coming against him. He called together his allies, and gave presents to many doughty knights to persuade them to join him. He repaired the fortifications of Thebes, and laid in a vast store of food and provisions and arms, so that if the city were taken it should be only after a long and stout defense.

"When the Greeks were ready to begin the war they held a council, and decided that it would be well to consult some great seer who could foretell the future and give them his advice; and they sent for a certain bishop named Amphiorax, an aged and wise man, who had great knowledge of magic and the stars and the decrees of the gods.

"But Amphiorax by his arts knew that the expedition would end in terrible destruction, and that all the noblest kings and princes of Greece would come to a violent end therein; he himself also would be swallowed up alive in the earth. Therefore when he heard that the Greeks were about to seek him he hid himself, telling no one except his wife where his place of refuge was.

"The messengers of the Greeks arrived, and could not find the seer; but they asked his wife, and questioned her so long and so closely that at last she revealed to them that he had shut himself up in a certain tower. Thither they went, and found Amphiorax. Then they took him and set him in a rich chariot, and led him to their host to be their chief counselor.

"But when the kings held a parliament together, and asked Amphiorax his advice, they were dismayed and surprised, for he

told them all that he knew—how the leaders of the host would fall by the sword, and he himself be swallowed in the earth. Nevertheless, though he told them this, and warned them not to go against Thebes, they would not listen, but set out into the enemy's country, taking Amphiorax with them.

"They sat down before Thebes and besieged the city. But the country round was rocky and barren, and very soon they began to suffer terribly for want of water, and all the more that it was a very hot season. Many died outright of thirst and heat, and others in despair threw themselves upon their swords and killed themselves.

"At length Tideus and King Campaneus rode out to try to find some place where there was enough water for the host. They rode this way and that over the land till they reached the neighboring country of King Lycurgus, whither Tideus had wandered before. There they came suddenly upon a green, shady arbor, where sat a lady passing fair, having in her arms a little child. Her name they discovered to be Isophilé, and she was a king's daughter who had left her own country because she would not agree to a plot of the other women to slay their husbands and all the other men in that land. She had fled thence to King Lycurgus, who, knowing her to be noble and of royal blood, had given his little son into her charge, and this son was the child which lay in her arms when Tideus and Campaneus first saw her. Lycurgus, you must know, was the same who afterwards fought for Palamon against Arcita.

"Tideus told Isophilé their sore straits, and she answered him that she could show him where there was water abundant enough to supply the whole host for a long time. The two knights were overjoyed at these tidings, and begged her to take them to

the place at once. The child could be left safely in the arbor, for no harm would come to it there.

"Isophilé at length consented, though sadly unwilling to leave the child alone. She went with Tideus and Campaneus, and very soon the Greek host was rejoicing in the flowing streams of cool fresh water which she showed them.

"Thus the Greeks were helped by Isophilé, and not long after they were able to reward her by aiding her in turn in her sore need, as I will tell you briefly, though it bears but little upon the story of the fall of Thebes.

"When Isophilé returned to the arbor, she found the child where she had left him, half hidden on a flowery bank; but, alas! the boy was dead. A foul serpent or dragon, huge and venomous, had bitten him as he slept, and he lay there slain, his face turned up to the light. Then Isophilé hastened back to the Greeks, and told them that because she had left her charge to aid them she would die, for the son of Lycurgus was slain, and the king would surely kill her in his wrath. The Greeks were filled with pity, and vowed that she should not die for their sakes, and all the kings and princes went to Lycurgus and begged him to spare her. But he and his queen in their sorrow for the loss of their son found it hard to show mercy, yet at the earnest entreaty of the Greeks they said that they would pardon Isophilé if the serpent were slain. Then King Prothonolope was sent to seek out and kill the monster, and after a long search he found it lurking, grim and terrible, under a rock by a river's bank; there he set upon it boldly and slew it, and sent the head to Lycurgus, who straightway pardoned Isophilé. Thus did the Greeks reward her for her kindness to them.

"And now they set to work to besiege Thebes yet more vig-

orously. They ravaged all the country round, and slew all the beasts and destroyed the crops, but still they could not take the city. But strife had arisen in Thebes itself; the lords who fought for Ethiocles could not agree together, and quarrels often arose at their councils. Jocasta, also, the old queen, told Ethiocles plainly that his conduct was unknightly and unkingly.

"'Let us try to end the matter while there is yet time,' she said. 'Maybe both you and your brother will repent it if you continue in arms.'

"In short, Ethiocles was pressed on every side to endeavor to make terms with Polimite; but he would yield only so far as to allow Jocasta to go to Adrastus and offer these conditions—that Ethiocles should be acknowledged King of Thebes for the rest of his life, except for one year, during which Polimite should reign. When that year was ended Polimite was to leave the city, and never approach it again.

"Jocasta came weeping to Adrastus and his council and laid these terms before him, but Polimite raised her up and comforted her, and then they debated what answer they should give. Tideus said outright that the terms should be refused, and that nothing would be accepted except the conditions which Polimite and Ethiocles had agreed upon together at first. But Amphiorax, the bishop, was against this, for he said that thus the war would be continued, and they would all come to a miserable end. Then Jocasta, in her turn, was beginning to pray them to make peace, when suddenly a strange thing happened which cut short their council.

"There had once been sent from Egypt to Imeiné and Antigoné, the sisters of Polimite and Ethiocles, a tame tiger, very swift of foot, with a body almost like a lion's, a head and nose

like a greyhound's, eyes red as fire, and a hide of as many hues and colors as a panther's. But instead of being fierce and cruel this tiger was tame and gentle as any roe, and it chanced that while the council was being held the beast escaped out of Thebes and ran among the Greeks.

"It did no harm, but the Greeks feared its terrible looks, and very soon set upon it and killed it. Then the men of Thebes, furious with wrath at the death of their pet, sallied out from the walls and engaged the enemy. Ethiocles himself donned his armor, and came forth and did great slaughter, and in a few moments a fierce battle was raging. For some time the fight was equal, but at length the valor of Tideus forced the Thebans to retreat within their walls again. But before that many were slain on both sides, and there was no longer any hope of peace. Jocasta was courteously escorted back to the city, and Greeks and Thebans alike made preparations for a great battle on the morrow.

"The next day the Greeks rode out in battle array to bid defiance to the enemy. Adrastus was at their head, and by his side in a rich chariot came Amphiorax. Suddenly the earth opened beneath their feet and swallowed Amphiorax, chariot, and horse and all; then the chasm closed again over him, and he was seen no more, but fell down to the nether regions. Thus was part of his own prophecy fulfilled.

"But the Greeks did not stop the war because of this, though they were sorely disheartened at the fate of their seer, and though the Thebans from the city walls taunted them with having taken a false prophet for their guide. They selected instead of the bishop two other diviners, Menalippus and Tredimus by name, and of these they chose Tredimus for their chief adviser; and

then, after scattered fighting for a few days, the last great struggle began. The Thebans issued from the city, and the Greeks at once joined battle.

"The first great prince to be slain was Tideus himself, but he died before the main battle began, for every day, in the little skirmishes, he was wont to put the enemy to flight, and drive them headlong before him to the very gates of the city, until in the end he was pierced by an arrow shot from the wall at close range. No leech nor surgeon could save him, for the wound was mortal, and so he met his death fighting in his friend's cause.

"But when the battle became general the like of it was never seen in Greece. Long and fiercely the struggle raged, till all the chiefs on either side were killed except Adrastus. Polimite and Ethiocles slew one another in single combat, and the rest fell in different parts of that awful field; and when the battle was ended Adrastus drew off the remainder of the Greek army and gave up the siege.

"Thus the royal house of Thebes came to an end. But the Thebans, now that the two brothers were slain, and they had no king to reign over them, chose for their governor a tyrant named Creon, who, as you heard in the Knight's tale (so I am told), would not suffer the dead kings to be buried. But in a little while there came Theseus, who utterly destroyed the whole city and slew Creon, as you have learnt. The ladies whose lords had been slain in the end took refuge at the court of Adrastus in Argos, and Adrastus himself reigned peaceably till old age and death came upon him.

"So Thebes was destroyed and its kingly line cut off. And may God send us peace in our lives, not war like that of Thebes, and after our deaths eternal joy! My tale is ended."

"A GOOD TALE NEEDS A GOOD WILL"

THE pilgrims thanked Lydgate heartily for his tale, and the Host began to think who ought to tell the next.

"Was there ever so fair and glad a morning as this?" he cried gayly. "What a sweet season is this of May! Look at the trees now fresh and green, and but a little while ago bare, and at the flowers of different hues all lovely and delightful to a man's sight; it makes my heart light to see them. Hark! hear the love-notes of the nightingale. And now that Heaven has given us so fair a day we ought all to be eager to take up a share in our merriment. Remember the proverb, 'He who would tell a tale must have a good will thereto.' Who will tell next? I dare say some of you cannot think of a story so early in the morning, and perhaps if we drew lots the turn might fall to some sleepy fellow who would only waste our time; but surely one of you is ready to speak without being called upon?"

The Merchant was greatly pleased with the Host's jovial words, and readily volunteered to tell the next tale.

"Far as I have traveled," said he, "I have never yet seen a man who could rule a company so well as this our Host Harry Bailly. His words are very true and very delightful to me to hear; they quite overcome me, and you shall not find me falling short of my duty. I will gladly give you the next tale, though you must forgive my rough and ready way of telling it."

With that he began his second tale.

THE MERCHANT'S SECOND TALE

BERYN

I.—The Folly of Beryn

LONG ago, in the old days, Rome was the greatest city on earth. There was no place like it, and the Emperor was the most powerful monarch in the world. Now, of course, Rome has fallen, and is not so mighty, just as many other cities are changed. Have not Rye and Winchelsea, here in England, not so far from us now, lost most of their old wealth and power? But that is not my story. Come nearer, sirs, you that are all behind, and listen to me.

"In the time of the Emperor Augustinus (in whose reign lived the famous Seven Sages) there dwelt a little way outside the walls of Rome a rich and prosperous senator named Faunus. He was valiant and of noble birth, and had married a wife named Agea, who was famous for her wisdom and beauty.

"For a long time—fifteen years or more—they had no child, though they prayed earnestly for one. But at length their prayers were answered: a son was born, to their great joy, and the name of Beryn was given to him.

"The little Beryn was brought up with the utmost care and comfort. He had four nurses to look after him, and his father loved him so dearly that he would not let him go out of his sight. Whatever the boy set eyes on, or asked for, was given to him.

"But it would have been better for him if he had been taught good manners and gentle behavior, for he grew up unruly and bad-tempered. If he disliked any one of the boys with whom he played, he would beat him, or stab him with a knife; and he would rush savagely at the knights of his father's house if they contradicted him or withstood him in any way.

"When he became a young man he grew worse instead of better. He took to gambling and playing with the dice, wasting his father's money endlessly, for he never won. Sometimes he would come home from some street brawl with his clothes all torn, knowing well that his fond mother would give him new ones only for the asking. Often his father had to appease as best he could the men whom Beryn in a riotous mood had wronged.

"At length Agea fell ill, and sent for her husband Faunus, knowing that her end was near. Faunus came in haste, and when he saw her, he perceived that he would soon lose her; he was filled with a great sorrow, and tears came to his eyes, until he thought that his heart would break. But he tried to speak gayly and cheerfully.

" 'Husband, this is no time to grieve,' said Agea. 'Let us speak of other things, for death is very near me.'

" 'Say on,' answered Faunus. 'But I will never forget you—no, not to my dying day.'

" 'You have been a kind husband to me, Faunus; never was a kinder. Be kind still, when I am gone; be true to me, and wed no other wife. Do not give our son a stepmother, for stepmothers love not the children of a first wife. That is all I ask of you, dear husband, and all I have to say.'

" 'I will never take another wife,' answered Faunus solemnly.

"Agea's kin were all sent for to bid her good-by, and among them she asked for Beryn. But he was away from home, playing hazard with his friends, according to his custom. When Agea saw that he did not come, her heart broke, and she died without looking on her son again.

"One of Agea's maidservants, though too late now, had already gone to seek Beryn. She found him gambling; he had lost all his money, and was staking his gown as she came in.

"'Sir, you must come home,' said the maid. 'Unless you hasten, your mother will die before you can see her again.'

"'Who told you to come for me, girl?' asked Beryn.

"'Your father, sir.'

"'Get along home! Have you nothing better to do than come here and take me from my pastime? I had rather my mother and you as well were both dead than lose this game!'

"With that he gave her a cuff on the side of the head. He cared nothing for his mother's illness, but went on playing like a madman.

"The news of Agea's death spread all over Rome, and she was mourned far and wide; but Beryn took no heed of the mourning. He still spent his time with bad companions, and cared nothing for his father's sorrow and anger. Faunus tried to persuade him to quit this evil way of life, but all in vain. He grew worse every day, and Faunus began to pine away with grief for the loss of Agea and the wickedness of his son.

"The Emperor soon heard of Faunus's sad state, and was greatly moved by the news. He summoned the Seven Sages, and took their advice about the matter; and they were of opinion that the only way to take away Faunus's sorrow was to give him a fresh wife to take the place of Agea. So, to make a long

story short, the Emperor bestowed upon him the hand of Raine, a lady of his Court, noted for her loveliness.

"Faunus could not disobey the Emperor's wish. He married Raine, and in a little while forgot all about Agea and his promise to her. He grew to love his new wife so much that he seemed to spend all his days in looking at her; so the people of Rome said; he never did anything without asking her, and obeyed her in all things.

"It fell out as Agea had expected. Raine took a dislike to Beryn, and strove to raise a quarrel between him and Faunus. But at first she pretended to be kind to him, and gave him money and clothing, as much as he liked to ask for.

"One evening when Faunus was with her he noticed that she seemed sorrowful and overcast.

" 'Dear wife, my heart's delight, why are you sad?' he asked. 'I am yours always, and if there is anything in my power which I can do, I will do it.'

"Raine began to sigh, thinking it a good time to draw upon her store of plots against Beryn.

" 'No wonder that I am sad,' she answered, 'since I became your wife. But I must put up with my fate.'

"By her artful words, using many a little trick of voice and look, she whetted her husband's curiosity, and set him half mad with grief for her distress. At last she let him know her pretended sorrow.

" 'Alas that I ever married you!' she cried. 'Suppose we have a son and he grows up like Beryn! I had rather he died than spend all his days playing hazard as Beryn does. Fifteen times within this month have I given your son new clothes when he came back with his own lost by gambling or torn in some riot-

ous brawl. The half of our possessions would not be enough to keep him. If I were you, I would refuse to give him any more clothes unless he keeps them better and gives up his folly.'

" 'I thank you for telling me, wife,' answered Faunus. 'I will speak to him, and will not give him any more till he lives a better life.'

"The next morning Beryn, when he rose, found that he wanted new clothes. He asked for them, but in vain; not a man in all the house would give him anything.

"Faunus heard the uproar Beryn made at this discovery, and went into his son's room. He had forgotten nothing of what Raine had said, but was boiling over with anger. He sat down in a chair and began to speak.

" 'Son Beryn, I must give you a lesson, and teach you to look after yourself. You are a man now, twenty years of age, and you know nothing. Yet you could win back my love, and come into honor and esteem, as well as profit, if you would only leave your evil ways. Give up your gaming and profligacy, and join the company of good, honest men. Else I promise you that you will have to stand on your own feet in the future. I will no longer buy you fresh clothes every day to wear to rags; but if you will give up bad companions and live steadily, you shall have your fair share of what Heaven has been pleased to give me. If not, you shall have nothing, my son, and so I tell you now.'

"Beryn scowled.

" 'Is this a sermon? Have you taken to preaching? You have never treated me thus before. Give me some clothes, and let me go back to my friends. They are waiting for me, and I will not give them up, nor my dice-playing either, for all that you can leave me in your will. Do your best with your

goods while you have them, for when they fall to me I shall do as I please. Who has been talking to you and setting you against me? But I know who it is—your wife, plague take her! Fancy a man letting his wife do as she pleases with his wisdom! You love Raine so much that she has stolen your wits from you, and all Rome laughs at your silly fondness. Now I know what it is to have a stepmother!'

"Faunus started out of his chair in anger at this brutal speech, and swore that Beryn should repent it. But Beryn took no heed to his words; he only asked for a new shirt.

"But when he came to put on what clothes he could find, he began to be uneasy in his mind. He had nothing but rags to wear, so old and torn that his bare skin showed through in many places. He went to his father, and begged him to give him some new clothes; but Faunus would not answer him a word.

"At last Beryn began to see that he was in a bad way, and all through his own fault. 'Now I know indeed that my mother is dead,' thought he—the first time he had even brought her to mind since he refused to see her. He was filled with shame and sorrow, and could not bear to go into Rome again to join his old comrades. He strode out of his father's house, half mad, and, wandering he knew not whither, came at length to the churchyard where Agea lay buried.

"When he saw his mother's grave he turned pale.

" 'Alas! gentle mother, how kind and true you were to me!' he cried, and fell down in a swoon.

"When he came to his senses again he fell to weeping once more, repenting bitterly of his unkindness and evil life. 'May God, who made heaven and earth,' said he, 'grant me mercy and grace that I may live better, and keep me from sin! By

my own wickedness I have lost my mother's life, my father's love, and my own happiness; only my own life is left me, to pass in suffering.'

"Meanwhile Raine had heard what Faunus had done, and rejoiced to find her plot so successful. But she pretended to be sorry that her words had been carried out.

" 'Dear husband,' she said to Faunus, 'I spoke but in jest to you about Beryn. What is this that you have done to him? He has left the house in rags, and everyone knows that you have quarreled. They will say that I, his stepmother, stirred up strife between him and you. I pray you, fetch him back home again.'

" 'Nay, he shall not come back yet at my asking,' replied her husband. 'He took no notice of my words, and I will take no notice of him. Everyone knows his evil ways, and will think them the cause of his going in rags; it is not your fault, dear wife.'

" 'Yes, but I know that they will say it is my doing,' she said. 'I beg you, for your love of me, send for Beryn at once, and clothe him again, and make up your quarrel.'

" 'Since it is your will, then, he shall come home. But it is for your sake alone; if you had not asked it, the grass should grow all over the pavements ere I would stir out to fetch him. But now I will be your messenger myself, and will go and find him.'

"Raine's plan had succeeded, and Faunus felt now such anger against Beryn that no penitence would ever make them friends again. But he could not disobey his wife. He went out and asked everywhere for Beryn, in all the old haunts and places where he used to make merry. But Beryn was in none of them,

and Faunus almost gave up the search, when he heard that his son was in the churchyard. He went thither, and saw Beryn by Agea's grave, crying out bitterly against his own folly.

"When Faunus came to the grave of his first wife, he remembered that he, too, had not kept his word to her, and he grew sad at the thought. 'Ah, Agea, my old love—yes, and my new love still,—alas that ever we had to part! When you were with me, I never knew sorrow or trouble, but all our days were gladness.'

"He drew near to Beryn, heavy at heart; but when Beryn saw that it was his father, shame would not let him go to meet him, and he sought to slink away unseen. But Faunus contrived to reach him, and told him why he came.

" 'We have sought all over the town for you, dear son, and could not find you. Forget what I said to you: I meant it only as a gentle reproof, and now that I know you have taken it so much to heart I will say no more. Come home with me, and mend your ways, for I see that your sorrow is true. If you will come, I will give you everything you desire, clothes and money and horses, and I will ask the Emperor to knight you. Whatever you need shall be bought for you, and you shall lack nothing so long as I have anything to give you.'

" 'Thank you for your goodness to me, dear father,' answered Beryn, 'but I cannot take what you offer. I care nothing for knighthood, and as for the rest, hear what I have to say. You love your wife dearly, and soon she will give you sons and daughters. If I come back, she will forever be trying to make her children your heirs, and we shall quarrel again and again. She will not let you give me anything, even for my own good, and she will always be reproaching you bitterly for your kindness

to me. But if you wish to help me, let me be a merchant and have five ships, well loaded, for my inheritance. With them I will sail away, and never trouble you again.'

"Faunus was glad to hear Beryn's words, for thus peace would be restored to his home, and his son would be provided for. But he did not show his joy to Beryn for fear he should change his mind.

"'I wonder how such a plan came into your head,' he said. 'You will give up the honors and the inheritance which are yours by law, in order to lead a life of toil and wandering!'

"But secretly he was overjoyed to be rid of his son, for Beryn's conduct had killed all real love between them.

"When Raine heard Beryn's plan, in her joy she kissed Faunus, and coaxed him and cuddled him as she had never done before. But she did not forget to carry out her plan to the end.

"'I know you can do one thing more for me, husband,' she said, 'and that is, secure your possessions so that you can give them to whom you please.'

"Beryn by law could claim a share in Faunus's property, and would succeed him as his heir. Raine wanted to get him disinherited, and have his inheritance for herself and her own children.

"Faunus promised to do as she wished, and she thanked him heartily for his goodness. When he left her, he went straight to Beryn, and began cunningly to try to get his own way.

"'Put away your mad plan, my dear son,' he said, taking him by the hand, 'and do as I advise you. You are sensible now, and of man's estate. Why should you be a merchant? Think of my sorrow if you lost all your goods at sea! And if I died while you were absent you would most likely lose your share in the

inheritance. Besides, I shall have to raise a loan on my lands, if I am to give you five ships and merchandise to fill them. But still, if your heart is set on it, I will do as you wish, whatever it cost me.'

"Faunus guessed rightly that the way to persuade Beryn to go was to pretend to wish the reverse. Beryn was so eager to venture as a merchant that he was willing even to give up all claim on his father's property if only he could have his ships and cargo.

"To cut a long story short, they went before the Emperor, and Beryn legally gave up his inheritance in exchange for a deed giving him five ships full of merchandise. The bargain was written down and signed and sealed before the Emperor and senators, and the parchment was given to a third person for safe keeping.

"You may be sure Raine was joyful when she heard that the matter was finally settled. Faunus, too, was glad to give Beryn his ships at once, and Beryn's only wish was to set sail immediately. So they were all satisfied; and now you shall hear no more of Faunus and his wife, but only of Beryn and his adventures."

II.—The Burgesses of Falsetown

"As soon as he got a fair wind, Beryn set sail from Rome for Alexandria with all his five ships and their cargo, and a full crew in each. They sailed with fine weather for two days and a night, but then there fell on the sea a thick mist and shut them in. The mist continued for three whole days without a break, and the ships were so hidden in it that one could not be seen from another.

"At the end of that time a great wind arose, clearing the fog away and almost destroying Beryn's fleet with its force. Beryn and his crew gave themselves up for lost; the wind howled and roared, the sea raged and broke over them, and every man commended himself to Heaven, thinking his last hour was come. Thus they continued for a day and a night, being driven they knew not whither, right out of their course. But on the morrow, just when they thought all was over with them, the storm began to abate; the wind dropped, and in a little while the sea became calm again.

"Beryn called one of the sailors to him. 'By the grace of Heaven we are saved,' said he. 'Go up to the masthead, and see if the other four ships are anywhere near us.'

"The man went aloft, and when he had been there a little while called down to Beryn: 'Cheer up, sir! Your ships are coming sailing up all safe and sound. You will see them in a moment. What is more, I spy land. Turn our course eastward, and we shall reach it.'

" 'Heaven be praised!' cried Beryn. 'We have come through the storm with our cargo all safe, and it is good merchandise that I could ill afford to lose. Helmsman, steer for the land, and when the other ships catch us up, clap on all sail!'

"He called the chief seamen out of each ship to a council, when the little fleet was once more united, and told them that land was near. But none of them could guess what country it was for which they were then making, and they debated what they had best do.

" 'The town which we can see on yonder coast seems fair and prosperous in appearance,' said Beryn; 'but I think it would be well if I were to land alone by myself, and go over it, to see what

sort of place it really is. What say you, sirs? Do you think that a good plan?'

"They agreed, and said that if it seemed likely to profit them they would put in at this port; if not, they would gladly go elsewhere.

"But they knew nothing of what the town really was. In all the world there was no city so false as this, no people so deceitful and dishonest as the inhabitants of this country. And the most cunning of all their tricks was this—that when any ships of another nation came into port, they hid themselves in their own houses, and left the streets quite empty; no one rode about, no one walked on the paths, there was nobody in the shops. If a stranger found them, and spoke of trading with them, they pretended to be utterly ignorant of merchandise. In fact, there were no such rogues as they in the whole earth, as you will very soon see.

"Beryn put on his best clothes, as became a rich merchant, and mounted a splendidly-harnessed horse, and rode into the town, with a page running alongside. He went right through the city, but saw not a soul in the streets or shops, all the house-doors and windows being closed. At length, however, he came to a fine house, whose gate stood open. Here there lived (though Beryn did not know it then) a manciple, the most slippery cheat of all the burgesses in that false town.

"Beryn entered, and found the master of the house playing chess. But as soon as the burgess saw him, he put the chess aside, and started up, crying, 'Bless me! what wind has blown you hither? I wish I could give you a better welcome, but you must take the will for the deed, and put up with the best I can do for you.'

"He saw from Beryn's dress that he was a rich man, and probably the owner of the ships which had just come into harbor; and he brought all his cunning to bear upon him, welcoming him with the greatest kindness, and showing him every imaginable courtesy.

" 'It is a day to be thankful for when I see you here in my country safe and sound,' said he, pretending to remember Beryn as an old friend, though he had as yet no idea even of his name. 'Tell me, now what brings you here? Can I serve you in anyway? If there is anything in my power that I can do to please you, I will do it.'

"The other citizen who had been playing chess with the burgess of the house now rose up, as if out of respect to Beryn, and fell in with his comrade's crafty plan in a moment.

" 'Pray, who is this worshipful gentleman?' he asked, innocently enough; 'you seem to know him. Have you met him before?'

" 'Know him!' said the other—'I have seen him hundreds of times! I will treat him like a brother, and do everything for him that I can. I tell you, in his own country he is a man of rank and wealth.'

" 'Well, then, there are a thousand in this town who would be ready to do him a service for your sake.'

"The master of the house, whose name was Syrophanes, now asked his friend to entertain Beryn for a few moments while he went to look after his guest's horse. 'A gentle heart cares for his beast when he has seen to his own welfare,' he said. 'I will look to your steed, and then find some of my choicest wine for you.'

"With that he went out, and left Beryn with his friend.

Beryn was a little confused at the warm welcome he had received, and hardly knew what to think, though he suspected no deceit. When the host's friend asked him about himself, he answered quite frankly.

" 'My name is Beryn, and I have come from Rome with five ships filled with merchandise. The ships are in your harbor now. But I am filled with wonder at your friend's kind welcome of me, and I do not know why he is so willing to entertain me.'

" 'It is not surprising, sir,' answered the other. 'He has often been to Rome; indeed, I think he was born there.'

" 'Ah, no wonder,' said the simple Beryn. 'I expect he has seen me there. Yes, his welcome proves it.'

"Meanwhile Syrophanes had gone to the stable and found Beryn's page-boy tending his master's horse. He asked the boy a few questions, and in a few minutes had got out of him everything about Beryn—his name, home, parents, the death of Agea, and all. Then he went back into the house with a well-feigned look of friendly grief on his face.

" 'Ah, Beryn!' he cried, coming into the room, 'I am sorry that your dear mother Agea is dead. Heaven rest her! Never had I a warmer welcome anywhere than from her—no, nor half so good a one. And so you are a merchant, and have come all this way oversea from Rome! You have left your inheritance to come here! Well, you might have fared ill indeed, and you must put up with the best you can get. I must go down to the harbor with you and see your ships when we have dined.'

"So they all three sat down and had a good dinner together. The burgess was a wealthy man, and knew how to provide a fine feast.

"When they had done their dinner, a chess-board and men were brought out. They were of ivory and the men most beautifully wrought and polished, and colored white and blue. Beryn was delighted at the sight of them.

" 'I dare say you would find your match, and be checkmated in a very short time,' said Syrophanes to him jestingly, meaning to make him play.

" 'That may well be,' answered Beryn. 'But now I must go and see to my ships.'

" 'There is no need of that,' said the other. 'They are not settled down properly in the harbor yet; I sent three messengers while we dined to find out. Let us have a game. I will be the first foe on whom you shall try your skill.'

"Beryn agreed, and they began to play. Beryn won four games one after the other, and grew weary of such an easy victory.

" 'I do not want to play any more,' he said. 'Where we are so unequal the game is poor. I must go, and I thank you very heartily for your good cheer and the games we have played.'

"The burgess had allowed Beryn to win in order to encourage him, and he did not want him to go away.

" 'Nay, Beryn, do not go,' he pleaded. 'Let us make the game better by laying a wager on it. Suppose we agree to this: whoever is checkmated must do whatever the other bids him, or else drink up all the salt water in the sea.'

"It was a strange wager, but the silly Beryn yielded and agreed to the terms, thinking himself sure of victory, though some of the citizens who were looking on were certain that he would lose, for Syrophanes was the best chess-player in the country. But Beryn knew nothing of that.

"They fell to the game again, and Beryn played very carefully. But for all his skill he got the worst of it. In an hour or so his pieces were nearly all taken or utterly blocked, and he was well-nigh mated.

"Meanwhile the burgess, seeing victory in his grasp, took counsel with his friends, and sent for the sergeants of the town, who came and walked up and down the hall just as if they were there by chance, though Syrophanes had taken care to let them know his purpose.

"By this time a great many people had gathered round to see the end of the game. Beryn turned his eyes away from the board for a moment and saw them, and knew then that he was betrayed.

" 'Play on, Beryn,' said his host; 'you are getting the worst of it!'

"The lookers-on began to talk to one another about the wager. Beryn overheard something of what they said, and was so confused at the thought of what might happen that he let Syrophanes capture a rook very easily. The loss only made his dismay greater; his heart sank, and he turned pale with distress and anger.

" 'Look, Beryn,' said the burgess suddenly: 'you see that piece there? I can mate your king when I please!'

"With that he moved one of his chessmen and cried, 'Checkmate!'

"The sergeants by this time were standing behind Beryn. One of them plucked him by the sleeve, saying, 'What are you going to do now, sir?'

" 'Why do you lay hands on me, sirs?' answered Beryn. 'What have I said or done that is wrong?'

" 'It is no use to resist,' the sergeants replied. 'You must come with us to the steward of the town, whether you wish it or not. He will hear what you have to say.'

" 'You need not drag me so roughly,' objected Beryn.

" 'Come with us,' they answered; 'we cannot listen to you.'

" 'I beg you to hear me,' Beryn pleaded. 'I have played chess with my good host here, and he has won the wager we laid on the game. But that is between him and me; what have you to do with it?'

"Syrophanes gave a great cry at that, and, setting his arms akimbo, began to protest loudly.

" 'Would you think to browbeat me?' he said angrily to Beryn. 'None of your lying tales. Go with the sergeants, and be quick over it. You shall tell your story to the steward.'

" 'Do you mean this, sir?' asked Beryn. 'You are my host, and you know my country and family, as you have yourself told me a dozen times already to-day.'

" 'What if I did say so?' answered the false burgess, following him, as the sergeants forced him to go with them. 'You will believe what I say a little less next time. I only spoke to you in order to get you into trouble, and now that I have my way, I will not spare you.'

"Thus they quarreled all through the streets till they came to the hall where the steward was sitting. His name was Evander, and he was crafty and wicked; but he had with him a burgess as provost to advise him, called Hanybald, who was still more cunning.

"Beryn's host told what had happened, and all about the terms of the wager; he did not add or hide anything, for in that town it was not necessary to conceal deceit.

"'Now, Beryn,' said the steward, 'you have heard this good burgess's tale. You must fulfill your part in the wager, and do anything that he likes to order, or else drink all the water that is salt in the sea. Which do you choose? I care not, but you must do one or the other.'

"Beryn was well-nigh speechless with dismay, and no wonder, for he had not expected to meet with a host so treacherous and crafty as Syrophanes. He begged Evander to grant him one day in which to make up his mind.

"'But if I allow you a day,' said the steward, 'you must give some pledge or surety that you will appear in court to-morrow.'

"'I have a plan,' broke in Hanybald. 'He has five ships lying yonder in the harbor. Let us take them as surety. I am your provost, and will seize them to execute justice.'

"'He must give his consent,' answered Evander.

"'I agree,' said Beryn; 'there is no other way.'

"So Beryn was set free, and went down to the quay with Hanybald to look at the ships.

"'Beryn,' said Hanybald, as they were talking on the way, 'I give you my word that I can do you a good turn. If you listen to me, you need fear nothing. Look you, the steward said that your ships were to be seized, but he said nothing about the cargoes in them; and when I have to seize the ships, I shall not be obliged to take the merchandise. Sell me the goods, then; I will pay a high price for them, and give you a written agreement, if you wish. Or come and see what I could give you in exchange. I have two or three warehouses full of some of the best merchandise in all this great city. We can certainly come to a bargain between us, if you think well of it.'

"'A fair offer,' said Beryn. 'I thank you, sir, and I will do

as you say, if you assure me that I do not break the law thereby.'

" 'I give you my word for it,' answered Hanybald.

"With that they rode together to Hanybald's warehouses, where Beryn found, as he had been told, a great store of costly merchandise, richer than any to be found elsewhere in that city. When they had looked carefully at all this, they went down to Beryn's ships, and Hanybald inspected the goods there.

" 'Your merchandise is very fine, Beryn,' he said at length. 'Let us come to terms. I will give you, in exchange for your five shiploads, five loads of whatever goods you can find anywhere in my warehouses. That is what I offer; if you think it a good bargain, talk it over with your men, and let me know soon what you decide, for I have no time to waste.'

"Beryn called the captains of his ships, and told them all that had happened. They agreed that the best that they could do was to take Hanybald's offer.

"But now hear what that rascal Hanybald had done. When he left Beryn to make up his mind, he went straight to his warehouses, and emptied them of everything; nothing was left except the walls and the roof and the beams. When Beryn came with his men to fetch whatever goods they could find in the warehouse, according to the agreement, Hanybald bade them go in and choose. But as soon as they saw the bare, empty rooms they knew that Beryn had once more been cheated.

"Beryn rushed out of the warehouse like a madman, and hurried down to his ships to stop the unloading of his goods. But he was too late. Three hundred men were busy carrying the bales and cases out of each ship to Hanybald's house; for the crafty citizen had laid his plans well, and had ordered the men to start work as soon as Beryn and his captains left the ships.

"Beryn ran off again to Hanybald, no one daring to stop him. But Hanybald greeted him with a careless smile.

" 'It is no use, Beryn,' he said. 'Lay aside your anger. You know well enough that I have seized your ships according to the law, and the goods are mine, since you have just exchanged them for five loads of whatever you can find in my warehouses. You keep your word, and I keep mine. What do you want here? I never saw a man like you: one moment you wish to sell, and the next you refuse. If you are not satisfied, let us go to the steward and lay the matter before him.'

" 'No, indeed!' cried Beryn, who knew enough of Evander the steward by now.

" 'You will have to go, whether you like it or not,' said Hanybald. 'I am the steward's provost, and I have power to compel you. Come, get on your horse, and do not let us fall out about it.'

"So Beryn sorrowfully mounted his horse, saying to his men, 'Take no heed of me; I will come back to you when I can. You see that I can do nothing else.'

"When they came to the steward, to cut a long story short, it was decided that Beryn should have a day in which to prepare his defense, and give reasons why Hanybald should not seize his cargoes. And thus there were two cases in which Beryn had to appear before the steward on the morrow."

III.—The Land of Lies

"Beryn left the steward's court ruefully, and turned to go towards his ships. But the fame of his misfortunes had by this time run throughout the town, and he soon found a great crowd

at his heels pressing eagerly to catch sight of this new dupe whom Syrophanes and Hanybald had cheated so successfully. Every rogue in the town—that is to say, every single inhabitant—wished to have his turn at plundering poor Beryn.

"Beryn made his way angrily through the mob with his page beside him. He had not ridden a stone's throw when a blind man met him, and saying nothing, laid hold of him by the coat and held him till he stopped.

" 'Not so fast, sir,' cried the stranger when he had made Beryn stand still. 'Do not try to escape.'

"Beryn thought that it was a joke, and made as if to free himself. But the blind man only clutched him more tightly with both hands.

" 'You shall not get off, for all your wealth,' he cried, 'until I have had the law on you. It is through you that I have lost my sight.'

"Beryn could not get past him, for he stood right in his path, and the crowd was closing in round him on every side. They were all trying to prevent his going, and speaking up for the blind man.

" 'You must stop and go and submit to the law,' they said, 'however great a man you may be.'

" 'I would do so readily enough,' answered Beryn, 'if there was any cause for it, but I know none.'

" 'No?' said the blind man. 'I will tell you what you have done.'

" 'Say on, then.'

" 'Nay, this is no place for my plea,' answered the man. 'There is no judge here of power enough to give me justice. We will go before Evander the steward, and he shall decide between

us. When I have told my tale and you have answered it, men will be able to see if you are guilty or not. Thank Heaven for this day! At last I have found you, and can show you to be my old partner who cheated and robbed me! You thought that you would never be found out, but there is something more to be said about that, as you shall see. Truth will out, as the saying is.'

"As they were talking the crowd had been moving them in the direction of the hall of justice, where the steward was. When they reached it the blind man was sworn, and hastened to make his plea.

" 'Sir Steward, I beg you to hear me for a short time. I have seized a fellow who has done me more wrong than any man on earth, and I desire the aid of the law. You know how often I have complained to you of the way in which I was betrayed and ill-used by a man who long ago exchanged eyes with me. This is he who did it. I lent him my eyes for his just for a little time, and he found mine better than his own and kept them, to my great sorrow and pain, as you know. I have not got my own, and I cannot see with his. But whenever I came to you before you told me that you could do nothing unless I brought the man who had wronged me into court. Well, here he is now. Don't let him go until he has given me back my eyes!'

" 'Beryn,' said Evander, 'do you hear how exact and well-drawn is this accusation?'

"Beryn was speechless with surprise and anger, which was a good thing for him, for by the law of that country whatever a man swore on oath was regarded as proved and true, so that if Beryn had denied the charge he would have been cast into prison at once for falsehood. The citizens, taking advantage of this

custom, were forever going to law with strangers, who seldom got off without losing something.

"'You will be condemned if you do not answer, Beryn,' Evander went on, seeing that Beryn was silent.

"'It would be of little use, sir,' Beryn replied, 'if I answered thus by myself without any man's advice. Surprise has taken away my wits. I pray you give me a day in which to make my answer ready.'

"'Very well,' said the steward, 'come here again to-morrow.'

"Beryn took his leave and went out of the court. He was mounting his horse to ride away when a woman, carrying a child in her arms, ran up weeping and seized his bridle.

"'Softly, sir,' she cried, 'do not hurry away. You must wait and hear me. You are my husband; you villain! why did you leave me? Come before the steward and hear what I have to say to you. Alas, that I ever married you! This two years have I suffered grief and hardship, and all because of you! But now men shall see who it is that has done wrong.'

"The crowd had gathered all round, and Beryn had to go back into the steward's court again. The woman stood up with her face all wan and pale, and made a great show of sorrow and misery as she began her tale.

"'Sir, I have often come before you and complained that my husband, the father of my child here, deserted me and left me all alone. I am ashamed to say how poor I have been since he went away. I have had to sell my clothes and often go without food or drink, so great has been my distress, and I had hard work to keep alive at all. This is he who is the cause of all my woe! It is time he paid for my keep and made amends for his neglect, and I challenge him to prove my words false!'

"'A piteous tale, sad enough to move a man's heart,' said Evander softly. 'I know that it is true in part, for many a time has the woman come to me and told me her grief. But of course she could do nothing until her husband was found. Now that you are here, Beryn, make your defense as well as you can.'

"Beryn again was silent.

"'Are you asleep?' asked the steward. 'Say something. Does she tell the truth or not?'

"'What is the good of my speaking among so many wise men without first taking counsel?' said Beryn. 'Grant me, I pray you, till to-morrow for my answer.'

"'I grant it,' answered the steward. 'But to-morrow you must answer all the charges without any more delay.'

"Beryn went away, his heart almost breaking with sorrow; and no wonder. He got on his horse and rode out of the city with his page-boy, no one hindering him now. He pondered over his misfortunes, and thought that they all sprang from his unkindness to his mother. But he had not yet come to the end of them.

"Very soon he sent his page away with his horse and went on walking afoot alone by himself. As he walked he lamented his folly aloud, and called on Heaven to bring down vengeance on the rogues who had tricked him.

"It happened that a sheriff's bailiff, or catchpole named Macaigne, who had been told about the misfortunes of the stranger who had that day arrived in the town, overheard Beryn as he talked to himself, and he immediately made up his mind to take him in afresh, if possible.

"'Heaven bless you, sir!' he said, going up to him in a friendly way. 'You seem to be unhappy, and no doubt have good cause.

But will you not tell me your distress? Perhaps I may be able to help you in it. Nothing is so bad that there is no remedy, and my advice has often done others a good turn.'

" 'Thank you, sir,' answered Beryn. 'I know not whom to trust. Even my host, who gave me dinner to-day, deceived me and had me arrested.'

" 'Oh, are you that man?' said the catchpole, pretending to recognize him at once. 'I have heard of you. You need not fear me; it is true that there are many rogues among our citizens, but I will give you the best advice I can. The wisest thing that you could do would be to speak privately to the steward, and lay out a penny or two to save your pounds. The steward is a covetous man, and has long wished to possess a knife which I have. I will sell you this knife, if you agree, for five marks; with it you can bribe the steward to be on your side, and you had better promise him twenty pounds as well. It is worth while to spend a little money in order to save the rest. Come to the steward now; I will go with you and kneel before him, and speak for you, pretending that I am your cousin. When I have had my say, then give him the knife.'

"Beryn thanked him heartily, trusting him entirely. They went together to Evander, Macaigne comforting Beryn on the road. Beryn carried the knife, and relied on his new friend for help.

"But as soon as they came into the presence of the steward the catchpole threw himself on the ground before him, and began to pour out a loud complaint against Beryn.

" 'Sir Steward,' he cried, 'now show yourself a just judge! Look at this false traitor standing beside me! He slew my father Melan, whose death I formerly laid before you for justice.

Melan went to Rome with seven swift ships full of merchandise seven years ago, and since then I have heard no more of it until to-day, in spite of all my diligence in asking. But now I know too well what has happened. Alas! alas!' And with that he fell a-weeping.

"When Beryn heard this he thought, 'What am I to do?' and turned and tried to flee. But Macaigne started up and caught hold of him.

" 'No, you shall not escape,' he cried; 'my tale is not done. If I let you escape, I should be sorry for it all my life.'

"Then, holding Beryn fast by the arm, he addressed the steward again. 'Hear me, good sir. Murder will out, and this villain is caught at last. Search him, and you will find on him a knife which used to be my father's. I know it well, and the cutler of this town made it, and will swear to it.'

"Beryn was full of anger and fear, and gave up the knife to the steward without a word.

" 'See, my friend, this is a foul deed to have done!' said Evander. 'You will not get off unless you give satisfaction for the body of Melan before you go, and for his goods as well. Come before me to-morrow to answer this charge.'

"So Beryn had yet another trial awaiting him on the morrow, when he was to be accused by Syrophanes, by Hanybald, by the blind man, by the woman who claimed to be his wife, and, last of all, by Macaigne the catchpole.

"But now he was near the end of his troubles, though he did not suspect it, for by this time he was ready to distrust everyone, and was at his wits' end to know what to do.

" 'Never was a man worse betrayed than I have been!' he mourned, looking back on the hall of justice when he had left

it. 'I have no friends here, and all those who offer to help me turn out to be cheats. Yet it is my own fault. I brought my mother to her grave by my wicked life, and then in my folly I turned merchant! If I had not been so foolish I might now have been rich at Rome, enjoying my inheritance and the company of my friends.'

"He was lamenting thus, when suddenly he saw coming towards him at a wonderful speed a cripple, with a wooden leg and a crutch, and arms all deformed and distorted.

"'Is there another trial in store for me?' thought Beryn, and he began to be filled with fear. But the cripple stretched out his hand and caught him by the sleeve.

"This was too much for Beryn. He turned like a startled hare, and took to his heels. But the cripple knew the paths better than he, and soon caught him up. Beryn stopped when he saw that it was in vain to run, and stood staring stupidly at the stranger, without saying a word.

"'You would not doubt my good faith if you knew me, sir,' said the cripple; 'and, whether you like it or not, you shall not part from me till I have come to terms with you. I know that you are in misfortune, but I desire to hear all your story. You were a fool when you first landed here; I could have told you everything about the wicked treachery of the merchants of this city.'

"Beryn sighed; he was too despondent and sad at heart to say much.

"'Good sir,' he begged, 'I pray you do me no more harm. Have some pity on me, and leave me now. Come to me again to-morrow, and I will give you anything I have left.'

"While he was talking, the cripple had laid hands upon his

cloak. But when Beryn saw this, he undid the fastening, and let the cloak slip off his shoulders, preferring to lose it rather than be taken before Evander again. The cripple, however, caught him by the sleeve when he saw the cloak loosened.

" 'Now I am cornered,' thought Beryn. 'I must run for it.'

"With that he fled as fast as he could. But the cripple, though he was very aged (being, indeed, more than a hundred years old), was amazingly swift-footed, and set to work at once to overtake him, saying to himself, 'The man will be ruined forever unless he takes my advice. I will help him, for he comes from Rome, which is my own country.'

"The cripple's name was Geoffrey, and he was no cheat, but a true friend, who really wished to do poor Beryn a good turn. His face was worn and old, and half covered with a long white beard, but it was manly and spirited to look at.

"Beryn was so frightened that he fled till he came to the waterside without ever looking back. But when he reached the sea he could go no further, and Geoffrey caught him up.

" 'Why do you try to avoid me?' asked Geoffrey. 'I swear to you that I mean you no harm. Sit down here upon the seashore, and if you fear anything, call your men to come and stand by you. Let them be with us and hear all we say, for I will not lie to you. Cheer up, and listen to me!'

"Beryn began to be less afraid when he heard Geoffrey's kind words; but he could not quite get over his suspicions after so many misfortunes.

" 'I know not whom I can trust,' he said. 'Nevertheless, if you will come on board one of my ships, I will hear what you have to say.'

" 'Very well, I will come aboard, and put myself into your

power. But if by my advice you are able to get the better of your enemies, and give their pride a fall, what reward shall I have?'

"'I will reward you truly and honestly, I promise you,' said Beryn.

"'Then I will join you, and tell you what to do.'

"'But what is your name, friend?' asked Beryn as they went on board together.

"'Geoffrey,' replied the cripple. 'I am not a citizen of this place, but come from Rome. But I have dwelt for many years here among these people, and have suffered far worse than you. I would not put up with their lies, and I paid dearly for my boldness. They are the vilest set of rogues on earth, and they have never had an honest thought among them. They robbed me of a thousand pounds' worth of merchandise, and I hardly escaped with my life. To save myself, I had to pretend to be a cripple, such as you see me now. Yet my limbs are whole and sound enough, and I need no crutches.'

"With that he threw away his wooden leg and crutch and leaped and danced and ran up and down the deck to show his strength.

"At length he and Beryn and the captains of the ships sat down to hold a council. Beryn told them all everything that had happened, and said to Geoffrey, 'If you know anyone who could really help me, and defend me to-morrow in court, I vow I would become his liege-man and servant!'

"'That would be too much to do,' said the late cripple. 'But if you will promise me one thing I will save you. Will you, if I defeat your enemies and win your case, carry me in one of your ships to Rome?'

"Beryn took his men's advice, and at length promised to do as Geoffrey asked. Then Geoffrey began to show Beryn how to escape his false accusers.

" 'You must tell me all about your accusers and the charges they bring against you,' he said, 'because I mean to take advantage of their customs, and turn the tables on them by appealing to the king. You know how treacherous they are, like all the rest of the people of this country. In their law the only proof required is that enough witnesses shall swear that a thing is true, no matter what be said against it; and it is no use to plead that your side of the case is true, because they all stand by one another, and every accuser will get a hundred or more to back him with the same tale. The reason of this is that Isope, their king, hates lying, and punishes it with death, so that, to save one another, they agree to stand by the lies they have told, in order to escape a charge of falsehood. The only way, therefore, to beat them is to tell bigger lies, which is what we must do to-morrow.'

" 'Heaven grant me aid!' said Beryn. 'If I can only save myself by lying, then lie I must.' Then he told Geoffrey all the different charges that had been brought against him.

" 'I will not fail you,' Geoffrey said, when he had heard the whole story. 'Now, listen to me.'

"With that he told Beryn how to approach King Isope; for that, he said, was the only way of escape.

" 'Isope, though he has been blind for more than sixty years, is the wisest king on earth, and will have no evil-doing among his citizens, though, as I have showed you, he cannot always find out what is amiss, because they all lie alike. He is very learned —more learned than even the Seven Sages of Rome—and he speaks all manner of tongues; and though he has reigned for seven

score years, his spirit is as strong and active as ever. Now you, Beryn, must go to Isope. He lives in a great palace, which you must not enter by the big main gate, where there are men on guard who would stop you, but by a window in the wall to the right of the gate. When you are inside, you will see in front of you a portcullis; pass by that, and you will come to a great hall paved with gold. There there are set two huge stones, one for ever blazing, so hot that it burns all who come near, and the other so cold that it freezes everything. You must walk very warily and lightly, or you will not get past. At the end of the hall is a door, guarded by two leopards, which will spring out at you to seize you. But there is nothing they hate so much as a man's breath, and if you blow in their faces just at the right moment they will let you leave the hall unhurt. On the other side of this door you will come into the loveliest garden in the whole world, containing every plant and shrub and flower that blows, and birds of pure gold singing and flying. In the middle stands the fairest tree that was ever seen, with leaves of silver and gold. The garden is watched by eight Magicians, four of them sleeping, while the other four keep guard; they cause the forms of horrible dragons to appear, loathly and terrible enough to frighten the bravest man unless he were warned in time. There is also a white lion, which in its time has eaten five hundred or more men. But all these dangers you will pass in safety if you go to the tree in the middle and touch it; whoever does that need fear nothing. Last of all, when you have gone right through the garden, you will see a narrow path, which, as you go along it, grows wider and wider, until you come to Isope's own chamber. There you must tell the King your story as best you can, and have the charges against you properly read, so as to

know clearly of what you are accused. Then come back to me, when you know exactly what will be brought against you, and we will take counsel again together.

" 'No,' said Beryn, 'I would rather lose all my merchandise than go such a journey as you ask!'

" 'Then, for your sake I will go myself,' replied Geoffrey. 'I will return by cock-crow. Be of good cheer while I am gone.'

"With that he set out for the wonderful palace of King Isope."

IV.—Geoffrey, the Master-Rogue

"When Geoffrey was gone, Beryn and his men fell into low spirits again. They feared that he might betray them by some new trick, and all night long they did nothing but rail against their unhappy fate, crying out that their goods would be taken and themselves sold as slaves. When it began to dawn, and cocks were heard giving their earliest crow, a still deeper despair seized them. Still Geoffrey did not return, and at last they made up their minds to try and escape by sailing away.

"They trimmed the sails in a hurry, and made all ready for setting out, and were just about to start when they saw Geoffrey racing to the waterside with his crutch, which he had taken up again to deceive the citizens. He stood on the shore calling loudly to them, and Beryn ordered a boat to be sent to fetch him on board. His men distrusted Geoffrey, but nevertheless they obeyed and brought him before Beryn.

" 'Why have you lost heart, Beryn?' asked Geoffrey as soon as he arrived. 'If you are low-spirited, your men will follow your example. Cheer up, and trust me; I heard all about the law of the case from King Isope, and I will outwit your enemies—ay,

and make them pay you heavy damages, too. You know, the law is that if the accuser does not prove his charge, or fulfill his part of the contract, he must pay the accused the same sum that he sued him for. Now let us have some food.'

"It was by now nearly nine o'clock in the morning, and Beryn and Geoffrey ate and drank, and Beryn felt his spirits reviving. But his men were still distrustful and despondent, and were for throwing Geoffrey overboard; and in their discontent and fear they forgot that their sails were set all ready for departure.

"Hanybald, however, happened to come down to the town bridge, near the quay, and saw the ship trimmed as if for sailing. He began to be terribly afraid that Beryn might escape with his merchandise, leaving him in the lurch, which would be a great loss; for, as provost of Evander's court, he had charge of Beryn's five ships. He hastened, therefore, to call his fellow-citizens together, and roused the whole town till a body of a thousand or so came down to the shore, all armed, to stop Beryn's flight.

"Now was the time for Geoffrey to show his skill, for, though Beryn did not mean to sail away, the mob might not believe his word, and in their anger they might do great harm.

"The cripple ordered the men to shave his beard and hair, so that he should look like a fool; and when they had done this, he went and stood in the prow of one of the ships, capering and bowing and grimacing like a madman.

"'Bless you, sir!' he cried to Hanybald. 'Beryn! Beryn! come here and see the pretty people! Look at all my children dressed up in armor! They have come to help us; a blessing on you all, my dear children!'

"He spoke thus in a high, shrill voice, dancing and making

faces the while, so that Hanybald thought he really was a madman, and the mob laughed heartily at him.

"When Beryn and his men saw that there was no danger, but that the townsmen were satisfied that they would not escape, they landed, and went with Geoffrey towards the court-house. On the way Beryn asked Hanybald, who joined them, why all those armed men had come down to the quay.

" 'You were going to run away,' answered the provost. 'You had your sails ready trimmed.'

" 'You are too wise,' said Geoffrey, still pretending to be half-witted. 'What do you know about ships? Our sails were set so that we might grease the masts!'

" 'But why were you hauling up the anchors?'

" 'That was to make the tempest cease and the sun shine.'

" 'Why were the portholes shut?'

" 'To wake the master.'

"Hanybald saw that Geoffrey was talking nonsense, and his suspicions died away, and still more when the cripple went on to laugh at Beryn too.

" 'Beryn, send your men away. What is the good of going to the court? I shall stay on shipboard.'

" 'Nay,' said Hanybald, taking him by the hand, 'we have no such fools as you among us, and you must stay. You will do well to plead Beryn's cause.'

" 'What do you say, Beryn? Shall I speak for you?'

" 'Hold your peace, fool!' said Beryn angrily. 'You may as well go back to the ship!' For Beryn, too, began to think Geoffrey mad, which was just what the cripple wished. If everyone laughed at him, they would be too surprised to object when he stood up for Beryn before the steward.

" 'Remember I was your partner once in Rome, Beryn,' he went on, 'though you have taken all the goods to yourself since we arrived here. I will stand by you and help you!'

" 'You help me!' cried Beryn, in a rage. 'You are mad! Go back to your ship; I want none of you.'

" 'I will go with you, and plead for you, whether you want me or not, Beryn.'

" 'So you shall,' said Hanybald, clapping him on the back; and he took him by the hand and led him towards the steward's court.

"Thus they talked and wrangled till they reached the court. By that time Beryn was thoroughly angry and miserable, Hanybald thoroughly satisfied and unsuspicious, and Geoffrey thoroughly pleased with the success of his plan so far. It remained to be seen whether his pretended madness would deceive the people so much that they would allow him to plead for Beryn.

"The accusers were already in court, quarreling among themselves as to who should have Beryn's goods. Beryn was given a seat, with his men, and he said that he had come to answer the charges against him.

" 'Do me justice, Sir Steward,' he asked; 'I want no more than that.'

" 'That you shall have,' answered Evander.

" 'Of course he shall,' said Geoffrey, 'whether he likes it or not. If not, I will go to my cousin the Emperor of Rome. Many a cup of wine he and I have drunk together, and shall again. He is always glad to see me.'

"Then he stood upon a bench, as if to get a better view, and turned his shaven head all round to look at the people; and when they saw him they thought him madder than ever.

"The crier called the burgess Syrophanes, who got up quickly and told his tale glibly. He recounted how Beryn had strayed into his house, had been entertained, and had finally played and lost a game of chess, on which they had laid a wager that the loser should either drink up all the salt water which was in the sea, or else do whatever the other bade him.

"Ten other burgesses appeared to support Syrophanes, and swore that what he said was true, as indeed it was. Then the steward asked Beryn for his answer. Beryn sat silent, but Geoffrey stood up and spoke for him.

"'I wonder that you ask us to reply,' he said. 'It is true I am quite ready to do so, unless my mouth is too dry. But let us hear all the accusers first. I am wiser than you think, for no one of you knows exactly what I mean when I speak.'

"They all laughed at his words. But Beryn did not know in the least what to do. Nevertheless, he let Geoffrey's opinion prevail.

"'Sir Steward, I understand this charge,' he said. 'Let me hear the rest, that I may answer them all at once.'

"'I grant it,' answered Evander. 'If you wish to let this madman rule you, you may; he is a wise sort of man to have by you in your need!'

"Then Hanybald the provost stood up and stated his case: he had seized Beryn's ships as pledges, he claimed, by the steward's order, and he had agreed to exchange five loads of the goods in his warehouses for their cargoes.

"'That was our bargain,' he ended, 'and I am ready to let Beryn take his five shipfuls of what he can find in my warehouses whenever he likes.'

"More burgesses swore to this story, which also was true.

"Then the blind man claimed his eyes back from Beryn, and four burgesses swore to *his* truth.

" 'It is a good thing that you have not got your own eyes,' said Geoffrey; 'for you live honestly now with Beryn's. If you had your own, you would be at your old trade of stealing.'

"The people all laughed at this sally, except poor Beryn and his men, who were at a loss to know how to escape the false charges which so many burgesses swore to be true.

"Next came the woman, with fifteen of the citizens to back her. She had her child in her arms, and told a long tale of the wrong her husband Beryn had done her; and her friends swore that she spoke the truth.

" 'Bless me!' said Geoffrey jestingly; 'Beryn, have you a wife? Why do you not go and kiss her and your child? Do not be ashamed of them. I never heard of this wedding; but now they shall come back with us to Rome, and I will teach your son some honest trade!'

"All this was part of his cunning plan for outwitting the accusers; but he had told no one what he meant to do, and Beryn was amazed when he saw him step towards the child as if to kiss him.

"At that the mother looked angry, and stood in the way to prevent him from reaching her son.

" 'You must be mad!' said Geoffrey. 'Let me speak to him. I will teach him the way to earn his living.' Then he saw how glum Beryn and his men were looking. 'Cheer up, Beryn! What is the matter? Have I not promised to help you?'

" 'Cease your foolish prating,' said Beryn. 'It does no good. Have you nothing better to do than jeer at the woman?'

"Last of all came the catchpole Macaigne, with his tale about

his father Melan. Beryn had done the murder, he said, and he showed the knife as proof of it.

" 'The cutler who made this knife can swear to it,' he added. 'There is no other like it: the hilt is studded with precious stones.'

"The cutler came forward and supported Macaigne, and a great many other burgesses swore to the same story.

"There were no more accusers, and Beryn and his friends left the court for a time to decide on their answer; Geoffrey remained behind for a little while. Beryn had lost all heart; he knew not what to reply or how to escape his accusers, nor were his men any more cheerful. They did nothing but weep and lament, and forgot that they had to give an answer. When Geoffrey came in to them, smiling and hopeful, he found that they were in the depths of despair. But nothing could well be worse than their present state, and Beryn at length said, 'We can do nothing ourselves; we trust wholly in you, Geoffrey. Help us as well as you can, and we will contradict nothing that you say.'

" 'That I will!' answered Geoffrey.

"Meanwhile in the court the accusers were quarreling about Beryn's goods.

" 'I do not want his life,' said Macaigne. 'He is rich enough for us all to have a share.'

" 'True,' said the blind man. 'We all brought our charges to get something out of him.'

"Hanybald bit his lips. 'That is all very well,' he said. 'But you have little share in his goods. They are mine, by my bargain with him.'

" 'No,' said Syrophanes, getting up quickly; 'the law is clear

on that point, Hanybald. They are mine, because I was the first to arrest him. You simply held the goods in charge for me, as pledges that he should not escape.'

" 'First come, first served, I suppose,' cried the woman. 'But I trust to your honors, sirs, to give me my share. Remember that I am his wife.'

"Thus they wrangled till Geoffrey and Beryn came back into court, ready to give their answer. Geoffrey entered like a madman, barefooted and grimacing, playing with a little stick, and whistling at every step. The steward and the burgesses all laughed heartily at the strange sight, mocking him for a fool; but he very soon showed them that it was they who were the fools.

" 'Now, enough of these jokes,' he said. 'You have let me plead for Beryn, and I am going to speak now, whether I do it well or ill. Look to yourselves, and judge fairly, for I have been to your king Isope, and I warn you against his wrath! Now for the accusers, one by one!'

"With that he gave his answer on each charge separately, not denying the accusation—for that was impossible in this city of lies—but meeting it with a bigger lie or a countercharge.

" 'First of all, Syrophanes,' he said, 'the loser of the wager was to drink all the salt water which was in the sea, unless he did what the winner ordered. Is not that the plea? Answer me!'

"Evander and the rest of the court sat silent. They began to see that Geoffrey was not the fool they had believed him to be, and they showed their uneasiness by their looks. Geoffrey hastened to drive his nail right home.

" 'Yes, you do not answer! Your silence means consent. That was the plea—that Beryn must obey Syrophanes, or drink

up all the salt water which is in the sea. Well, hear now how Beryn came to make that wager. He did it on purpose, and he lost it on purpose, too. He could have won the game, had he wished, for there is no one in this city who can play chess better than he. Better, do I say? No, nor half so well. And the reason why he lost was this. When we were at sea, a terrible storm of thunder and lightning, wind and rain, fell upon us; we drove before it for fifteen days, and had given up all hope, when suddenly a voice was heard speaking to us out of the storm, saying, "If you wish to be saved, your master Beryn must vow to drink up all the salt water which is in the sea; but no fresh water must be mixed with it." The voice also told Beryn how to separate the salt water in the sea from the fresh. Beryn, to save us, made this vow; but he was not rich enough to carry out this separation by himself, and so, when he reached your city, he gladly agreed to the wager with Syrophanes, who is rich, and can easily afford to take the salt water away from the fresh. You see, then, that it is Syrophanes who is at fault, and not Beryn. Beryn will willingly perform his share of the wager, and drink all the salt water in the sea; but Syrophanes must first separate it from the fresh, because Beryn never agreed to drink any of the fresh.'

"Syrophanes turned pale when he heard this speech, and asked the steward what he should do.

"'The Romans are too cunning for you,' answered Evander, 'and you will have to suffer for your wager. You know that the law orders you to pay damages if you do not fulfill your part. You had better let Beryn go, if he will agree to it.'

"'It is a very clever answer of his,' said Syrophanes, 'and I must do as you say.'

"With that he withdrew his charge. But Geoffrey would have none of it; he was going to exact all his full due, and demanded damages as well, unless Syrophanes could carry out the strict terms of the wager, and separate the salt water from the fresh.

"'You know that that is the law, Sir Steward,' he said. 'My master will perform his share if Syrophanes does his.'

"'But, Geoffrey,' answered Evander, 'how is it possible to divide the salt from the fresh?'

"'You can do it easily if you are rich enough. But we will not insist on it if Syrophanes will pay us heavy damages. Do not try to stand in our way. We have been to Isope, and we know that he will see justice done!'

"So Syrophanes had to give pledges that he would pay heavy damages, and Geoffrey went on to the next case.

"'Now for Hanybald. Five shiploads of whatever goods Beryn could find in his warehouses! Well, let us go and look at the warehouses, to see if there is anything in them that we want.'

"The steward and Hanybald and the rest went to the warehouses, and saw the big empty rooms.

"'Beryn will not get much out of Hanybald,' said the steward, seeing nothing that could be taken away as merchandise. The houses were swept clean, and Beryn was at a loss to think how Geoffrey would get him off.

"'Leave it to me,' said Geoffrey to him quietly; 'they will get the worst of it, for all their cleverness.'

"'Well, Syrophanes has good reason to hate these Romans,' said Evander to Hanybald, 'but I think that you will get the better of them.'

"'I will make them pay, too,' said the blind man. 'No mercy for Beryn.'

"'Now that I have seen how he has served Syrophanes, I vow I will have his life for murdering my father,' added Macaigne.

"But Geoffrey was too cunning for them. He had brought with him two butterflies, as white as snow, which he let loose on the sly and then pretended to see suddenly as they settled on a wall.

"'Look, sirs,' he cried; 'here is our merchandise! We have made our choice of what we can find here! Look, Sir Hanybald—look at the white butterflies on the wall. You must give us five shiploads of those. White butterflies were the very things that we wanted to buy when we left Rome! There is a doctor there who makes a wonderful ointment out of them to cure blindness and other ailments, and we wish to sell some to him. Now then, Sir Hanybald, make haste and give us your answer. We have a long day's work before us.'

"'I shall have to pay,' whispered Hanybald to the steward.

"'Yes,' answered he; 'there are not enough white butterflies in all the world to fill five ships. See if he will release you from the agreement.'

"So Hanybald went to Beryn, and said, 'We are all sorry that you only came here for butterflies, for there are not enough to fill your ships. Will you, therefore, let me off our agreement if I give you back your cargoes?'

"But Geoffrey would not let Beryn yield. 'No, no!' he said; 'keep your word, and we will keep ours. The law is on our side, and we fear nothing while King Isope is alive.'

"So Hanybald also had to pledge himself to pay. Then Geoffrey went on.

" 'Now as to this blind man who says that Beryn has his eyes. It is quite true: Beryn *has* got the blind man's eyes; but the blind man also has Beryn's. They exchanged eyes long ago. They were merchants together, partners, and had everything in common. One year a great famine came on their land, which was followed by great plenty; and in the rejoicings then held a famous juggler appeared, whom all the country round went to see. Beryn and this blind man, his partner, set out among the rest to see him; but on the way the blind man fell ill. He was very eager to see the juggler, but was too ill to move; so he asked Beryn to take his eyes to the theater to see the show, while he remained ill in bed with Beryn's eyes. Beryn agreed, and they exchanged eyes. Beryn went to the show, and the blind man's eyes saw the juggler. But when Beryn came back he found the blind man on his hands and knees, groping about for Beryn's eyes, which he pretended had fallen out of his head and were lost; and from that day to this he has never given Beryn back his eyes, but fled away, and was not discovered till yesterday. Now, Beryn's eyes were a much better pair than his; make him, therefore, restore them; he can have his own back when he does that. Give us justice, Sir Steward. It is not fair that Beryn should have lost his good sight just because of his kindness in taking this fellow's eyes to see the juggler.'

"The blind man saw that he was outwitted, and wanted to withdraw his suit. But Geoffrey pressed him hard, and he, too, had to give pledges that he would pay damages.

"The woman who claimed to be Beryn's wife was soon got rid of.

" 'Of course she is Beryn's wife,' said Geoffrey; 'but must not a wife obey her husband, Sir Steward?'

"As he spoke he looked hard at the woman. She turned pale and flinched, and he went on: 'Yes—come with us. You must join your husband, for weal or woe!'

"But that was not at all what the woman desired; she had only wanted to get money out of Beryn by her charge, and had no wish to become his wife really. So she, too, gave security.

"By this time the court was all amazed. The accusers were utterly put to confusion, for Geoffrey had tricked them all, and more, for he made them pay heavily as well. Only Macaigne now remained, and everyone began to think that he would fare no better than the rest.

" 'Macaigne says his knife was found on Beryn,' Geoffrey continued. 'That also is quite true. There can be no doubt about the knife. But hear how Beryn came to have it. Seven years ago, on the Tuesday before Easter, Beryn's father meant to go early to church. He therefore slept in a little room apart, by himself, so as not to disturb the rest of his household when he rose. Beryn, too, went to church early, but his father was not there; and when he went to the little room to find him, saw him lying on the floor, murdered. The bedclothes were all torn off the bed, and in the dead man's heart this knife of Macaigne's was buried. Macaigne swears it is his knife, and his friends back him. He must answer for the murder. From that Tuesday up to yesterday we had no suspicion of who was the murderer, but now we know.'

" 'I withdraw my plea,' cried Macaigne, starting up pale with terror.

" 'Thank you,' said Geoffrey; 'but we have been put to trouble and vexation in this matter, and we want amends. Sir Steward, give us judgment, or we will go straight to Isope. State the

law on all these five charges, and make an end of the matter by giving us justice.'

"The steward took counsel of twenty-four burgesses, skilled in the law, and asked them for a true judgment; and they said that Geoffrey was right in demanding damages in each case, and that the accusers must all pay a heavy fine to Beryn.

"So Beryn and Geoffrey and their men went back rejoicing to their ships, with all their goods restored to them and a large sum of money as well; Beryn wanted to give Geoffrey half his riches, but Geoffrey only asked to be taken back to Rome, as they had agreed together. And as for Hanybald and his friends, they were left to think over their losses, and make up their minds never to meddle with Romans again.

"But that was not all. Beryn's luck had at last turned, and fresh good fortune was in store for him. As he was holding a great feast with Geoffrey, in honor of their victory, five maidens, splendidly attired, came to him from King Isope, bringing gifts: a cup of gold and azure; a sword in a sheath wrought with fine pearls; a purple robe lined with rich fur; a cloth of gold, the like of which was never before seen; and a palm in token of peace and friendship.

"The maidens knelt and gave the gifts. 'Our lord Isope greets you and sends these presents,' said the first of them, 'and prays that you will visit him to-morrow in his palace, with all your company.'

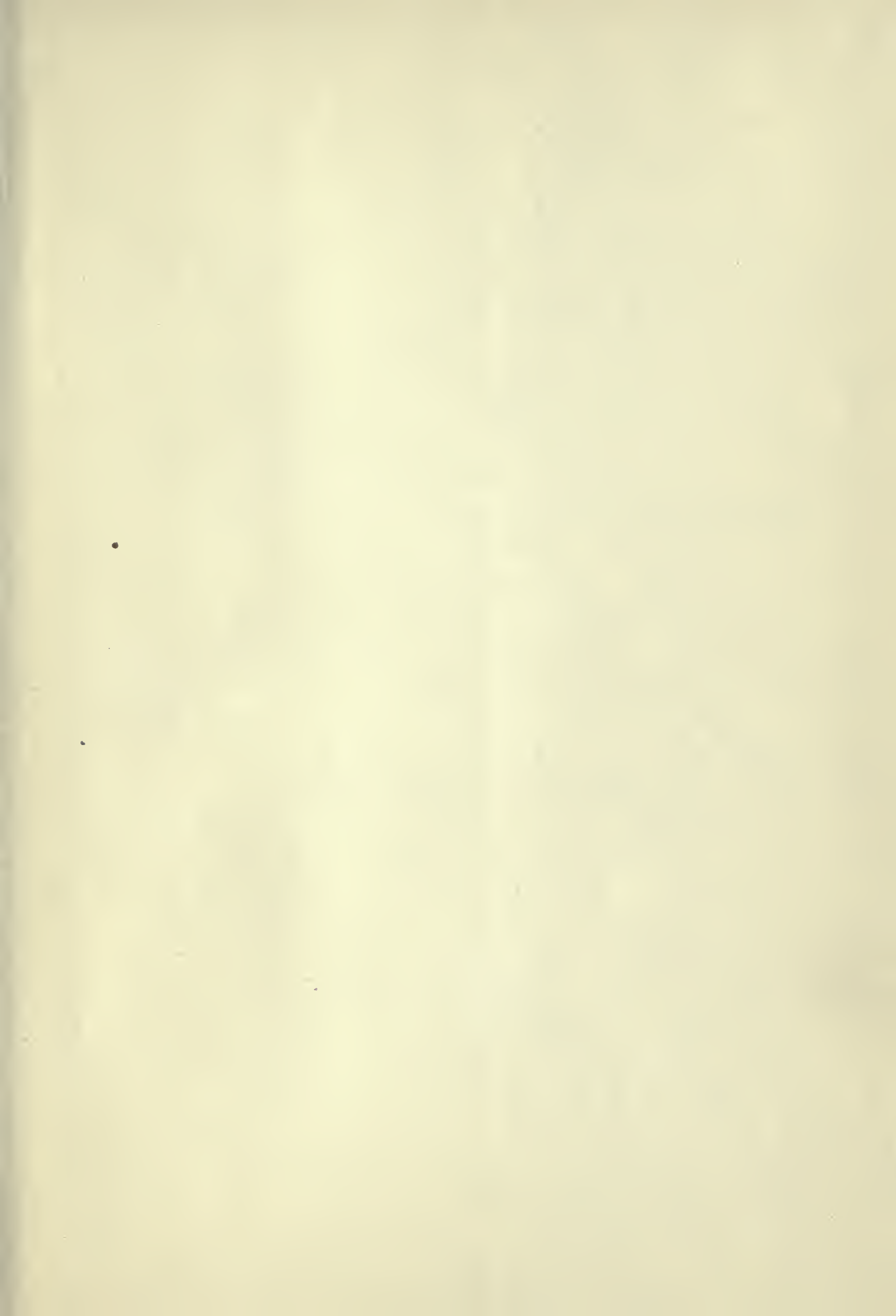
"Beryn took up the splendid sword, and thanked the maidens, and made a feast for them. Then he said that he would visit Isope on the morrow, if the King would grant him an escort and safe conduct, that being the custom of his country. (Geoffrey had bidden him ask this, to increase his dignity.)

"The next day twelve barons came and escorted Beryn to the King. He stayed three days in the palace, making merry and feasting royally; and Isope liked him so well that he asked him to stay always in that country. If he would remain, he should wed the King's daughter, a maiden as wise and lovely as could be imagined.

"Beryn was willing to agree to this. So he married Isope's daughter, and was very happy with her. He and the King and Geoffrey, who stayed with them, instead of going back to Rome, together ruled the country, and by their wise government led the citizens away from their lying customs and evil habits."

THE LAST OF THE PILGRIMS

HERE the Merchant's second story came to an end, and here, too, must end the tales told by these Canterbury pilgrims. The great English poet, Geoffrey Chaucer, died without having time to round off the pilgrimage completely, and though a few stories were afterwards written by other writers to fill up gaps, no one has ever since been able to finish the whole as Chaucer himself might perhaps have done if he had lived. And, as we do not know when the pilgrims got back to the Tabard again, or what stories they told during the rest of their journey, we can never find out who had the fine supper promised by the Host. Was it the honorable Knight, or the young Squire, or the gentle Prioress, or the merry rascal of a Pardoner, or any one you like of the others? That you must guess for yourself; and perhaps when you have made up your mind, you will be able to fancy the winner supping happily at the Tabard with his friends, after their journey through Kent so long ago.



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