LADY SYBIL'S CHOICE

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A Tale of the Crusades

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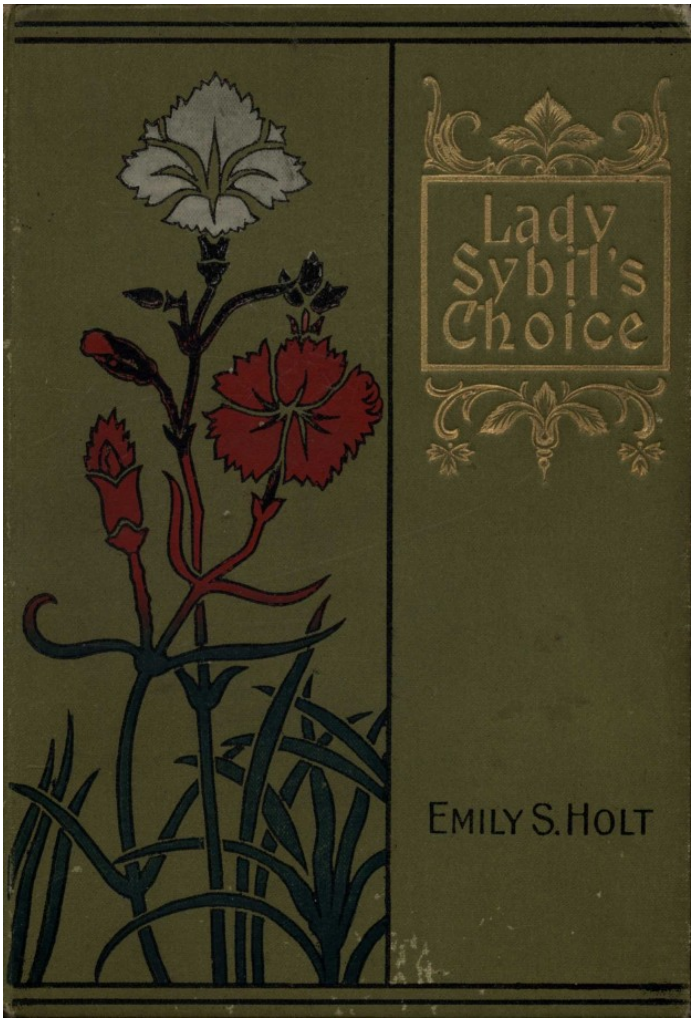
Lady Sybil's Choice

A Tale of the Crusades

BY



Cover art

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P. 317.

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EMILY SARAH HOLT
AUTHOR OF "MISTRESS MARGERY," "SISTER ROSE," ETC.

"This Tale in ancient Chronicle,—
In wording old and quaint,
In classic language of the past,
In letters pale and faint,—
This tale is told. Yet once again
Let it be told to-day—
The old, old tale of woman's love,
Which lasteth on for aye."

NEW EDITION

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1879

PREFACE.

"Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know Him, not see His days?"

From the earliest ages of the world, the needs-be of suffering has been a mystery. Down to the latest, it will be a mystery still. Truly, the more we "know Him," the less mystery it is to us: for even where we cannot see, we can trust His love. Yet there are human analogies, which may throw some faint light on the dark question: and one of these will be found in the following pages. "What I do, thou knowest not now"—sometimes because it is morally impossible,—our finite

capacity could not hold it: but sometimes, too, because we could not be trusted with the knowledge. In their case, there is one thing we can do—wait. "O thou of little faith!—*wherefore* didst thou doubt?"

"Oh restful, blissful ignorance!
'Tis blessed not to know.
It keeps me still in those kind arms
Which will not let me go,
And hushes my soul to rest
On the bosom that loves me so!

"So I go on, not knowing,—
I would not, if I might.
I would rather walk in the dark with God
Than walk alone in the light;
I would rather walk with Him by faith,
Than walk alone by sight.

"My heart shrinks back from trials
Which the future may disclose;
Yet I never had a sorrow
But what the dear Lord chose:
So I send the coming tears back
With the whispered word, 'He knows!'"

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LADY SYBIL'S CHOICE

CHAPTER I.

GUY TAKES THE CROSS .

"But what are words, and what am I?
An infant crying in the night;
An infant crying for the light;
And with no language but a cry."
—TENNYSON.

Alix says I am a simpleton. I don't think it is particularly pleasant. Sometimes she says I am a perfect simpleton: and I cannot say that I like that any better. Nor do I think that it is very civil in one's sister to put her opinion on record in this certainly perspicuous, but not at all complimentary manner. Still, I have heard her say it so many times that I might almost have come to believe it, if she did

not say so of anybody but me. But when—as she did this morning—she says Guy is a simpleton, that I cannot stand with any patience. Because there is nobody like Guy in all the world. He is the best, kindest, dearest brother that ever a girl had or could have. And it is a shame of Alix to say such things. I am sure of it.[#]

[#] The brothers in this family are historical persons; the sisters fictitious.

I do not know how it is, but Alix seems vexed that I should like Guy best of all my brothers. She says I ought to make companions of Amaury and Raoul, who are nearer me in age. But is that any reason for liking people? At that rate, I ought to love Alix least of all, because she is furthest off. And—though I should not like her to know that I said so—I am not at all sure that I don't.

Being like you in character, it seems to me, is a much better reason for choosing companions, than being near you in age. And I think Guy is much more like me than Amaury or Raoul either. They don't care for the same things that I do, and Guy does. Now, how can you like a man's company when you can never agree with him?

Alix says my tastes—and, of course, Guy's—are very silly. I believe she thinks there is no sense in anything but spinning and cooking and needlework. But I think Amaury and Raoul are quite as foolish as we are. Amaury admires everything that shines and glitters, and he is not at all particular whether it is gold or brass. I believe, this minute, he knows more about samite, and damask, and velvet, than I do. You would think the world was coming to an end by the wail he sets up if his cap has a feather less than he intended, or the border of his tunic is done in green instead of yellow. Is that like being a man? Guillot says Amaury should have been a woman, but I think he should have stayed a baby. Then Raoul cares for things that bang and clash. In his eyes, everybody ought to be a soldier, and no tale is worth hearing if it be not about a tournament or the taking of a city.

Now I do think Guy and I have more sense. What we love to hear is of deeds really noble,—of men that have saved their city or their country at the risk of their own lives; of a mother that has sacrificed herself for her child; of a lady who was ready to see her true knight die rather than stain his honour. When we were little children at old Marguerite's knee, and she used to tell us tales as a reward when we had been good,—and who ever knew half so many stories as dear old Marguerite?—while Raoul always wanted a bloody battle, and Amaury a royal pageant, and Alix what she called something practical—which, so far as I could see, meant something that was not interesting—and Guillot, he

said, "Something all boys, with no girls in it"—the stories Guy and I liked were just those which our dear old nurse best loved to tell. There was the legend of Monseigneur Saint Gideon, who drove the heathen Saracens out of his country with a mere handful of foot-soldiers; and that of Monseigneur Saint David, who, when he was but a youth, fought with the Saracen giant, Count Goliath, who was forty feet high—Guillot and Raoul used to like that too; and of Monseigneur Saint Daniel, who on a false accusation was cast to the lions, and in the night the holy Apostle Saint Peter appeared to him, and commanded the lions not to hurt him; and the lions came and licked the feet of Monseigneur Saint Peter. The story that Amaury liked best of all was about Madame Esther, the Queen of Persia, and how she entreated her royal lord for the lives of certain knights that had been taken prisoners; but he always wanted to know exactly what Madame Esther had on, and even I thought that absurd, for of course Marguerite had to make it up, as the legend did not tell, and he might have done that for himself. Raoul best loved the great legend of the wars of Troy, and how Monseigneur Achilles dragged Monseigneur Hector at the wheels of his chariot: which I never did like, for I could not help thinking of Madame the Queen, his mother, and Madame his wife, who sat in a latticed gallery watching, and remembering how their hearts would bleed when they saw it. The story Guy liked best was of two good knights of Greece, whose names were Sir Damon and Sir Pythias, and how they so loved that each was ready and anxious to lay down his life for the other: and I think what I best loved to hear was the dear legend of Madame Saint Magdalene, and how she followed the blessed steps of our Lord wherever He went, and was the first to whom He deigned to appear after His resurrection.

I wish, sometimes, that I had known my mother. I never had any mother but Marguerite. If she heard me, I know she would say, "Ha, my Damoiselle does not well to leave out the Damoiselle Alix." But I am sure Alix was never anything like a mother. If she were, mothers must be queer people.

Why don't I like Alix better? Surely the only reason is not because she is my half-sister. Our gracious Lord and father was twice married,—first to the Lady Eustacie de Chabot, who was mother of Alix, and Guillot, and Guy, and Amaury, and Raoul: and then she died, soon after Raoul was born; and the year afterwards Monseigneur married my mother, and I was her only child. But that does not hinder my loving Guy. Why should it hinder my loving Alix?

Most certainly something does hinder it,—and some tremendous thing hinders my loving Cousin Hugues de la Marche. I hate him. Marguerite says "Hush!" when I say so. But Hugues is so intensely hateable, I am sure she need not. He is more like Guillot than any other of us, but rougher and more boisterous by far. I can't bear him. And he always says he hates girls, and he can't bear me. So why should I not hate him?

O Mother, Mother! I wish you had stayed with me!

Somehow, I don't think of her as I do of any one who is alive. I suppose, if she were alive, I should call her "Fair Madame," and be afraid to move in her presence. But being dead seems to bring her nearer. I call her "Mother," and many a time I say her pretty, gentle name, Clémence,—not aloud, but in my thoughts. Would she have loved me if she had stayed?

Does she love me, where she is with God? They say she was so gentle and pious, I am sure she must be in Heaven. She stayed only a very little while with us; I was not two years old when she died. Marguerite says she used to carry me up and down the long gallery, looking tenderly down at my baby face, and call me her darling, her dove, her precious Elaine. Oh, why could I not have heard her, to remember it, only once?

There is no need to ask why I feel lonely and desolate, and muse on my dead mother, as I always do when I am miserable. I can never be anything else, now that Guy is gone. Monseigneur, our gracious Lord and father, gave consent a month since that Guy should take the holy cross, and yesterday morning he set forth with a company on his perilous journey. Was there no one in all the world but my Guy to fight for our Lord's sepulchre? And does our Lord think so very much about it, that He does not care though a maiden's heart be broken and her life desolate, if she give up her best beloved to defend it?

Well, I suppose it is wrong to say that. The good God is always good, of course. And I suppose it is right that Guy should put the sepulchre before me. He is the true knight, to sacrifice himself to duty; and I am not the noble-hearted damsel, if I wish he had done otherwise. And I suppose the great tears that fell on that red cross while I was broidering it, were displeasing to the good God. He ought to have the best. Oh yes! I see that, quite clearly. And yet I wonder why He wanted my best, when He has all the saints and angels round Him, to do Him homage. And I had only Guy. I cannot understand it.

Oh dear! I do get so puzzled, sometimes. I think this is a very perplexing world to live in. And it is of no use to say a word to Alix, because she only calls me a simpleton, and that does not explain anything: and Marguerite says, "Hush! My Damoiselle would not speak against the good God?"

And neither of them helps me a bit. They do not see that I never mean to speak against the good God. I only want to understand. They do not feel the same sort of want, I suppose, and so they think it wicked in me to feel it.

Does my mother understand it all? Must one die, to understand? And if so, why?

Guy would let me ask him such questions. I do not know that he saw the answer any better than I did, but at least we could agree in feeling them, and could try to puzzle the way out. But Alix appears not even to see what I mean.

And it is disheartening, when one takes the trouble to brace up one's courage to ask such questions from somebody above one, of whom one feels ever so little afraid, only to be told in reply what the same person had told one a hundred times before—that one is a simpleton.

I wish somebody would listen to me. If I could have seen a saint,—some one who lived in perpetual communion with our Lord, and knew all things! But do saints know all things? If so, why could not I be a saint myself, and then I should know too?

Well, I have no doubt of the answer to that question. For if I were a saint, I must first be a nun; and that would mean to go away from home, and never, never see Guy any more.

Oh no! that would not do. So it is plain I can never be a saint.

When I come to think about it, I doubt if there ever were a saint in our family. Of course we are one of the oldest families in Poitou, and indeed I might say, in France; for Count Hugues I. lived about nine hundred years after our Lord, and that is nearly as far back as Charlemagne. And Monseigneur has no one above him but our gracious Lord the Count of Poitou, who is in his turn a vassal of our suzerain, the King of England, and he pays homage to the King of France.

I never did like that, and I don't now. I cannot see why our King should pay homage to the King of France for his dominions on this side of the sea.[#] The French say there were Kings in France before there ever were in England. Well, that may be so: but I am sure it was not long before, and our King is every bit as good as the King of France. When Raoul wants to tease me, he says I am a Frenchwoman. And I won't be called a Frenchwoman. I am not a subject of King Louis. I am a Poitevine, and a subject of the Lord Henry, King of England and Count of Poitou, to begin with: and under him, of his son the Lord Richard,[#] who is now our young Count; and beneath him again, of Monseigneur, my own father, who has as much power in his own territory as the King himself.

[#] This homage, exacted by the Kings of France, was always a sore subject with the Kings of England, who took every opportunity of evading that personal payment of it which it was the anxiety of the French monarchs to secure.

[#] Cœur-de-Lion.

It is true, Monseigneur's territory is not very large. But Father Eudes told us one day, when he was giving us our Latin lessons, that the great Emperor of Rome, Monseigneur Julius Cæsar, who was such a wonderful man and a great magi-

cian, used to say that he would rather be the first in a village than the second in imperial Rome itself. And that is just what I feel. I would rather be the Damoiselle Elaine, daughter of Monseigneur the Count of Lusignan, than I would be the niece or cousin of the Queen of France. I do like to be at the top of everything. And I would rather be at the top of a little thing than at the bottom of a big one.

Marguerite smiles and shakes her head when I say so to her. She says it is pleasanter down at the bottom. It makes me laugh to hear her. It is natural enough that she should think so, as she is only a villein, and of course she is at the bottom. And it is very well if she likes it. I could never bear it. But then I am noble, and it could not be expected that I should do so.

Though we never had a saint in our House, yet, as every one knows, we sprang from a supernatural source. The root of the House of Lusignan was the Fairy Mélusine, who was the loveliest creature imaginable, but half woman and half serpent. I do not know when she lived, but it must have been ages ago; and she built the Castle of Lusignan by enchantment. Sometimes, on a still summer evening, any one who is out alone will catch a glimpse of her, bathing in the fountain which stands in the pleasance.[#] I would not cross the pleasance after dark on a summer evening—no, not to be made a queen. I should be frightened to death of seeing the Lady Mélusine. For when any one of our line is about to die, she is sure to appear, so I should think I was going to die if I saw her. She comes, too, when any great calamity is threatening France. Perhaps I should not be quite sure to die, but I would rather not risk it. I never did see her, the saints be thanked; and Marguerite says she never did. I think she cannot have appeared for a long time. About forty years ago, before the death of the Lady Poncette, Countess of Angoulême, who was a daughter of our House, Arlette, the mother of our varlet Robert, thought she saw the Lady Mélusine; but it was nearly dark, and there were trees between them, and Arlette is near-sighted, so it was not possible to be sure. But she says her mother-in-law's niece's grand-aunt really did see her, and no mistake at all about it. She was bathing in the fountain, and she splashed her long tail about till the maiden almost lost her wits from the fright. And the very next year, Count Hugues the Good was murdered by the Duke of Guienne's people. Which shows plainly that there are such things as ghosts.

[#] Pleasure-grounds.

The night before Guy went away—can it be two evenings since,—only two?—we crept into the long gallery, as we two always do when we want a quiet talk, and sat down in that window from which you get the lovely view of the church

spire through the trees, across the river. That is always our favourite window. Guy was trying to comfort me, and I am rather afraid I was crying. And he said, drawing me up to him, and kissing me,—

"Now, my little Elaine, there have been tears enough for once. I am not going to forget thee, any more than thou meanest to forget me. When I have fought the Saracens, and taken Saladin captive, and brought him in chains to Jerusalem, and the King has made me a Count, and given me a beautiful lady for my wife, and everybody is talking about me,"—of course I knew that was only Guy's fun; he did not really expect all that,—"then," he went on, "I will send home for Amaury and my little pet, and you shall come to me in the Holy Land. Monseigneur promised me that, thou knowest. He said it would be an excellent thing for thee; because thou wouldst not only have all thy sins forgiven at the Holy Sepulchre, but very likely I should have the chance of getting a good husband for thee. And I have talked well to Amaury about taking care of thee on the journey; and Marguerite must attend thee. So look forward to that, Lynette, and dry those red eyes."

"They will be red till thou comest back, Guy!" said I, with another burst of tears.

"I am sure I hope not!" he answered, laughing. "They will be very ugly if they are; and then how am I to get thee a husband?"

"I don't care about one, I thank thee," said I "So that does not signify."

"Ah, that is because thou art fourteen," said Guy; "wait till thou art four-and-twenty."

There, now! if I could have been vexed with my own dear Guy, and just when he was going away for ever—at least it looks very like for ever—but of course I could not. But why will men—even the very best of them—always fancy that a girl cares more for a husband than anything else in this world? However, I let it pass. How could I quarrel with Guy?

"Guy," I said, "dost thou care very much about having a beautiful lady for thy wife?"

Guy takes the Cross.

"Oh, certainly!" replied Guy, pursing up his lips, and pretending to be grave.

I did not like the idea one bit. I felt more inclined to cry till Guy came back than ever.

"What will she be like, Guy?" I asked, trying not to show it.

"She will be the loveliest creature in all the world," said Guy, "with eyes as black as sloes, and hair like a raven's plumage; and so rich that whenever she puts her hand in her pocket thou wilt hear the besants go chink, chink against each other."

"Wilt thou love her, Guy?" I said, gulping down my thoughts.

"To distraction!" replied Guy, casting up his eyes.

Well, I knew all the while it was nonsense, but I did feel so miserable I could not tell what to do. I know Raoul and Guillot have a notion that they are only fulfilling the ends of their being by teasing their sisters; but it was something so very new for Guy.

"But thou wilt not give over loving *me*, Guy?" I wailed, and I am sure there were tears in my voice as well as my eyes.

"My dear, foolish little Lynette!" said Guy, half laughing, and smoothing my hair; "dost thou not know me any better than that? Why, I shall be afraid of talking nonsense, or sense either, if thou must needs take it to heart in that style."

I felt rather comforted, but I did not go on with that. There was something else that I wanted to ask Guy, and it was my last opportunity.

"Guy," I said softly, after a moment's pause, "canst thou remember my mother?"

"Oh yes, darling," he said. "I was eleven years old when she died."

"Didst thou love her?" said I.

"Very dearly," he answered—quite grave now.

"Am I like her, Guy?"

Guy looked down on me, and smiled.

"Yes—and no," he said. "The Lady Clémence had lighter hair than thou; and her smile was very sweet. Thine eyes are darker, too, and brighter—there is something of the falcon in them: she had the eyes of the dove. Yet there is a likeness, though it is not easy to tell thee what."

"Did Monseigneur love her very much, Guy?" I said.

"More than he ever loved any other, I think," answered Guy. "He was married to my mother when both were little children, as thou knowest is generally the case: but he married thine for love. And—I don't know, but I always fancy that is the reason why he has ever been unwilling to have us affianced in infancy. When people are married as babies, and when they grow up they find that they do not like each other, it must be very disagreeable, I should think."

"I should think it was just horrible, Guy," said I. "But Alix and Guillot were affianced as babies."

"So they were," said he. "But I doubt if Guillot ever cared about it."

"Why, is Umberge one to care about?" I replied. "There is nothing in her of any sort. Was Alix very sorry, Guy, when her betrothed died? How old was she?"

"About ten years old," he said. "Oh no—not she. I do not think she had seen him five times."

"Well," I said, "I am very glad that I was not treated in that way."

So we went on talking. I hardly know what we talked about, or rather what we did not; for it was first one thing and then another, as our thoughts led

that way. I asked Guy if he thought that our mothers knew what befel us here on earth, and he said he supposed they must, for how else could the saints and angels hear us?

I saw old Marguerite at one end of the gallery, and I am sure she was come to bid me go to bed: but as soon as she caught sight of Guy and me talking in the window, she made believe to be about something else, and slipped away again. She knew I wanted to have my talk out with Guy. The last talk I may ever have with him for years!

And now it is all over, and Guy is gone.

I wonder how he will get on! Will he do some grand, gallant deed, and be sent for to the Court of the Holy Land, and made a Count or a Duke?—and have all sorts of jewels and riches given him? Perhaps the Queen will put a chaplet of flowers on his head, and all the Princesses will dance with him, and he will be quite a hero. But about that beautiful lady,—I don't feel at all comfortable about her! I cannot tell whether I should love her or hate her. If she did not almost worship Guy, I am sure I should hate her.

And then there is another side to the picture, which I do not like to look at in the least. Instead of all this, Guy may get taken prisoner, and may languish out twenty years in some Saracen dungeon—perhaps, all his life!

Oh dear, dear! I don't know what to do! And the worst of it is, that nothing I can do will make any difference.

Why does the good God let there be any Saracens? Marguerite says—and so does Father Eudes, so it must be true—that God can do everything, and that He wants everybody to be a good Christian. Then why does He not make us all good Christians? That is what I want to know. Oh, I cannot, cannot make it out!

But then they all say, "Hush, hush!" and "Fie, Damoiselle!" as if I had said something very wicked and shocking. They say the good God will be very angry. Why is the good God angry when we want to know?

I wonder why men and women were ever made at all. I wonder why *I* was made. Did the good God want me for something, that He took the pains to make me? Oh, can nobody tell me why the good God wanted me?

He must be good, for He made all so beautiful. And He might have made things ugly. But then, sometimes, He lets such dreadful things happen. Are there not earthquakes and thunderstorms? And why does He let nice people die? Could not—well, I suppose that is wicked. No, it isn't! I may as well say it as think it.—Would it not have done as well if Alix had died, and my mother had lived? It would have been so much nicer! And what difference would it have made in Heaven—I hope Alix would have gone there—where they have all the angels, and all the saints? Surely they could have spared my mother—better than I can.

Well, I suppose—as Alix says when she wants one to be quiet—"it is no use talking." Things are so, and I cannot change them. And all my tears will not give me Guy back. I must try to think of the neuvaine[#] which he has promised to offer for me at the Holy Sepulchre, and hope that he won't be taken prisoner, and that he will be made a Count, and—well, and try to reconcile myself to that beautiful lady who is to have Guy instead of me. Oh dear me!

[#] Nine days' masses.

Now, there is another thing that puzzles me. (Every thing puzzles me in this world. I wish there had been another to which I could have gone, where things would not have puzzled me.) If God be everywhere—as Father Eudes says—why should prayers offered at the Holy Sepulchre be of more value than prayers offered in my bedchamber? I cannot see any reason, unless it were that God[#] loves the Holy Land so very much, because He lived and died there, that He is oftener there than anywhere else, and so there is a better chance of getting Him to hear. But how then can He be everywhere?

[#] In using this one of the Divine Names, a mediæval Romanist almost always meant to indicate the Second Person of the Trinity only.

Why will people—wise people, I mean—not try to answer such questions? Marguerite only says, "Hush, then, my Damoiselle!" Alix says, "Oh, do be quiet! When will you give over being so silly?" And Monseigneur pats me on the head, and answers, "Why should my cabbage trouble her pretty little head? Those are matters for doctors of the schools, little one. Go thou and call the minstrels, or bind some smart ribbons in thine hair; that is more fit for such maidens as thou."

Do *they* never want to know? And why should the answers be only fit for learned men, if the questions keep coming and worrying me? If I could once know, I should give over wanting to know. But how can I give over till I do?

Either the world has got pulled into a knot, or else I have. And so far from being able to undo me, nobody seems to see that I am on a knot at all.

"If you please, Damoiselle, the Damoiselle Alix wishes to know where your Nobleness put the maccaroons."

"Oh dear, Héloïse! I forgot to make them. Can she not do without them?"

"If you please, Damoiselle, your noble sister says that the Lady Umberge

will be here for the spice this afternoon, and your Excellence is aware that she likes maccaroons."

Yes, I am—better than I like her. I never did see anybody eat so many at once as she does. She will do for once with cheesecakes. I would not mind staying up all night to make maccaroons for Guy, but I am sure cheesecakes are good enough for Umberge. And Alix does make good cheese-cakes—I will give her that scrap of praise.

"Well, Héloïse—I don't know. I really think we should do. But I suppose—is there time to make them now?"

"If you please, Damoiselle, it is three o'clock by the sundial."

"Then it is too late."

And I thought, but of course I did not say to Héloïse,—How Alix will scold! I heard her step on the stairs, and I fairly ran. But I did not lose my lecture.

"Elaine!" cried Alix's shrill voice, "where are you?"

Alix might be a perfect stranger, for the way in which she always calls me *you.* I came out. I knew it was utterly useless to try to hide.

"Where have you put those new maccaroons?"

"They are not made, Alix," I said, trying to look as if I did not care.

"Not made? Saint Martin of Tours help us! What can you have been doing?"

I was silent.

"I say, what were you doing?" demanded Alix, with a stamp of her foot.

"Never mind. I forgot the maccaroons."

If I had been speaking to any one but Alix, I should have added that I was sorry. But she is always so angry that it seems to dry up any regret on my part.

"You naughty girl!" Alix blazed out. "You very, very naughty girl! There is no possibility of relying on you for one instant. You go dreaming away, and forget everything one tells you. You are silly, *silly*!"

The tone that Alix put into that last word! It was enough to provoke all the saints in the calendar.

"There will be plenty without them," said I.

"Hold your tongue, and don't give me any impudence!" retorted Alix.

I thought I might have said the same. If Alix would speak more kindly, I am sure I should not get so vexed. I can't imagine what she would say if I were to do something really wicked, for she exhausts her whole vocabulary on my gathering the wrong flowers, or forgetting to make cakes.

"Don't be cross, Alix," I said, trying to keep the peace. "I really did forget them."

"Oh dear, yes, I never doubted it!" answered Alix, in that way of hers which always tries my patience. "Life is sacred to the memory of Guy, but my trouble and Umberge's likings are of no consequence at all! And it does not matter that

the Baron de Montbeillard and his lady will be here, and that we shall have a dish too little on the table. Not in the least!"

"Well, really, Alix, I don't think it does much matter," said I.

"Of course not. And the Lady de Montbeillard will not go home and tell everybody what a bad housekeeper I am, and how little I care to have things nice for my guests—Oh dear, no!"

"If you treat her kindly, I should think her very ungrateful if she did," said I.

Alix flounced away with—"I wish you were gone after Guy!"

And so did I.

But at night, just before I dropped asleep, a new idea came to me—an idea that never occurred to me before.

Do I try Alix as much as she tries me?

Oh dear! I hope not. It cannot be. I don't think it is possible. Is it?

I wish I had not forgotten those cakes. Alix did seem so put out. And I suppose it was rather annoying—perhaps.

I did not like her saying that I was not to be trusted. I don't think that was fair. And I cannot bear injustice. Still, I did forget the cakes. And if she had trusted me, it was only reasonable that she should feel disappointed. But she did not need to have been so angry, and have said such disagreeable things. Well, I suppose I was angry too; but I show my anger in a different way from Alix. I do not know which of us was more wrong. I think it was Alix. Yes, I am sure it was. She treats me abominably. It is enough to make anybody angry.

Those limes seem to come up and look reproachfully at me, when I say that. I was not at all well—it might be three years ago: rather feverish, and very cross. And two travelling pedlars came to the Castle gate. One sold rare and costly fruits, and the other silken stuffs. Now I know that Alix had been saving up her money for a gold-coloured ribbon, for which she had a great fancy; and there was a lovely one in that pedlar's stock—in fact, I have never since seen one quite so pretty. Alix had just enough to buy it. She could not get any more, because the treasurer was away with Monseigneur at the hawking. But she saw my wistful glances at the limes in the other pedlar's panniers, and she bought some for me. They were delicious: but Alix went without her gold-coloured ribbon. She had no other chance of it, for the pedlar was on his way to the great Whitsuntide fair at Poictiers, and he would not stay even one night.[#]

[#] At the period of this story, shops were nearly unknown except in the largest towns. Country families—noble, gentle, or peasant—had to rely on laying in a stock of goods at the great fairs, held at Easter, Whitsuntide, Michaelmas, and Christmas; and for anything wanted between those peri-

ods, recourse was had to travelling pedlars, who also served as carriers and postmen when occasion demanded it.

I wonder if it be possible that Alix really loves me,—just one little bit! And I wonder if we could give over rasping one another as we do. It would be very difficult.

But if I ever do follow Guy, I will bring back, from Byzantium or Damascus, something beautiful for Alix, to make up for that gold ribbon. It was good of her. And I do wish I had remembered those maccaroons!

CHAPTER II.

TWO SURPRISES FOR ELAINE .

"I feel within me
A mind above all earthly dignities,
A still and quiet conscience."
—SHAKSPERE.

I should like to know, if I could find out, what it is that makes Alix have such a fancy for Lady Isabeau de Montbeillard. I think she is just abominable. She finishes off every sentence with a little crackling laugh, which it drives me wild to hear. It makes no difference what it is about. Whether it be, "Dear Damoiselle, how kind you are!" or "Do you not think my lord looks but poorly?" they all end up with "Ha, ha, ha!" Sometimes I feel as though I could shake her like Lovel does the rats.

If Lady Isabeau were like Alix in her ways, I would understand it better; but they are totally unlike, and yet they seem to have a fancy for each other.

As for the Baron, I don't care a bit about him any way. He is like Umberge in that respect—there is nothing in him either to like or dislike. And if there can be still less of anything than in him, I think it is in his brother, Messire Raymond, who sits with his mouth a little open, staring at one as if one were a curiosity in a show.

Alix told me this morning that I was too censorious. I am afraid that last

sentence looks rather like it. Perhaps I had better stop.

The Baron and his lady went with us to the hawking, and so did Messire Raymond; but he never caught so much as a sparrow. Then, after we came back, I had to try on my new dress, which Marguerite had just finished. It really is a beauty. The under-tunic is of crimson velvet, the super-tunic of blue samite embroidered in silver; the mantle of reddish tawny, with a rich border of gold. I shall wear my blue kerchief with it, which Monseigneur gave me last New Year's Day, and my golden girdle studded with sapphires. The sleeves are the narrowest I have yet had, for the Lady de Montbeillard told Alix that last time she was at the Court, the sleeves were much tighter at the wrist than they used to be, and she thinks, in another twenty years or so, the pocketing sleeve[#] may be quite out of fashion. It would be odd if sleeves were to be made the same width all the way down. But the Lady de Montbeillard saw Queen Marguerite[#] when she was at Poictiers, and she says that the Queen wore a tunic of the most beautiful pale green, and her sleeves were the closest worn by any lady there.

[#] One of the most uncomely and inconvenient vagaries of fashion. The sleeve was moderately tight from shoulder to elbow, and just below the elbow it went off in a wide pendant sweep, reaching almost to the knee. The pendant part was used as a pocket.

[#] Daughter of Louis VII., King of France, and Constança of Castilla: wife of Henry, eldest son of Henry II. of England. Her husband was crowned during his father's life, and by our mediæval chroniclers is always styled Henry the Third.

I wish I were a queen. It is not because I think it would be grand, but because queens and princesses wear their coronets over their kerchiefs instead of under. And it is such a piece of business to fasten one's kerchief every morning with the coronet underneath. Marguerite has less trouble than I have with it, as she has nothing to fasten but the kerchief. And if it is not done to perfection I am sure to hear of it from Alix.

When Marguerite was braiding my hair this morning, I asked her if she knew why she was made. She was ready enough with her answer.

"To serve you, Damoiselle, without doubt."

"And why was I made, dost thou think, Marguerite? To be served by thee—or to serve some one else?"

"Of course, while the Damoiselle is young and at home, she will serve Monseigneur. Then, when the cavalier comes who pleases Monseigneur and the good God, he will serve the Damoiselle. And afterwards,—it is the duty of a good wife to serve her lord. And of course, all, nobles and villeins, must serve the good

God."

"Well, thou hast settled it easier than I could do it," said I. "But, Margot, dost thou never become tired of all this serving?"

"Not now, Damoiselle."

"What dost thou mean by that?"

"Ah, there was a time," said Marguerite, and I thought a blush burned on her dear old face, "when I was a young, silly maiden, and very, very foolish, Damoiselle."

"Dost thou think all maidens silly, Margot?"

"Very few wise, Damoiselle. My foolish head was full of envious thoughts, I know that—vain wishes that I had been born a noble lady, instead of a villein maiden. I thought scorn to serve, and would fain have been born to rule."

"How very funny!" said I. "I never knew villeins had any notions of that sort. I thought they were quite content."

"Is the noble Damoiselle always quite content? Pardon me."

"Why, no," said I. "But then, Margot, I am noble, and nobles may rightfully aspire. Villeins ought to be satisfied with the lot which the good God has marked out for them, and with the honour of serving a noble House."

"Ha, Damoiselle! The Damoiselle has used a deep, strong word. Satisfy! I believe nothing will satisfy any living heart of man or woman,—except that one thing."

"What one thing?"

"I am an ignorant villein, my Damoiselle. I do not know the holy Latin tongue, as ladies do. But now and then Father Eudes will render some words of the blessed Evangel into French in his sermon. And he did so that day—when I was satisfied."

"What was it that satisfied thee, then, Margot?"

"They were words, Father Eudes said, of the good God Himself, when He walked on middle earth among us men. 'Come unto Me,' He said, 'all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"

"But I do not understand, Marguerite. How did those words satisfy thee?"

"The words did not, Damoiselle. But the thing did. I just took the blessed Lord at His word, and went to Him, and, thanks be to His holy Name, He gave me rest."

"What dost thou mean, Margot?"

"Will the dear Damoiselle not come and try? She will want rest, some day."

"Had I not better wait till I am tired?" said I, laughingly.

"Ah, yes! we never want rest till we are tired.—But not wait to come to the merciful Lord. Oh no, no!"

"Nay, I cannot comprehend thee, Margot."

"No, my Damoiselle. She is not likely to know how to come until she wants to do it. When she does want it, the good God will hear the Damoiselle, for He heard her servant."

"Didst thou entreat the intercession of Saint Marguerite?"

"Ah, no. I am but an ignorant old woman. The dear Lord said, 'Come unto *Me*.' And I thought, perhaps, He meant it. So I just went."

"But how couldst thou, Margot?"

"If it please my Damoiselle, I did it. And if He had been angry, I suppose He would not have heard me."

"But how dost thou know He did hear thee?"

"When the Damoiselle entreats Monseigneur to give her a silver mark, and he opens his purse and gives it, is it possible for her to doubt that he has heard her? The good God must have heard me, because He gave me rest."

"I do not understand, Margot, what thou meanest by rest. And I want to know all about it. Have things given over puzzling thee? Is there some light come upon them?"

"It seems to me, Damoiselle, if I be not too bold in speaking my poor thoughts"——

"Go on," said I. "I want to know them."

"Then, my Damoiselle, it seems to me that there are two great lights in which we may see every thing in this world. The first is a fierce light, like the sun. But it blinds and dazzles us. The holy angels perchance can bear it, for it streams from the Throne of God, and they stand before that Throne. But we cannot. Our mortal eyes must be hidden in that dread and unapproachable light. And if I mistake not, it is by this light that the Damoiselle has hitherto tried to see things, and no wonder that her eyes are dazzled. But the other light soothes and enlightens. It is soft and clear, like the moonlight, and it streams from the Cross of Calvary. There the good God paid down, in the red gold of His own blood, the price of our redemption. It must have been because He thought it worth while. And if He paid such a price for a poor villein woman like me, He must have wanted me. The Damoiselle would not cast a pearl into the Vienne for which she had paid a thousand crowns. And if He cared enough about me to give His life for me, then He must care enough to be concerned about my welfare in this lower world. The Damoiselle would not refuse a cup of water to him to whom she was willing to give a precious gem. Herein lies rest. What the good God, who thus loves me, wills for me, I will for myself also."

"But, Marguerite, it might be something that would break thine heart."

"Would the blessed Lord not know that? But I do not think He breaks hearts that are willing to be His. He melts them. It is the hearts that harden themselves like a rock which have to be broken."

"But thou wouldst not like something which hurt thee?"

"Not enjoy it—no, no. Did the Damoiselle enjoy the verdigris plaster which the apothecary put on her when she was ill three years ago? Yet she did not think him her enemy, but her friend. Ah, the good God has His medicine-chest. And it holds smarting plasters and bitter drugs. But they are better than to be ill, Damoiselle."

"Marguerite, I had no idea thou wert such a philosopher."

"Ah, the noble Damoiselle is pleased to laugh at her servant, who does not know what that hard word means. No, there is nothing old Marguerite knows, only how to come to the blessed Lord and ask Him for rest. *He* gave the rest. And He knew how to do it."

I wonder if old Marguerite is not the truest philosopher of us all. It is evident that things do not puzzle her, just because she lets them alone, and leaves them with God. Still, that is not knowing. And I want to know.

Oh, I wish I could tell if it is wicked to want to know!

I wonder if the truth be that there are things which we cannot know:—things which the good God does not tell us, not because He wishes us to be ignorant, but because He could not possibly make us comprehend them. But then why did He not make us wiser?—or why does He let questions perplex us to which we can find no answer?

I think it must be that He does not wish us to find the answer. And why? I will see what idea Marguerite has about that. She seems to get hold of wise notions in some unintelligible way, for of course she is only a villein, and cannot have as much sense as a noble.

There was that tiresome Messire Raymond in the hall when I went down. He is noble enough, for his mother's mother was a Princess of the Carlovingian[#] blood: but I am sure he has no more sense than he needs. The way in which he says "Ah!" when I tell him anything, just exasperates me. The Baron, his brother, is a shade better, though he will never wear a laurel crown.[#] Still, he does not say "Ah!"

[#] A descendant of Charlemagne.

[#] The prize of intellect.

I don't like younger brothers. In fact, I don't think I like men of any sort. Except Guy, of course—and Monseigneur. But then other men are not like them. Guillot, and Amaury, and Raoul rank with the other men.

I wonder if women are very much better. I don't think they are, if I am to

look upon Alix and the Lady de Montbeillard as samples.

Oh dear, I wonder why I hate people so! It must be because they are hateful. Does anybody think *me* hateful? How queer it would be, if they did!

I really do feel, to-night, as if I did not know whether I was standing on my feet or on my head. I cannot realise it one bit. Alix going to be married! Alix going away from the Castle! And I—I—to be the only mistress there!

Monseigneur called me down into the hall, as I stood picking the dead leaves from my rose-bushes for a pot-pourri. There was no one in the hall but himself. Well, of course there were a quantity of servitors and retainers, but they never count for anything. I mean, there was nobody that is anybody. He bade me come up to him, and he drew me close, kissed me on the forehead, and stroked down my hair.

"What will my cabbage say to what I have to tell her?" said he.

"Is it something pleasant, Monseigneur?" said I.

"Now, there thou posest me," he answered, "Yes,—in one light. No,—in another. And in which of the two lights thou wilt see it, I do not yet know."

I looked up into his face and waited.

"Dost thou like Messire Raymond de Montbeillard?"

"No, Monseigneur," I answered.

"No? Ha! then perchance thou wilt not like my news."

"Messire Raymond has something to do with it?"

"Every thing."

"Well," said I, I am afraid rather saucily, "so long as he does not want to marry me, I do not much care what he does."

Monseigneur pinched my ear, kissed me, and seemed extremely amused.

"Thee? No, no! Not just yet, my little cabbage. Not just yet! But suppose he wanted to marry Alix?"

"Does he want to marry Alix?"

"He does."

"And under your good leave, Monseigneur?"

"Well, yes. I see no good reason to the contrary, my little cat. He is a brave knight, and has a fine castle, and is a real Carlovingian."[#]

[#] Throughout France in the Middle Ages, the Carlovingian blood was rated at an extravagant value.

"He is a donkey!" said I. "Real, too."

"Ha, hush, then!" replied Monseigneur, yet laughing, and patting my cheek. "Well, well—perhaps not overburdened with brains—how sharp thou art, child, to be sure! (No want of brains in that direction.) But a good, worthy man, my cabbage, and a stalwart knight."

"And when is it to be, Monseigneur?" I asked.

"In a hurry to see the fine dresses?" demanded my gracious Lord, and laughed again. "Nay, I think not till after Christmas. Time enough then. *I* am in no hurry to lose my housekeeper. Canst thou keep house, my rabbit?—ha, ha! Will there be anything for dinner? Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

I was half frightened, and yet half delighted. Of course, I thought, if Alix goes away, Umberge will come and reign here. Nobody is likely to think me old enough or good enough.

"Under your Nobility's good leave, I will see to that," said I.

Monseigneur answered by a peal of laughter. "Ha, ha, ha! Showing her talons, is she? Wants to rule, my cabbage—does she? A true woman, on my troth! Ha, ha, ha!"

"If it please you, Monseigneur, why should you come short of dinner because I see about it?"

My gracious Lord laughed more than ever.

"No reason at all, my little rabbit!—no reason at all! Try thy hand, by all means—by all means! So Umberge does not need to come? Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"Certainly not for me," said I, rather piqued.

"Seriously, my little cat," said he, and his face grew grave. "Wouldst thou rather Umberge did not come? Art thou not friends with her?"

"Oh, as to friends, so-so, là-là,"[#] said I. "But I think I should get along quite as well without her."

[#] Middling.

"But wouldst thou not weary for a woman's company?"

"I never weary for any company but Guy's," I answered; and I think the tears came into my eyes.

"Is it still Guy?" said he, smiling, but very kindly now. "Always Guy? Well, well! When the time comes—I promised the boy thou shouldst go out to him. We must wait till he writes to say he is ready to receive thee. So Guy stands first, does he?"

I nodded, for my heart was too full to speak. He patted my head again, and let me go. But I thought he looked a little troubled; and I could not tell why.

When I came to undress, the same evening, I asked Marguerite if she had heard the news.

"The Damoiselle Alix was so gracious as to inform me," said she.

"Dost thou like it, Margot?"

"Ha, my Damoiselle! What does it matter what a villein old woman likes?"

"It matters to me, or I should not have asked thee," said I.

"I trust it will be for the noble Damoiselle's welfare," said she; and I could get her to say no more.

"Now, Margot, tell me something else," said I. "Why does the good God not make all things clear to everybody? What sayest thou?"

"He has not told me why, Damoiselle. Perhaps, to teach my Damoiselle to trust Him. There could be no trust if we always knew."

"But is not knowing better than trusting?" I replied.

"Is it?" responded Marguerite. "Does Monseigneur always take my Damoiselle into his secrets, and never require her to trust him? God is the great King of all the world. Kings always have secret matters. Surely the King of kings must have His state secrets too."

This seemed putting it on a new footing. I sat and considered the matter, while Marguerite took off my dove cote[#] and unbound my hair.

[#] The rich network which confined the hair; often of gold and precious stones.

"Still, I don't see why we may not know everything," I said at last.

"Does my Damoiselle remember what stood in the midst of the beautiful Garden of God, wherein Adam and Eva were put to dwell?"

"The tree of knowledge," said I. "True; but that does not help me to the why. Why might Adam and Eva not eat it?"

"Will my Damoiselle pardon me? I think it does help to the why; but not to the why of the why—which is what she always wants to see. Why Adam and Eva might not eat it, I suppose, was because the good God forbade it."

"But why, Marguerite?—why?"

"Ha! I am not the good God."

"I do not see it one bit," said I. "Surely knowledge is a good thing."

"Knowledge of good, ay,—which is knowledge of God. The good Lord never forbids us that. He commands it. But let me entreat my Damoiselle to remember, that this was the tree of knowledge of good *and evil.* That we should know evil cannot be good."

"I do not understand why the good God ever let Satan be at all," said I. "And

I do not see how Satan came to be Satan, to begin with."

"The blessed Lord knows all about it," said Marguerite. "When my Damoiselle was a little child, I am sure she did not understand why we gave her bitter medicines. But the apothecary knew. Can my Damoiselle not leave all her questions with the good Lord?"

"I want them answered, Margot!" I cried impatiently. "If I knew that I should understand when I am dead, I would not so much mind waiting. But I don't know any thing. And I don't like it."

"Well, I do not know even that much," she replied. "It may be so. I cannot tell. But the good Lord knows—and He loves me."

"How knowest thou that, Marguerite?"

"People don't die for a man, Damoiselle, unless they love him very much indeed."

"But how dost thou know that it was for thee?"

"It was for sinners: and I am one."

"But not for all sinners, Margot. A great many sinners will go to perdition, Father Eudes says. How canst thou tell if thou art one of them or not?"

"Ah, that did perplex me at first. But one day Father Eudes read out of the holy Gospel that all who believed in our Lord should have life eternal: so that settled it. The sinners that are lost must be those who do not believe in our Lord."

"Marguerite! don't we all believe in Him?"

"Let the Damoiselle forgive me if I speak foolishly. But there are two brothers among the varlets in the hall—Philippe and Robert. Now, I quite believe that they both exist. I know a good deal about them. I know their father and mother, Pierrot and Arlette: and I know that Philippe has a large nose and black hair, and he is fond of porpoise; while Robert has brown hair and limps a little, and he likes quinces. Yet, if I wanted to send a crown to my niece Perette, I should feel quite satisfied that Robert would carry it straight to her, while I should not dare to give it to Philippe, lest he should go to the next cabaret and spend it in wine. Now, don't I believe in Robert in a very different way from that in which I believe in Philippe?"

"Why, thou meanest that Robert may be trusted, but Philippe cannot be," said I. "But what has it to do with the matter?"

"Let the Damoiselle think a moment. Does she simply believe that the good God is, or does she trust Him?"

"Trust Him!—with what?" said I.

"With yourself, my Damoiselle."

"With myself!" I exclaimed. "Nay, Margot, what dost thou mean now?"

"How does the Damoiselle trust Monseigneur? Has she any care lest he should fail to provide her with food and clothing suitable to her rank? Does it

not seem to her a matter of course that so long as he lives he will always love her, and care for her, and never forget nor neglect her? Has she ever lain awake at night fretting over the idea that Monseigneur might give over providing for her or being concerned about her welfare?"

"What a ridiculous notion!" I cried. "Why, Margot, I simply could not do it. He is my father."

"And what does my Damoiselle read in the holy Psalter? Is it not 'Like as a father pitieth his children, even so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him?' Is He not Our Father?"

"Yes, of course we expect the good God to take care of us," I replied. "But then, Margot, it is a different thing. And thou knowest He does not always take care of us in that way. He lets all sorts of things happen to hurt and grieve us."

"Then, when my Damoiselle is ill, and Monseigneur sends off in hot haste for Messire Denys to come and bleed her in the foot, he is *not* taking care of her? It hurts her, I think."

"Oh, that has to be, Margot. As thou saidst, it is better than being ill."

"And—let my Damoiselle bear with her servant—is there no 'must be' with the good God?"

"But I don't see why, Margot. He could make us well all in a minute. Monseigneur cannot."

"Yet suppose it is better that my Damoiselle should not be made well all in a minute, but should learn by suffering to be patient in sickness, and thankful for her usual good health? Did not Monseigneur Saint David say, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted'?"

"Oh, what a queer idea!" said I.

"Is it?" quietly answered Marguerite. "I once heard a young noble lady say, about three years ago, that it was so delightful to feel well again after being ill, that it really was worth while going through the pain to reach it. And I think,—if I may be pardoned the allusion,—I think they called her the Damoiselle Elaine de Lusignan."

I could not help laughing. "Well, I dare say I did say something like it. But, Margot, it is only when I am getting well that I think so. When I am well, to begin with, I don't want to go through the pain again."

"When my Damoiselle is truly well of the mortal disease of sin, she will never need to go through the pain again. But that will not be till the sin and the body are laid down together."

"Till we die—dost thou mean that?"

"Till we die."

"O Margot! don't. I hate to think of dying."

"Yes. It is pleasanter to think of living. They are well for whom all the

dying comes first, and the life is hereafter."

"Well, I suppose I shall be all right," said I, jumping into bed. "Monseigneur pays my Church dues, and I hear the holy mass sung every day. I say my prayers night and morning, and in all my life I never was so wicked as to touch meat on a fast-day. I think, on the whole, I am a very good girl."

"Will my Damoiselle be angry if I ask her whether the good Lord thinks the same?"

"O Marguerite! how can I know?"

"Because, if Father Eudes read it right, we do know. 'There is none that doeth good, no, not one.'"

"Margot, how thou must listen to Father Eudes! I hear him mumbling away, but I never bother my head with what he is saying. He has got to say it; and I have got to sit there till he has done; that is all. I amuse myself in all sorts of ways—count the bits of glass in the window, or watch the effect of the crimson and blue light creeping over the stalls and pillars, or think how Saint Agatha would look in a green robe instead of a purple one. What makes thee listen to all the stuff he says?"

"My Damoiselle sees that—saving her presence—I am a little like her. I want to know."

"But Father Eudes never tells us anything worth knowing, surely!"

"Ha! Pardon me, my Damoiselle. He reads the true words of the good God from the holy Evangels. Commonly they are in the holy Latin tongue, and then I can only stand and listen reverently to the strange sounds: the good God understands, not I. But now and then I suppose the blessed Lord whispers to Father Eudes to put it into French for a moment: and that is what I am listening for all the time. Then I treasure the words up like some costly gem; and say them to myself a hundred times over, so that I may never forget them any more. Oh, it is a glad day for me when Father Eudes says those dear words in French!"

"But how thou dost care about it, Margot! I suppose thou hast so few things to think of, and delight in—I have more to occupy me."

"Ah, my Damoiselle! The blessed Lord said that His good word was choked up and brought no fruit when the cares of other things entered into the heart. No, I have not much to think of but my work, and—three graves in a village churchyard, and one——And I have not much to delight in save the words of the blessed Lord. Yet—let my Damoiselle bear with me!—I am better off than she."

"O Margot!" And I laughed till the tears came into my eyes. It was so excessively absurd.

Marguerite took up the lamp.

"May the good God and His angels watch over my sweet Damoiselle," she said.

And then she tucked the silken coverlet round me, and put out the lamp, that the light should not keep me awake; and quietly undressed herself, and got into the trundle-bed. And I was asleep almost before she lay down.

But, Oh dear, how ridiculous! Marguerite better off than I am! There is no harm in her fancying it, dear old thing; but the comicality of the idea! Why, I dress in velvet and diaper, and she in unshorn wool; and I lie on a feather-bed, under fustian blankets and satin coverlets, and she sleeps on straw with a woollen rug over her; and I ride, and hawk, and sing, and dance, and embroider,—and she is hard at all sorts of rough work from morning to night. Why, she cannot wear a jewel, nor a bit of gold, nor have any sort of pleasure except singing and dancing, and she is too old for both. Of course, such things as nobles amuse themselves with are not fit for villeins. But that a villein should fancy for a moment that she is better off than a noble—Oh, it is too absurd for any thing!

Well, really!—better off than I am!

CHAPTER III.

ALL IS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERS .

"All things that can satisfy,
Having Jesus, those have I."

So all is over, and Alix is really gone! It was a grand wedding. The bride was in blue velvet, embroidered in gold, with golden girdle, fermail,[#] and aumonière; her mantle was of gold-coloured satin, and her under-tunic of black damask. I thought she chose her colours with very good taste (more than Alix generally does); but one should look nice on one's wedding-day, if one ever is to do. And she did look nice, in her gemmed coronal, and no hood, and all her hair flowing over her shoulders.[#] As for Messire Raymond, I nearly went into fits when I caught sight of him. The creature had dressed himself in a yellow tunic, with a brick-red super-tunic, and flesh-coloured hose. Then he had green boots, striped in gold; and a sky-blue mantle studded with golden stars. Raoul said he must fancy that he was Jupiter, since he had clad himself with the firmament: but Amaury replied that, with all that flame-colour, he must be Vulcan, if he were a Pagan deity of any kind. Father Eudes sang the mass, and Father Gilbert, the

Lord of Montbeillard's chaplain, gave the nuptial benediction. I was dressed in pale green and dark violet, and Lady Isabeau in rose-coloured satin.

[#] Brooch.

[#] The costume restricted to brides or to queens at their coronation.

Then came the wedding-feast in the great hall, for which Alix and I had been preparing a week beforehand; (and after all, I am certain Héloïse forgot to put any more sugar in the placentæ[#]): and then the hall was cleared, and we danced till supper-time. Then, after supper, the minstrels played; and Lady Isabeau and I, with all the other ladies there, went up and put the bride to bed: and after throwing the stocking and all the other ceremonies,—and I am glad to say it did not hit me,[#] but that ugly Elise de la Puissaye,—we came back into the hall, and danced again till it was time to take up the posset.[#] Oh, I was tired when I did get to bed at last! I should not like to be at another wedding next week.

[#] Cheesecakes.

[#] The girl hit by the stocking was expected to be married next.

[#] This serving of a posset to the newly-married pair in the night was a purely French custom.

Well, it really is a very good thing that Alix is gone. I have had some peace these last two days. And there! if the very last thing she did before going was not to do me an ill turn! She went and persuaded Monseigneur to invite Umberge to come and take the reins. Oh, of course *I* could not be expected to understand anything!—(what sort of a compliment was that to her teaching?)—I was a mere baby, full of nonsense,—and all on in that way. And when Monseigneur was so good as to say that I did not like the idea of Umberge's coming, and he thought he would try what I could do, Alix fairly laughed in his face. As if I were fit to decide!—the baby that I was!—she said. Thank you very much, Dame Alix de Montbeillard; perhaps I have more sense than you suppose. At any rate, I am very glad of one thing,—that we have got rid of *you*.

Oh dear! I wonder whether any body ever thinks that it would be nice to get rid of me? But then I am not disagreeable, like Alix. I am sure I am not.

Now, why is it that when one gets something one has been wishing for a long

while, one does *not* feel satisfied with it? I have been fancying for months how pleasant it would be when Alix was gone, and there would be no one to find fault with me. Yet it is not pleasant at all. I thought it would be peaceful, and it is dull. And only this afternoon Raoul was as cross with me as he could be. Monseigneur took my part, as he well might, because of course I was right; but still it was disagreeable. Why don't I feel more happy?

I thought I would see what Marguerite would say, and I asked her what she thought about it. She only smiled, and said,—"Such is the way of the world, my Damoiselle, since men forsook the peaceful paths of God."

"But why do things look so much more delightful beforehand than when they come?" said I.

"The Damoiselle has a vivid fancy. Does she never find that things look more unpleasant at a distance?"

"Well, I don't know—perhaps, sometimes," I said. "But disagreeable things are always disagreeable."

I suppose something in my face made Marguerite answer—

"Is the coming of the Lady Umberge disagreeable to my Damoiselle?"

"Oh, as to that, I don't care much about it," said I. "But I do want to hear from Guy."

Ay, that is coming to be the cry in my heart now. I want to hear from Guy! I want to know where he is, and what he is doing, and whether he is made a Count yet, and—Oh dear, dear!—whether that dreadful beautiful lady, whom he is to like so much better than me, has appeared. That could not happen to me. I could never love any body better than Guy.

I should so like a confidante of my own rank and age. Umberge would never do at all, and she is quite fifteen years older than I am. If I had had a sister, a year older or younger than myself, that would have been about the right thing. Nobody ever was my confidante except Guy. And I wander about his chamber very much as Level does, and feel, I should imagine, very much like him when he holds up one paw, and looks up at me, and plainly says with his dog-face,—"Where is he?—and is he never coming back?" And I can only put my cheek down on his great soft head, and stroke his velvet ears, and feel with him. For I know so little more than he does.

It must be dreadful for dogs, if they want to know!

Here is Umberge at last. She came last night, and Guillot with her, and Valence and Aline. They are nice playthings, or would be, if I might have my own way. But—I cannot quite understand it—the Umberge who has come to live here seems quite a different woman from the Umberge who used to come for an afternoon. She used to kiss me, and call me "darling," and praise my maccaroons. But this Umberge has kept me running about the house all morning, while she

sits in a curule chair with a bit of embroidery, and says, "Young feet do not tire," and "You know where everything is, and you are accustomed to the maids." It looks as if she thought I was a superior sort of maid. Then, when our gracious Lord comes in, she is all velvet, and "dear Elaines" me, and tells him I am such a sweet creature—ready to run about and do any thing for any body.

If there is one thing I do despise, it is that sort of woman. Alix never served me like that. She was sharp, but she was honest. If Monseigneur praised the placentæ, she always told him when I had made them, and would not take praise for what was not her work.

I shall never be able to get along with Umberge, if this morning is to be a specimen of every day.

Oh dear! I wish Alix had not gone! And I wish, I wish we could hear from Guy!

Things do not go on as smoothly as they used to do. I think Monseigneur himself sees it now. Umberge is not fond of trouble, and instead of superintending every thing, as Alix did, always seeing after the maids, up early and down late, she just takes her ease, and expects things to go right without any trouble on her part. Why, she never rises in the morning before six, and she spends a couple of hours in dressing. It is no good to tell her of any thing that is wanted, for she seems to expect every thing to mend itself. Yesterday morning, one of the jacinths dropped out of the sheet on my bed,[#] and I told Umberge—(Alix was always particular about any thing of that kind being reported to her directly)—but she only said, "Indeed? Well, I suppose you can sleep as well without it." But it was last night that Monseigneur seemed vexed. We had guests to supper, and I am sure I did my best to have things nice; but every thing seemed to go wrong. Umberge apparently thought the supper would order itself in the first place, and cook itself in the second, for beyond telling me to see that all was right, she took no care about it at all, but sat embroidering. The dining-room was only just ready in time, and the minstrels were half an hour behind time; the pastry was overbaked, and the bread quite cold. There was no subtlety[#] with the third course, and the fresh rushes would have been forgotten if I had not asked Robert about them. I was vexed, for Alix was there herself, and I knew what she would think,—to say nothing of the other guests. I do think it is too bad of Umberge to leave me all the cares and responsibilities of mistress, while she calmly appropriates the position and the credit, and then scolds me if every thing is not perfection. Why, I must go and dress some time; and was it my fault if Denise left the pies in too long while I was dressing, or did not attend to my order to have the bread hot[#] at the last minute? I cannot be every where!

[#] How jewels were set in linen sheets is a mystery, but there is abundant evidence of the fact.

[#] Ornamental centre-piece.

[#] It was considered of consequence that the bread at a feast should be as new as possible.

My gracious Lord did not blame me; he asked Umberge and me together how it happened that all these things were wrong: and I declare, if Umberge did not say, "Elaine had the ordering of it; Monseigneur will please to ask her." I am afraid I lost my temper, for I said—

"Yes, Monseigneur, I had the ordering of it, for my fair sister took no care of any thing; and if I could have had three pairs of hands, and been in six places at once, perhaps things might have been right."

Monseigneur only laughed, and patted my head. But this evening I heard him say to Guillot, just as I was entering the hall—

"Fair Son, thy fair wife puts too much on the child Elaine."

Guillot laughed, rubbed his forehead, and answered—"Fair Father, it will take more than me to stop her."

"What! canst thou not rule thine own wife?" demanded our gracious Lord.

"Never tried, Monseigneur," said Guillot. "Too late to begin."

And Monseigneur only said, with a sigh,—"I wonder when we shall hear from Guy!"

Guillot looked relieved, and (seeing me, I think) they went on to talk of something else.

But everything seems changed since they came. Except for my gracious Lord and Amaury and Raoul. It does not feel like home.

Alix rode over this afternoon. I took her to my bower in the turret, and almost directly she asked me,—"How do you get on with our fair sister?"

And I said,—"O Alix! I wish thou wouldst come back!"

She laughed, and replied,—"What would my lord say, child? I thought you were not very comfortable."

"What made thee think so, Alix? Was it Tuesday night?"

"Tuesday night—the supper? I guessed you had seen to it."

"Why?—was it so very bad?" said I, penitently.

"Bad?—it was carelessness and neglect beyond endurance," she said. "No, I saw the maids wanted the mistress's eye; and Umberge evidently had not given it; and I thought you had tried to throw yourself into the gap, and—as such an inexperienced young thing would—had failed."

I really was pleased when Alix said that.

"Then thou wert not vexed with me, Alix?"

"Not I. You did your best. I was vexed enough with Umberge. I knew she

was lazy, but I did not expect her to discredit the house like that."

"She seems quite altered since she came here," I said.

"Ah, you never can tell how people will turn out till you come to live with them," said Alix. "So you are not so very glad, after all, to lose me, little one?"

I was startled, for I never supposed that Alix had guessed that. I did not know what to say.

"Why, child, did you think I had no eyes?" she added. "You know you were glad."

I did what I generally do—hesitated for a moment, and then came out bluntly with the truth—

"Well, Alix, I was glad. But I am not now."

Alix laughed. "That is right," she said; "always tell the plain truth, Elaine. You will find many a time, as you go through life, child, that the prettiest pasties are not always the best flavoured, nor the plainest say[#] the worst to wear."

[#] A common quality of silk.

I suppose it is so. But I never should have guessed that I should be wishing for Alix to come back.

"Marguerite," I said one morning as I was dressing, "dost thou think it would be wrong if I were to pray for a letter from Guy?"

"I cannot think it wrong to pray for anything," she answered, "provided we are willing that the good God should choose for us in the end."

"Well, but I am not sure that I am willing to have that."

"Is my Damoiselle as wise as the good Lord?"

"Oh no, of course not! But still"——

"But still, my Damoiselle would like always to have her own way."

"Yes, I should, Margot."

"Well, if there be one thing for which I am thankful it is that the good Lord has not given me much of my own way. It would have been very bad for me."

"Perhaps, for a villein, it might," said I; "but nobles are different."

"Possibly, even for the nobles," said Marguerite, "the good Lord might be the best chooser."

"But it seems to me, if we left everything in that way, we should never pray at all."

"Let my Damoiselle pardon me. That we have full trust in a friend's wisdom

is scarcely a reason why we should not ask his counsel."

"But the friend cannot know what advice you need. The Lord knows all about it."

"Does my Damoiselle never tell her thoughts to Monseigneur Guy because he knows that she is likely to think this or that?"

"Oh, but it is such pleasure to tell one's thoughts to Guy," I replied. "He generally thinks as I do; and when he does not, he talks the thing over with me, and it usually ends in my thinking as he does. Then if I am sad, he comforts me; and if I am rejoicing, he rejoices with me; and—O Margot! it is like talking to another me."

"My Damoiselle," said Marguerite, with a peculiar smile which I have seen on her lips before, and never could understand—it is so glad and sunny, yet quiet and deep, as if she were rejoicing over some hidden treasure which she had all to herself,—"My Damoiselle has said well. 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.' 'If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.' My Damoiselle does not yet know what it is to speak out freely all her thoughts to One who is infinitely high and wise, and who loves her with an infinite love. I am but a poor ignorant villein woman: I know very little about any thing. Well! I take my ignorant mind to Him who knows all things, and who can foresee the end from the beginning. I do not know any grand words to pray with. I just say, 'Sir[#] God, I am very much puzzled. I do not know what to do for the best. Put the best thing into my head. Thou knowest.' Every night, before I go to sleep, the last thing, I say in my heart, 'Sir God, I do not know what is good, and what is evil for me. Thou knowest. Give me the good things to-night, and keep the evil ones away.' I suppose, if I were very wise and clever, I should not make such poor, ignorant prayers. I should know then what would be best to do. Yet I do not think I should be any better off, for then I should see so much less of the good Lord. I would rather have more of the good God, and less of the quick wit and the ready tongue."

[#] Though this title will certainly sound strange, if not irreverent, to modern ears, it was meant as the most reverent epithet known to those who used it.

It would be nice to feel as Margot does. I cannot think where she got it But it would never do for me, who am noble, to take pattern from a poor villein. I suppose such thoughts are good for low, ignorant people.

What should I have done if I had been born a villein? I cannot imagine what it would feel like. I am very glad I was not. But of course I cannot tell what

it would feel like, because nobles have thoughts and feelings of quite a different sort to common people.

I suppose Guy would say that was one of my queer notions. He always says more queer ideas come into my head than any one else's.

O Guy, Guy!—when shall I see thee again? Two whole years, and not a word from thee! Art thou languishing in some Paynim dungeon? Hast thou fallen in some battle? Or has the beautiful lady come, and thy little Lynette is forgotten?

I have been asking Father Eudes to tell me something about the Holy Land, for I want to be able to picture to myself the place where Guy is. And of course Father Eudes can tell, for he knows all about every thing; and he had an uncle who was a holy palmer, and visited the blessed Sepulchre, and used to tell most beautiful legends, he says, about the Holy Land. Beside which, his own father fought for the Sepulchre in the second Crusade, and dwelt in that country for several years.

Father Eudes says it is nearly a hundred years since the kingdom of Jerusalem was founded, for it was in the year of our Lord 1099, at the time of the first Crusade. The first King was the gallant Count Godefroy of Boulogne, who was unanimously chosen by all the Christian warriors after the Holy City was taken: but he would never call himself King, but only "Defender of the Holy Sepulchre." But, alas!—the good King Godefroy only reigned one year; and on his death the Princes all assembled in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which they also call the Temple, to elect a successor. And because there were great contentions among them, they resolved to decide the choice by lot: and they stood around the tomb of our Lord, each holding a long taper, and earnestly besought the good God that He would cause the taper held by him who ought to be King of Jerusalem to be lighted by miracle. And when the prayer was ended, one of the tapers was found to be burning. It was that held by Duke Robert the Courthose, son of Lord William the Norman, who conquered England. But to the horror of all the Princes, Duke Robert blew out the taper, and refused to be King. He said that he was not worthy to wear a crown of gold in that place where for his sins our Lord had worn a crown of thorns. And I really have always felt puzzled to know whether he acted very piously or very impiously. So, in the end, the brother of King Godefroy was chosen; but he also left no child, though he reigned eighteen years. But the Lady Ida, his sister, who was a very wise and preux[#] lady, had a son, and he reigned after his uncle for thirteen years: yet at his death he left four daughters, and no son. And Father Eudes thinks that this showed the displeasure of our Lord, who had willed that the kingdom of Jerusalem should belong to our Lords the Kings of England, and they wickedly refused to receive it.

[#] Brave, noble, chivalrous.

For of course it is the bounden duty of all Christian men to rescue the Holy Land out of the hands of Paynims, Jews, and such horrible heretics, who all worship the Devil, and bow down to stocks and stones: since this land belonged to our Lord Jesus Christ, who was King of it by holy Mary His mother, and He died seised of the same. For which reason all Christian men, who are the right heirs of our said Lord, ought to recover their inheritance in that land, and not leave it in the hands of wicked heretics, who have no right to it at all, since they are not the children and right heirs of Jesus Christ our Lord.[#]

[#] This singular reasoning is borrowed from Sir John Mandeville.

Well! when King Beaudouin II. was dead, the Holy Land fell to the eldest of his four daughters, who was named the Lady Melisende: and she wedded Count Foulques of Anjou, and from her all the kings since then have come: so now it seems settled in the line of Anjou. I suppose our Lords the Kings of England, therefore, have no right to it any more.

I cannot help feeling sorry that Duke Robert blew out the taper. I would not have done it, if it had been mine. I think to be the Queen of Jerusalem would be the grandest thing in all the world—even better than to be the Empress of Monseigneur the Cæsar. Is it not the Land of God?

A letter at last!—a letter from Guy! And he is high in the King's favour, and has won booty to the amount of eighteen thousand golden crowns, and he wants Amaury and me to go to him at once. I keep dancing about and singing, I am so delighted. And not one word of the beautiful lady! That is best of all.

Guy says the King is a mesel,[#] and dwells in chambers to himself; and he has never been married, so there is no Queen, except the widow of the late King his father; and she is of the high blood of Messeigneurs the Cæsars,[#] but is not the mother of the King. He is like Guy, for his own mother, who was the Damoiselle de Courtenay, died when he was very young: and he has one sister of the whole blood, who is called the Lady Sybil; and one sister of the half blood, who is called the Lady Isabel. The Lady Sybil is a widow, though she is younger than Alix: for she was the wife of Monseigneur Guillaume, the Marquis of Montferrat, who died about the time Guy reached the Holy Land; and she has

one child, Monseigneur Beaudouin, named after the King his uncle. The Lady Isabel is not yet married, and she is about fourteen years old. Guy writes that the King, and the ladies his sisters, and the old Queen, are all very good to him, and he is prospering marvellously.

[#] Leper.

[#] She was Maria, daughter (some writers say niece) of the Emperor Manuel Comnemus.

Guy's letter was brought by a holy palmer, late last night. I am sure the palmer must be a very holy man, for he had scallops fastened to his shovel-hat, and cross-keys embroidered on his bosom, and bells upon his sleeve, and the holy cross upon his shoulder.[#] His cross was green, so he must be a Fleming.[#] And whenever I came near him, there was such a disagreeable smell, that he must, I am sure, be very holy indeed. He told Robert, and Marguerite told me, that he had not changed his clothes for three whole years. What a holy man he must be! I was very glad when he gave me his benediction, though I did try to keep as much to windward of him as I could, and I put a sprig of lavender in my handkerchief before I asked for it. I am rather afraid Father Eudes would say it was wicked of me to put that sprig of lavender in my handkerchief. But really I think I should have felt quite disgusted if I had not done so. And why should it be holy not to wash one's self? Why don't they always leave babies unwashed, if it be, that they might grow up to be holy men and women?

[#] The scallop-shell denoted a pilgrim to the shrine of St. James of Compostella; the cross-keys, to Rome; the bells, to Canterbury (hence the "Canterbury bell"); and the cross, to the Holy Sepulchre.

[#] The Flemings wore a green cross, the French a red, the English a white one. The proverbial "Red Cross Knight," therefore, strictly speaking, could not be an Englishman.

I wonder if the angels like smells which we think disagreeable. If they do, of course that would account for it. Yet one cannot imagine an angel with soiled feathers.

I suppose Guy would say that was another of my queer ideas. Oh, I am so delighted that we have heard from Guy!

Monseigneur says I must have lots of new dresses to take with me. I have been wishing, ever so long, for a fine mantle of black cloth, lined with minever: and he says I shall have it. And I want a golden girdle, and a new aumonière.[#]

I should like a diaper[#] gown, too,—red and black; and a shot silk, blue one way, and gold the other.

[#] The bag which depended from the girdle.

[#] This term seems to have indicated stuff woven in any small regular pattern, not flowers.

My gracious Lord asked me what gems I would best like.

"Oh, agate or cornelian, if it please your Nobility," said I, "because they make people amiable."

He pinched my ear, and said he thought I was amiable enough: he would give me a set of jacinths.[#]

[#] These gems were believed to possess the properties in question.

"What, to send me to sleep?" said I, laughing.

"Just so," he answered. "Thou art somewhat too wide-awake."

"What do you please to mean, Monseigneur?"

He smiled, but then sighed heavily, and stroked my head.

"Ah, my little Lynette!" he said. "If thy blessed mother had but lived! I know not—truly I know not—whether I act for thy real welfare or not. The good God forgive our blunders, poor blindlings that we are!" And he rose and went away.

But of course it must be for my welfare that I should go to Guy, and get some appointment in the household of one of the Princesses, and see life, and—well, I don't know about getting married. I might not have so much of my own way. And I like that dearly. Besides, if I were married I could not be always with Guy. I think I won't, on the whole.

I asked Marguerite to-night if she could tell why holy people did not wash: and she said she thought they did.

"Well," said I, "but yonder holy palmer had not taken his clothes off for three years; and I am sure, Margot, he did not smell nice."

"I think," said Marguerite, "under leave of my Damoiselle, he would have been at least as holy if he had changed them once a month."

"O Margot! is not that heterodoxy?" asked I, laughing.

"Let my Damoiselle pardon her servant—no! Did not Monseigneur Saint Paul himself say that men should wash their bodies with pure water?"

"I am sure I don't know," said I. "I always thought, the holier you were, and the dirtier. And that is one reason why I always thought, too, that I could never be holy. I should want my hands and face clean, at least."

"Did my Damoiselle think she could never be holy?"

"Yes, I did, Margot, and do."

"Wherefore? Let her forgive her poor servant."

"Oh, holiness seems to mean all sorts of unpleasant things," said I. "You must not wash, nor lie on a comfortable bed, nor wear anything nice, nor dance, nor sing, nor have any pleasure. I don't want to be holy. I really could not do with it, Margot."

"Under my Damoiselle's leave, all those things she has mentioned seem to me to be outside things. And—unless I mistake, for I am but an ignorant creature—holiness must be something inside. My soul is inside of me; and to clean my soul, I must have something that will go inside to it. The inside principle will be sure to put all the outside things straight, will it not? But I do not see what the outside things can do to the inside—except that sometimes they make us cross. But then it is we who are wrong, not they."

"Dost thou suppose it is wicked to be cross, Margot?"

"Damoiselle, Father Eudes once read a list of the good things that a true Christian ought to have in his heart,—there were nine of them: 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' I think one cannot have many of them when one is cross and peevish."

"Then thou dost not think it sinful to delight in fine clothes and jewels, and lie in a soft bed, and have dainties for dinner?—for all those are outside."

"Ha! yes, my Damoiselle. Those are the world's substitute for happiness."

"Now, what dost thou mean, Margot?" laughed I. "Have I not all these good things?—and am I not happy?"

"All these,—ah, yes. But, happy? No, no. My Damoiselle is not happy."

"Why, what wilt thou say next?" cried I.

"Will my Damoiselle permit her poor servant to ask her a question?"

"Oh yes!—anything thou wilt."

"Then is my Damoiselle quite certain—safely, happily certain—what will become of her when she shall die?"

"O Margot, what an ugly question! I hate to think of it Why, I suppose I shall go to Heaven—why should I not? Don't all nobles go there, except those who are very, very wicked?"

"Ha! She hates to think of it? Wherefore?"

"Why, everybody does, of course."

"Let my Damoiselle pardon me. Not I."

"Oh, thou art an old woman, and hast outlived thy youth and its pleasures.

No wonder."

"My Damoiselle will find, as life goes on, that the older she grows, the more distasteful that thought becomes to her. That is, unless she should learn to be happy, which may the good God grant!"

I could not help laughing heartily. For a young noble maiden like me, to take lessons of a forlorn old creature like Margot, in the art of being happy, did seem so very ridiculous.

"Ah, my Damoiselle may laugh now," said Marguerite in her quiet way; "but I have told the sober truth."

"Oh dear!" said I. "I think I had better sleep on it.—Margot, art thou not very much pleased at the thought of going to the Holy Land?"

"Ah, yes, my Damoiselle, very much. I would dearly like to behold the earth which the feet of the blessed Lord have trodden,—the lake on which He walked, and the hill from which He went up. Ah! 'He shall so come'—'this same Jesus'!"

I looked at her in astonishment. The worn old face and sunken eyes seemed alight with some hidden rapture. I could not understand her.

"And the Holy Sepulchre!" I said; for that is holiest of all the holy places, as everybody knows.

"Well, I should not so much care to see that," answered Marguerite, to my surprise. "'He is not there; He is risen.' If a dear friend of mine had gone on a journey, I should not make a pet of the saddle on which he rode away. I should rather want not to see it, for it would always remind me that he was gone."

"Marguerite!" exclaimed I, "dost thou not know that a neuvaine offered at the Holy Sepulchre is of more efficacy than ten offered at any other altar?"

"Will my Damoiselle give me leave to wait till I see it? Of course, if the good God choose to have it so, there is an end of the matter. But I think I would rather be sure. For me, I should like to pray in the Church of the Nativity, to thank Him for coming as a little babe into this weary world: and in the Church of the Ascension, to beg Him to hasten His coming again."

"Ah, the Church of the Ascension!" said I. "There are pillars in that church, nearly close to the wall; and the man who can creep between the wall and the pillar has full remission of all his sins."

"Is that in the holy Evangel?" asked Marguerite; but I could not tell her.

"I fancy there may be some mistake about that," she added. "Of course, if it be in the holy Evangel! But it does not look quite of a piece with what Father Eudes reads. He read one day out of the writing of Monseigneur Saint John, that the blood of Jesus Christ, the blessed Lord, cleansed us from all sin: and another time—I think he said it was from the Evangel of Monseigneur Saint Matthew—he read that if a man did but ask the good God for salvation, it should be given him. Well! I asked, and He gave it me. Could He give me anything more?—or would

He be likely to do it because I crept between a wall and a pillar?"

"Why, Marguerite! Hast thou been listening to some of those wicked Lyonnese, that go preaching up and down? Dost thou not know that King Henry the father hath strictly forbidden any man to harbour one of that rabble?"

"If it please my Damoiselle, I know nothing at all about them."

"Why, it is a merchant of Lyons, named Pierre Waldo, and a lot more with him; they go up and down the country, preaching, and corrupting people from the pure Catholic faith. Hast thou listened to any such preachers, Margot?"

"Ha, my Damoiselle, what know I? There was a Grey Friar at the Cross a few weeks since"——

"Oh, of course, the holy brethren of Saint Augustine are all right," said I.

"Well, and last Sunday there was a man there, not exactly in a friar's robe, but clad in sackcloth, as if he were in mourning; but he said none but very good words; they were just like the holy Evangel which Father Eudes reads. Very comforting words they were, too. He said the good Lord cared even for the sparrows, poor little things!—and very much more for us that trusted Him. I should like to hear him preach again."

"Take care how thou dost!" said I, as I lay down in bed. "I am afraid, Margot, he is one of those Lyonnese serpents."

"Well!" said Marguerite, as she tucked me up, "he had no sting, if he were."

"No, the sting comes afterwards," said I. "And thou art but a poor villein, and ignorant, and quite unable to judge which is the true doctrine of holy Church, and which the wicked heresy that we must shut our ears against."

"True, my Damoiselle," said old Marguerite meekly. "But to say that the dear, blessed Lord cares for His poor servants—no, no!—that is no heresy!"

"What is heresy?" said I. "And what is truth? Oh dear! If one might know, one's own self!"

"Ah! Pilatus asked that of the good God, when He stood before his judgment-seat. But he did not wait for the answer."

"I wish he had done!" I answered. "Then we might have known it. But I suppose the good Lord would have told him to submit himself to the Church. So we should not have been much better off, because we do know that."

"We are better off, my Damoiselle," said old Marguerite. "For though the good God did not answer Pilatus—maybe he was not worthy—He did answer the same question, asked by Monseigneur Saint Thomas. Did not my Damoiselle hear Father Eudes read that in French? It was only a few weeks ago."

I shook my head. I cannot imagine when or how Marguerite does hear all these things. I never do. But she went on.

"It was one day when the good Lord had told Messeigneurs the Apostles that He was going to ascend to Heaven: and He said, 'The way ye know.' But

Monseigneur Saint Thomas—ah! he was rather like my Damoiselle; he wanted to know!—he replied that they did not know the way. (If he had not been a holy apostle, I should not have thought it very civil to contradict his Seigneur, let alone the good Lord.) But the good God was not angry: He saw, I suppose, that Monseigneur Saint Thomas did not mean anything wrong, but he wanted to know, like a damoiselle of the House of Lusignan. So He said, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.'"

"But I do not see what that means," said I. "Truth cannot be a person,—a man cannot be a way. Of course it is a figure of speech; but still I do not see what it means."

I was very sleepy, and I fancy rather cross. Marguerite stooped and kissed my hand, and then turned and put out the light.

"Rest, my fair Damoiselle," she said, tenderly. "And may the good God show my darling what it means!"

CHAPTER IV.

A JOURNEY—AND THE END OF IT .

"A violet by a mossy stone,
Half hidden from the eye:
Fair as a star when only one
Is shining in the sky."
—WORDSWORTH.

Bound for the East Countrie! Ay, we are fairly off at last, Amaury and I,—with old Marguerite, and her niece Perette, and Bertrade, Robert's daughter, and Robert himself, to wait upon me; and an escort of armed men, and Amaury's attendants.

Yet it was not all brightness when we came to leave the Castle. Alix and Messire Raymond were there to take leave of us: and I really fancied—it must have been fancy!—that there were tears in Alix's eyes when she kissed me. There were none in Umberge's, nor in Guillot's. But Raoul cried honestly; though Amaury said afterwards that he believed three-quarters of Raoul's tears were due to his having to stay behind. Father Eudes gave me his blessing; and he wept too, poor old man! I dare say he was sorry. He was here before I was born. Then

the maidens and servants came forward, the women kissing my hand, and the men my robe: and last of all I came to Monseigneur, our father.

He folded me close in his arms, and bent his head down upon mine; and I felt two or three hot tears on my brow.

"My little Lynette!" he said. "My little, little girl! The one bud of my one love! Must I let thee go? Ha, well!—it is for thy welfare. The good God bless thee, *mignonne*, and Messeigneurs and Mesdames the saints. Please God, little maiden, we shall meet in Jerusalem."

"Meet in Jerusalem?" I said in surprise. This was news to me—that Monseigneur meant to take the cross.

"Ay," said he softly, "in the '*Syon Aurea, ut clarior oro.*' There is an upper City, my child, which is fairer than the lower. Jesu, of His mercy, bring us both there!"

"Amen!" said Father Eudes. "Dame Mary, pray for us poor sinners!"

There was a great bustle after that, and noise, and clashing; and I do not remember much distinctly, till I got into the litter with Bertrade, and then first Amaury set forth on his charger, with his squires after him, and then Marguerite behind Robert on horseback, and Perette behind Amaury's varlet, who is a cousin of hers; and then my litter moved forward, with the armed men around and behind. I just saw them all clearly for one moment—Alix with her lips set, looking at us, as if she were determined not to say a word; and Messire Raymond smoothing his moustache; and Guillot with an old shoe poised in the air, which hit my fore postilion the next minute; and Umberge with that fair false smile with which she deludes every one at first sight; and Monseigneur, with his arms folded, and the tears fairly running down his cheeks, and his lips working as if he were deeply grieved. Just for one minute there they all stood; and I think they will make a picture in my eyes till the end of time for me. And then my litter was drawn out of the Castle gate, and the horses tramped across the drawbridge, and down the slope below: and I drew the curtain of the litter aside, and looked back to see my dear old home, the fair strong Castle of Lusignan, growing less and less behind me every moment, till at last it faded into a more dim speck in the distance, and I felt that my long and venturesome journey had begun.

Oh, why do people never let us know how much they love us, until just as we unclasp hands and part?

Do they always know it themselves?

And I wonder whether dying is anything like this. Do men go a long journey to God, with an armed escort of angels, and do they see the world go less and less behind them as they mount? I will ask Margot what she thinks. She is but a villein, in truth, but then she has such curious fancies.

I have asked Marguerite, and she shakes her head.

"Ha! no, my Damoiselle. It can be no long journey to God. Father Eudes said but last Sunday, reading from the Breviary, in his sermon, that 'He is not far from every one of us.' And the good thief Ditmas, that was crucified with God, was there in half a day. It can only be a little way to Heaven. Ah! much less than half a day, it must be; for did not Monseigneur Saint Gabriel, the holy Archangel, begin to fly when Monseigneur Saint Daniel began to pray?—and he was there before he had finished his beads. It is a long while since Father Eudes told us that; and I thought it so comforting, because it showed that Heaven was not far, and also that the good Lord listens so quickly when we call. Ah! I have to say, 'Wait, Héloïse!—I am listening to Perette:' but the good Lord does not need to do that. He can hear my Lady the Queen, and the Lady Alix, and Monseigneur Guy, and my Damoiselle, and her servant Marguerite, all at once."

Yes, I suppose it must be so, though I cannot understand it. One has to believe so many things that one cannot understand. Do we even know how we live from day to day? Of course it is known that we have certain organs in our bodies, by which we breathe, and speak, and walk, and digest food; but can any one tell *how* all they do goes to make up what we call life? I do not believe it.

We took our way by Poictiers, across the duchies of Berry and Burgundy, and through Franche-Comté, crossing some terrible mountains between Besançon and Neufchatel. Then we travelled across Switzerland—Oh, how beautiful it is! I felt as though I should have been content to stay there, and never go any farther. But Amaury said that was just like a silly girl. What man, said he—with such an accent on the *man*!—ever wanted to stop away from gorgeous pageants and gallant deeds of arms, just to stare at a big hill with some snow on it, or a pool of water with some trees round it? How could any body make a name in that foolish way?—said Messire Amaury.

But old Marguerite thought with me. "Damoiselle," she said, "I am very thankful I came on this journey. Methinks I have a better notion what Heaven will be like than I had before we left Poitou. I did not know the good God was so rich. There seems to be no end to the beautiful things He can make. Oh, how beautiful He Himself must be! And we shall see His face. Father Eudes read it."

Whatever one says to Marguerite, she always finds something to say in answer about the good God. Surely she should have been a nun.

We came into Italy through two great passes,—one over the Julier mountain, so called from Julius Cæsar, the great Emperor, who made the road by help of the black art, and set up two pillars on the summit to commemorate his deeds: and then, passing through a beautiful valley, where all flowers of the year were out together, and there was a lovely chain of lakes,—(which naughty Amaury scornfully called crocuses and dirty water!)—we wound up hill after hill, until at last it really seemed as if we must have reached the top of the world. Here were

two small lakes, at the foot of a drear slope of ice, which in these parts they call a glacier: and they call them the Black Lake and the White Lake. We had two sturdy peasants as guides over the mountains, and I should have liked dearly to talk with them about their country, but of course it would not have been seemly in a damsel of my rank: *noblesse oblige*. But I got Marguerite to ask them several questions, for their language is sufficiently like the Langue d'Oc[#] for us to understand them, though they speak very thickly and indistinctly. They told Marguerite that their beautiful valley is named the Val Engiadina,[#] and they were originally a colony from Italy, who fled from a persecution of the Saracens.[#] This pass is called the Bernina, for *berne* in their tongue signifies a bear, and there are many bears about here in winter. And they say this mountain is the top of the world, for here the waters separate, on the one side flowing far away into Asia, near the place where Adam dwelt in Paradise;[#] and on the other, into the great western sea,[#] which we shall shortly have to cross. And here, on the very summit of this mountain, dwelt a holy hermit, who gave me a shelter in his hut, while the men camped outside round great fires; for though it was August, yet at this great height it was quite cold. And so, through the pass, we wound slowly down into Italy.

[#] Two cognate languages were at this time spoken in France; north of the Loire, the Langue d'Oil, and south, the Langue d'Oc, both words meaning *yes* in the respective languages. The more northern language was the harsher, *ch* being sounded as *k*, just as *church* in England becomes *kirk* in Scotland. *Cher, chaise, chien*, therefore, were pronounced *ker, kaise, kien*, in the Langue d'Oil.

[#] The Engadine.

[#] All the evil done or doing in the world was at this time attributed to the Saracens. The colony is supposed to have arisen from the flight of a group of Christians in the persecution under Diocletian.

[#] The Black Sea.

[#] The Mediterranean.

Marguerite and Perette were both full of the beauty they had seen in the great glacier, on which they went with the guides: but it would not have done for a damsel of my rank, and really I saw no beauty in it from across the lake; it looked like a quantity of very dirty ice, with ashes scattered over it. But they said it was full of deep cracks or fissures, in which were the loveliest colours that human eye could see or heart imagine.

"Ah! I can guess now!" said Marguerite. "I could not think what Monseigneur Saint John meant when he said the city was gold like clear crystal. I know now. Damoiselle, in the glacier there are walls of light, the sweetest green

shading into blue that my Damoiselle can possibly imagine: they must be like that, but golden. Ha! if my Damoiselle had seen it! The great nobles have not all the good things. It is well not to be so high up that one cannot see the riches of the good God."

She has the queerest notions!

Well!—we travelled on through Lombardy, and tarried a few days at Milan, whence we journeyed to Venice, which is the strangest place I ever saw or dreamed of, for all the streets are canals, and one calls for one's boat where other people order their horses. The Duke of Venice, who is called the Doge, was very kind to us. He told us at supper a comical story of a Duchess of Venice who lived about a hundred years ago. She so dearly loved ease and luxury that she thought it too much trouble to eat with her fingers like everybody else; and she actually caused her attendants to cut her meat into little pieces, like dice, and then she had a curious instrument with two prongs,[#] made of gold, with which she picked up the bits and put them in her dainty mouth. Only fancy!

[#] The first fork on record.

At Venice we embarked, and sailed to Messina, where most of the pilgrims for the Holy Land assemble, as it is the most convenient port. We did not go overland, as some pilgrims do, through the dominions of the Byzantine Cæsar;[#] but we sailed thence to Crete. I was rather sorry to miss Byzantium,[#] both on account of the beautiful stuffs which are sold there, and the holy relics: but since I have seen a spine of the crown of thorns, which the Lady de Montbeillard has—she gave seven hundred crowns for it to Monseigneur de Rheims[#]—I did not care so much about the relics as I might otherwise have done. Perhaps I shall meet with the same kind of stuffs in Palestine; and certainly there will be relics enough.

[#] The Eastern Emperor; his dominions in Europe extended over Greece and Turkey.

[#] Constantinople.

[#] The Archbishop.

From Crete we sailed to Rhodes, and thence to Cyprus. They all say that I am an excellent sailor, for I feel no illness nor inconvenience at all; but poor Bertrade has been dreadfully ill, and Marguerite and Perette say they both feel very uncomfortable on the water. At Cyprus is an abbey of monks, on the Hill of the

Holy Cross; and here Amaury and his men were housed for the night, and I and my women at a convent of nuns not far off. At the Abbey they have a cross, which they say is the very cross on which our Lord suffered, but some say it is only the cross of Ditmas, the good thief. I was rather puzzled to know whether, there being a doubt whether it really is the holy cross, it ought to be worshipped. If it be only a piece of common wood, I suppose it would be idolatry. So I thought it more right and seemly to profess to have a bad headache, and decline to mount the hill. I asked Amaury what he had done.

"Oh! worshipped it, of course," said he.

"But how if it were not the true cross?" I asked.

"My sister, wouldst thou have a knight thus discourteous? The monks believe it true. It would have hurt their feelings to show any doubt."

"But, Amaury, it would be idolatry!"

"Ha, bah!" he answered. "The angels will see it put to the right account—no doubt of that. Dear me!—if one is to be for ever considering little scruples like that, why, there would be no end to them—one would never do any thing."

Then I asked Marguerite if she went up to worship the holy cross.

"No, Damoiselle," said she. "The Grey Friar said we worship not the cross, but the good God that died thereon. And I suppose He is as near to us at the bottom of the hill as at the top."

Well, it does look reasonable, I must say. But it must be one of Marguerite's queer notions. There would be no good in relics and holy places if that were always true.

This island of Cyprus is large and fair. It was of old time dedicated by the Paynims to Venus, their goddess of beauty: but when it fell into Christian hands, it was consecrated anew to Mary the holy Mother.

From Cyprus we sailed again, a day and a half, to Tyre; but we did not land there, but coasted southwards to the great city of Acre, and there at last we took land in Palestine.

Here we were lodged in the castle, which is very strong: and we found already here some friends of Amaury, the Baron de Montluc and his two sons, who had landed about three weeks before us. Hence we despatched a letter to Guy. I was the writer, of course, for Amaury can write nothing but his name; but he signed the letter with me. Messire Renaud de Montluc, who was setting out for the Holy City, undertook to see the letter safe. We were to follow more slowly.

We remained at Acre about ten days. Then we set forth, Amaury and I, the Baron de Montluc and his son Messire Tristan, and several other knights who were waiting for a company, with our respective trains; and the Governor of Acre lent us an additional convoy of armed men, to see us safe to the Holy City.

This was my first experience of tent life; and very strange it felt, and horribly insecure. I, accustomed to dwell within walls several feet thick, with portcullis and doors guarded by bolts and bars, in a chamber opening on an inner court, to have no more than one fold of goats' hair canvas between me and the outside world! True, the men-at-arms were camped outside; but that was no more than a castle garrison: and where was the castle?

"Margot," said I, "dost thou not feel horribly frightened?"

For of course, she, a villein, would be more accessible to fear than a noble.

"Oh no, my Damoiselle," she said very quietly. "Is it not in the holy Psalter that 'the Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them'? We are as safe as in the Castle of Lusignan."

It is a very good thing for Marguerite and the maidens that I am here. Because, of course, the holy angels, who are of high rank, would never think of taking care of mere villeins. It must mean persons of noble blood.

We journeyed on southwards slowly, pausing at the holy places—Capernaum, where Messeigneurs Saint Peter and Saint Andrew dwelt before they followed our Lord; and where Monseigneur Saint Peter left Madame his wife, and his daughter, Madame Saint Petronilla, when he became our Lord's disciple. Of course, he was obliged to leave them behind, for a holy apostle could not have a wife. (Marguerite says that man in sackcloth, who preached at the Cross at Lusignan, said that in the early ages of the Church, priests and even bishops used to be married men, and that it would have been better if they had continued to be so. I am afraid he must be a very wicked person, and one of those heretical Waldenses.) We also tarried a while at Cæsarea, where our Lord gave the keys to Monseigneur Saint Peter, and appointed him the first Bishop of Rome; and Nazareth, where our Lady was born and spent her early life. Not far from Neapolis,[#] anciently called Sychem, they show the ruins of a palace, where dwelt King Ahab, who was a very wicked Paynim, and had a Saracen to his wife. At Neapolis is the well of Monseigneur Saint Jacob, on which our Lord once sat when He was weary. This was the only holy place we passed which old Marguerite had the curiosity to go and see.

[#] Nablous.

"Now, what made thee care more for that than any other?" I asked her. "Of course it was a holy place, but there was nothing to look at save a stone well in a valley. Our Lady's Fountain, at Nazareth, was much prettier."

"Ah, my Damoiselle is young and blithe!" she said, and smiled. "It is long,

long since I was a young mother like our Lady, and longer still since I was a little child. But the bare old well in the stony valley—that came home to me. He was weary! Yet He was God. He is rested now, on the throne of His glory: yet He cares for me, that am weary still. So I just knelt down at the old well, and I said to Him, in my ignorant way,—'Fair Father,[#] Jesu Christ, I thank Thee that Thou wert weary, and that by Thy weariness thou hast given me rest.' It felt to rest me,—a visit to the place where He sat, tired and hungry. But my Damoiselle cannot understand."

[#] "Bel Père"—one of the invocations then usual.

"No, Margot, I don't at all," said I.

"Ah, no! It takes a tired man to know the sweetness of rest."

Three days' journey through the Val de Luna, which used to be called the Vale of Ajalon, brought us to the city of Gran David, which was of old named Gibeon. The valley is styled De Luna because it was here that Monseigneur Saint Joshua commanded the sun and moon to stand still while he vanquished the Paynims. From Gran David it is only one day's journey to the Holy City.

"To-morrow, Margot!" said I, in great glee. "Only to-morrow, we shall see the Holy Sepulchre!"

"Ha! Thanks be to the good God. And we need not wait till to-morrow to see Him that rose from it."

"Why, Marguerite, dost thou ever have visions?"

"Visions? Oh no! Those are for the holy saints; not for a poor ignorant villein woman like me."

"Then what didst thou mean, just now?"

"Ah, my Damoiselle cannot understand."

"Margot, I don't like that. Thou art always saying it. I want to understand."

"Then she must ask the good God to show her."

And that is all I can get out of her.

Short of a league from the Holy City is the little hill called Mont Joie, because from it the palmers catch the first glimpse of the blessed Jerusalem. We were mounting, as it seemed to me, a low hillock, when Amaury rode up beside me, and parting the curtains, said—

"Now, Elaine, look out, for we are on the Mont Joie. Wilt thou light down?"

"Certainly," I answered.

So Amaury stopped the litter, and gave me his hand, and I jumped out. He took me to the place where the palmers kneel in thanksgiving for being brought

thus far on their journey: and here I had my first sight of the Holy City.

It is but a small city, yet strongly fortified, having three walls. No Paynim is permitted to enter it, nor of course any heathen Jew. I cannot imagine how it was that the good God ever suffered the Holy City, even for an hour, to be in the hands of those wicked people. Yet last night, in the tent, if Marguerite did not ask me whether Monseigneur Saint Paul was not a Jew! I was shocked.

"Oh dear, no!" said I.

"I heard somebody say so," she replied.

"I should think it was some Paynim," said I. "Why, of course none of the holy Apostles were Jews. That miscreant Judas Iscariot, and Pontius Pilatus, and all those wicked people, I suppose, were Jews: but not the holy Apostles and the saints. It is quite shocking to think of such a thing!"

"Then what were they, if my Damoiselle pleases?" said Marguerite.

"Oh, they were of some other nation," said I.

For really, I do not know of what nation they were,—only that they could never have been Jews.

Amaury said that we must first visit the Holy Sepulchre; so, though I was dying to have news of Guy, I comforted myself with the thought that I should hereby acquire so much more merit than if I had not cared about it.

We entered the Holy City by the west gate, just as the dusk was beginning; and passing in single file along the streets, we descended the hill of Zion to the Holy Sepulchre.

In this church are kept many holy relics. In the courtyard is the prison where our Lord was confined after His betrayal, and the pillar to which He was bound when scourged: and in the portico the lance which pierced His side. The stone which the Angel rolled away from the sepulchre is now broken in two. Here our Lady died, and was buried in the Church of Saint Mary, close by. In this church is kept the cup of our Lord, out of which He habitually drank: it is of silver, with a handle on each side, and holds about a quart. Here also is the sponge which was held to His mouth, and the crown of thorns. (By a miracle of the good God, one half of the crown is also at Byzantium.) The tomb of our Lord is seven feet long, and rises three palms from the floor; fifteen golden lamps burn before it, day and night. I told the whole Rosary at the holy tomb, or should have done, for I felt that the longer I waited to see Guy, the more merit I should heap up: but Amaury became impatient, and insisted on my coming when a Pater and eight Aves were still to say.

Then we mounted the hill of Zion again, passing the church built in honour of the Prince of the Apostles, on the spot where he denied our Lord: and so we reached the King's Palace at last.

Amaury sprang from his horse, and motioned my postilion to draw up in

front of the chief gate. I heard him say to the porter—

"Is Sir Guy de Lusignan here?"

"My gracious Lord, the Count of Joppa and Ascalon, is here, if it like you, noble Sir," replied the porter. "He is at this moment in audience of my Lady the Queen."

I was so glad to hear it. Then Guy had really been created a Count! He must be in high favour. One half of his prophecy was fulfilled. But what about the other?

"Pray you," said Amaury to the porter, "do my Lord Count to wit that his brother, Sir Amaury de Lusignan, and his sister, the Lady Elaine, are before the gate."

I hardly know how I got through the next ten minutes. Then came quick steps, a sound of speech, a laugh, and then my curtains were pushed aside, and the voice I loved best in all the world said—

"Lynette! Lynette, my darling!"

Ay, it was my own Guy who came back to me. Changed?—no, not really changed at all. A little older; a little more bronzed; a little longer and fuller in the beard:—that was all. But it was my Guy, himself.

"Come! jump out," he said, holding his hand, "and let me present thee to the Lady Queen. I long to see my Lynette the fairest ornament of her Court. And how goes it with Monseigneur, our fair father?"

So, talking all the way, I walked with Guy, hand in hand, up the stairs, and into the very bower of the imperial lady who bears the crown of all the world, since it is the flower of all the crowns.

"I can assure thee," said Guy, "the Lady Queen has often talked of thee, and is prepared to welcome thee."

It was a beautiful room, though small, decorated with carved and fragrant cedar-work, and hung with blue and gold. Round the walls were blue and gold settles, and three curule chairs in the midst. There were only three ladies there,—but I must describe them.

The Queen, who sat in one of the curule chairs, was rather short and stout, with a pleasant, motherly sort of look. She appeared to be between forty and fifty years of age. Her daughter, the Lady Isabel, who sat in another chair, busied with some embroidery, was apparently about eighteen; but Guy told me afterwards that she is only fifteen, for women ripen early in these Eastern lands, and grow old fast. She has luxuriant black hair and dark shining eyes. On the settle was a damsel a little older than the Princess, not quite so dark, nor so handsome. She, as I afterwards found, was the Damoiselle Melisende de Courtenay,[#] a distant relative of the King, who dwells with the Princesses. Guy led me up to the Queen.

[#] A fictitious person. Millicent is the modern version of this old Gothic name. It comes from Amala-suinde, and signifies *heavenly-wisdom.*

"Madam," said he, "your Highness has heard me often speak of my younger sister."

"Ha! the little Damoiselle Helena?"[#] replied the Queen, smiling very kindly. "Be welcome, my child. I have indeed heard much of you; this brother of yours thinks nobody like you in the world,—not even one, eh, Sir Count?—Isabel! I desire thee to make much of the Damoiselle, and let her feel herself at home. And,—Melisende! I pray thee, give order for her lodging, and let her women be seen to. Ah!—here comes another who will be glad to be acquainted with you."

[#] Helen is really quite distinct from Ellen, of which lost Elaine is the older form. The former is a Greek name signifying *attractive, captivating.* The latter is the feminine of the Celtic name Alain,—more generally written Alan or Allan,—and means *bright-haired.* Eleanor (it is a mistake as regards philology to write Elinor) is simply an amplification of Ellen by the addition of "or," *gold.* It denotes, therefore, *hair bright as gold.* Annora is a corruption of Eleanor, and Nora or Norah a further contraction of Annora.

I turned round to see at whom the Queen was looking. An inner door of the chamber had just opened, and two ladies were coming into the room. At the one I scarcely looked, save to see that she was old, and wore the garb of a nun. The other fixed my eyes in an instant.

Shall I say she was beautiful? I do not know. She has a face about which one never thinks whether it is beautiful or not. She is so sweet, so sweet! Her hair is long, of a glossy golden hue: her eyes are dark grey, and all her soul shines out in them. Her age seemed about twenty. And Guy said behind me, in a whisper—

"The Lady Sybil of Montferrat."

Something in Guy's tone made me glance suddenly at his face. My heart felt for a moment as if it stopped beating. The thing that I feared was come upon me. The whole prophecy was fulfilled: the beautiful lady stood before me. I should be first with Guy no longer.

But I did not feel so grieved as I expected. And when Lady Sybil put her arms round me, and kissed me, and told me I should be her dear little sister,—though I felt that matters must have gone very far indeed, yet somehow I was almost glad that Guy had found a heart to love him in this strange land.

The old nun proved to be a cousin of the Queen, whom they call Lady

Judith.[#] She is an eremitess, and dwells in her cell in the very Palace itself. I notice that Lady Sybil seems very fond of her.

[#] A fictitious person.

Damoiselle Melisende showed me a nice bed-chamber, where I and my three women were to lodge. I was very tired, and the Queen saw it, and in her motherly way insisted on my having some supper, and going to bed at once. So I did not even wait to see Amaury again, and Guy went to look for him and bring him up to the Queen. The King, being a mesel, dwells alone in his own rooms, and receives none. When Guy has to communicate with him, he tells me that he talks with him through a lattice, and a fire of aromatic woods burns between them. But I can see that Guy is a very great man here, and has the affairs of the State almost in his own hands.

I said to Marguerite as I was undressing,—"Margot, I think Count Guy is going to marry somebody."

"Why, if it please my Damoiselle?"

"From the way he looks at Lady Sybil, and—other things."

"Your gracious pardon, but—is he less loving to my Damoiselle?"

"Oh no!—more loving and tender than ever, if that be possible."

"Then it is all right," said Marguerite. "He loves her."

"What dost thou mean, Margot?"

"When a man marries, my Damoiselle, one of three things happens. Either he weds from policy, and has no love for his lady; but Monseigneur Guy loves to look at her, so it is not that. Or, he loves himself, and she is merely a toy which ministers to his pleasure. Then he would be absorbed in himself and her, and not notice whether any other were happy or unhappy. But if he loves her, with that true, faithful, honourable love, which is one of God's best gifts, then he will be courteous and tender towards all women, because she is one. And especially to his own relatives, being women, who love him, he will be very loving indeed. That is why I asked."

"O Margot, Margot!" I said, laughing. "Where on earth dost thou find all thy queer notions?"

"Not all on earth, my Damoiselle. But, for many of them, all that is wanted is just to keep one's eyes open."

"Are my eyes open, Margot?"

"My Damoiselle had better shut them now," replied Marguerite, a little drily. "She can open them again to-morrow."

So I went to sleep, and dreamed that Guy married Lady Judith, in her nun's attire, and that I was in great distress at the sacrilege, and could do nothing to avert it.

CHAPTER V.
CURIOUS NOTIONS .

"The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a soul can be discerned." —ROBERT BROWNING.

For the last few weeks, since we reached Jerusalem, I have been very busy going about with the Damoiselle Melisende, and sometimes the Lady Isabel, with Amaury as escort. We have now visited all the holy places within one day's journey. I commanded Marguerite to attend me, for it amuses me afterwards to hear what she has to say.

We went to the Church of Saint Mary, in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, which is built in a round form; and in it is the empty tomb in which our Lady was buried. So some say, and that the angels carried her body away in the night: but other some say, that while the holy Apostles were carrying her to her burial, the angels came down and bore her away to Paradise. I asked Margot (as she always listens) if she had heard Father Eudes read about it from the holy Evangel: but she said he had never read the story of that, at least in French. In this church there is a stone in the wall, on which our Lord knelt to pray on the night of His betrayal; and on it is the impression of His knees, as if the stone were wax. There is no roof to the church, but by miraculous provision of the good God, the rain never falls on it. Here also, our Lord's body, when taken down from the cross, was wrapped and anointed.

We also visited the Church of the Holy Ghost, where is the marble table at which our Lord and the holy Apostles ate the Last Supper, and they received the Holy Sacrament at His hands. There is also a chapel, with an altar whereat our Lord heard mass sung by the angels; and here is kept the vessel wherein our Lord washed the feet of His disciples. All these are on Mount Zion.

Marguerite was very much interested in the vessel in which the holy Apostles' feet were washed: but she wanted to know which of them had put it by and kept it so carefully. This, of course, I could not tell her. Perhaps it was revealed by miracle that this was the vessel.

"Ah, well!" she said, turning away at last, with a contented face. "It does not much matter, if only the good God wash our feet."

"But that cannot be, Margot!" said I.

Lady Judith was with us that day, and she laid her hand on my arm.

"Child," said she gently, "'if He wash thee not, thou hast no part with Him.'"

"And," said Marguerite, "my Lady will pardon me,—if He wash us, we have part with Him."

"Ay," answered Lady Judith. "'Heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ.' Thou knowest it, my sister?—thou hast washed? Ay, 'we believers enter into rest.'"

I wondered what they were talking about. Lady Judith—of the Cæsars' purple blood, and born in a palace at Constantinople; and old Marguerite,—a villein, born in a hovel in Poitou,—marvel to relate! they understood each other perfectly. They have seemed quite friendly ever since. It can hardly be because they are both old. There must be some mystery. I do not understand it at all.

Another day, we went to the Church of the Ascension, which is on the summit of Mount Olivet. This also has an open roof. When our Lord ascended, He left the impression of His feet in the dust; and though palmers are constantly carrying the holy dust away by basketsful, yet the impression never changes. This seemed to me so wonderful that I told Marguerite, expecting that it would very much astonish her. But she did not seem to think much about it. Her mind was full of something else.

"Ah, my Damoiselle," she said, "they did well that built this church, and put no roof on it. For He is not here; He is gone up. And He will come again. Thank God! He will come again. 'This same Jesus'—the same that wore the crown of thorns, and endured the agony of the cross,—the same that said 'Weep not' to the bereaved mother, and 'Go in peace' to the woman that was a sinner—the very same, Himself, and none other. I marvel if it will be just here! I would like to live and die here, if it were."

"O Margot!" said I, laughing, "thou dost not fancy it will be while thou art alive?"

"Only the good God knows that," she said, still looking up intently through the roof of the church,—or where the roof should have been—into the sky. "But I would it might. If I could find it in my heart to envy any mortal creature, it would be them who shall look up, maybe with eyes dimmed by tears, and see Him coming!"

"I cannot comprehend thee, Margot," said I. "I think it would be just dreadful. I can hardly imagine a greater shock."

"Suppose, at this moment, my Damoiselle were to look behind her, and see Monseigneur Count Guy standing there, smiling on her,—would she think it a dreadful shock?"

"Margot! How can the two be compared?"

"Only love can compare them," answered the old woman softly.

"Marguerite! Dost thou—canst thou—love our Lord as much as I love Guy? It is not possible!"

"A thousand times more, my Damoiselle. Your Nobility, I know, loves Monseigneur very dearly; yet you have other interests apart from him. I have no interest apart from my Lord. All my griefs, all my joys, I take to Him; and until He has laid His hand on them and blessed them, I can neither endure the one nor enjoy the other."

I wonder if Lady Judith feels like that! I should like to ask her, if I could take the liberty.

Marguerite was looking up again into the sky.

"Only think what it will be!" she said. "To look up from the cradle of your dying child, with the anguish of helplessness pressing tight upon your heart—and see Him! To look up from your own sick bed, faint and weary beyond measure—and see Him! From the bitter sense of sin and failure—from cruel words and unkind looks—from loneliness and desolation—from hunger and cold and homelessness—to look up, and see Him! There will be some suffering all these things when He comes. Oh, why are His chariot-wheels so long in coming? Does not He long for it even more than we?"

I was silent. She looked—this old villein woman—almost like one inspired.

"He knows!" she added softly. "He knows. He can wait. Then we can. Surely I come quickly. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"'

Amaury called me, and I left her there.

He wanted to creep through the columns, and wished me to try first, as I am slimmer than he. I managed it pretty well,—so now all my sins are remitted, and I do feel so good and nice! Lady Isabel could hardly do it; and Amaury, who has been growing fatter of late, could not get through at all. He was much disappointed, and very cross in consequence. Damoiselle Melisende would not try. She said, laughing, that she was quite sure she could not push through, and she must get her sins forgiven some other way. But she mischievously ran and fetched old Marguerite, and putting on a grave face, proposed to her to try the feat. Now I am quite certain Marguerite could never have done it; for though she is not stout, she is a large-built woman. But she looked at the place for a moment, and then said to Melisende—

"If the Damoiselle pleases, what will follow?"

"Oh, thou wilt have all thy sins forgiven," said she.

"I thank the Damoiselle," answered Marguerite, and turned quietly away. "Then it would be to no good, for my sins are forgiven."

"What a strange old woman!" exclaimed Lady Isabel.

"Oh, Marguerite is very queer," said I. "She amuses me exceedingly."

"Is she quite right in her head, do you think?" demanded the Princess, eyeing Margot with rather a doubtful expression.

I laughed, and Amaury said, "Oh yes, as bright as a new besant. She is only comical."

Then we went into the Church of Saint John, where a piece of marble is kept on which our Lord wrote when the heathen Jews desired to know His judgment on a wicked woman. Marguerite seemed puzzled with this. She said she had heard Father Eudes read the story, and the holy Evangel said that our Lord wrote on the ground. How did the writing get on that marble?

"Oh," said I, "the marble must have been down below, and it pleased the good God that it should receive the impress."

"The good God can do all things," assented Margot. "But—well, I am an ignorant woman."

Coming down, on the slope of Olivet, the place is shown where our Lady appeared to Monseigneur Saint Thomas, who refused to believe her assumption, and gave him her girdle as a token of it. This girdle is kept in an abbey in England, and is famous for easing pain.

That same afternoon, at the spice in the Queen's presence-chamber, were Messire de Montluc and his sons. And we fell in talk—I remember not how—upon certain opinions of the schoolmen. Messire Renaud would have it that nothing is, but all things only seem to be.

"Nay, truly, Messire," said I, laughing; "I am sure I am."

"Pardon me—not at all!" he answered.

"And that cedar-wood fire is," said Damoiselle Melisende.

"By no means," replied Messire Renaud. "It exists but in your fancy. There is no such thing as matter—only mind. My imagination sees a fire there: your imagination sees a fire:—but there is no fire,—such a thing does not exist."

"Put your finger into this fire which does not exist, if you please, Messire," remarked the Queen, who seemed much amused; "I expect you will come to a different conclusion within five minutes."

"I humbly crave your Highness' pardon. My finger is an imagination. It does not really exist."

"And the pain of the burn—would that be imagination also?" she inquired.

"Undoubtedly, Lady," said he.

"But what is to prevent your imagining that there is no pain?" pursued Her Highness.

"Nothing," he answered. "If I did imagine that, there would be none. There is no such thing as matter. Mind—Soul—is the only existence, Lady."

"What nonsense is the boy talking!" growled the Baron.

"But, I pray you, Messire Renaud," said I, "if I do not exist, how does the idea that I do exist get into my head?"

"How do I have a head for it to get into?" added Guy.

"Stuff and nonsensical rubbish!" said the Baron. "Under leave of my Lady Queen,—lad, thou hast lost thy senses. No such thing as matter, quotha! Why, there is nothing but matter that is in reality. What men call the soul is simply the brain. Give over thy fanciful stuff!"

"You are a Realist, Messire?" asked Guy.

"Call me what name you will, Sir Count," returned the Baron. "I am no such fool as yon lanky lad of mine. I believe what I see and hear, and there I begin and end. So does every wise man."

"Is it not a little odd," inquired Guy, "that everybody should think all the wise men must believe as he does?"

"Odd? No!" said the Baron. "Don't you think so yourself, Sir Count?"

Guy laughed. "But there is one thing I should like to know," said he. "I have heard much of Realists and Nominalists, but I never before met one of either. I wish to ask each of you, Messires,—In your system, what becomes of the soul after death?"

"Nay, if there be no soul, what can become of it?" put in Damoiselle Melisende.

"Pure foy!" cried the Baron. "I concern myself about nothing of that sort. Holy Church teaches that the soul survives the body, and it were unseemly to gainsay her teaching. But—ha! what know I?"

"For me," said Messire Renaud, a little grandiloquently, "I believe that death is simply the dissolution of that which seems, and leaves only the pure essence of that which is. The modicum of spirit—of that essence—which I call my soul, will then be absorbed into the great soul of the Universe—the Unknowable, the Unknown."

"We have a name for that, Messire," said Guy reverently. "We call it—God."

"Precisely," answered Messire Renaud. "You—we—holy Church—personify this Unknowable Essence, which is the fountain of all essence. The parable—for a parable it is—is most beautiful. But It—He—name it as you will—is none the less the Unknown and the Unknowable."

"The boy must have a fever, and the delirium is on him," said the Baron. "Get a leech, lad. Let out a little of that hot blood which mystifies thy foolish brains."

There was silence for a minute, and it was broken by the low, quiet voice of Lady Judith, who sat next to the Lady Queen, with a spindle in her hand.

"'And this is life eternal, that they should *know Thee*.'" She added no more.

"Beautiful words, truly," responded Messire Renaud. "But you will permit

me to observe, Lady, that they are—like all similar phrases—symbolical. The soul that has risen the nearest to this ineffable Essence—that is most free from the shell of that which seems—may, in a certain typical sense, be said to 'know' this Essence. Now there never was a soul more free from the seeming than that of Him whom we call our Lord. Accordingly, He tells us that—employing one of the loveliest of all types—He 'knew the Father.' It is perfectly charming, to an enlightened mind, to recognise the force, the beauty, the hidden meaning, of these exquisite types."

"Lad, what is the length of thine ears?" growled the Baron. "What crouched ass crammed all this nonsense into thee? 'Enlightened mind'—'exquisite types'—'charming symbolism'! I am not at all sure that I understand thee, thou exquisite gander! But if I do, what thou meanest, put in plain language, is simply that there is no God. Eh?"

"Fair Father, under your good leave, I would choose other words. God—what we call God—is the Unknowable Essence. Therefore, undoubtedly there is God, and in a symbolic sense, He is the Creator of all things, this Essence being the source out of which all other essences are evolved. Therefore, parabolically speaking"——

"I'll lay my stick about thy back, thou parabolical mud-puddle!" cried the Baron. "Let me be served up for Saladin's supper if I understand a word of thy foolery! Art thou a true son of holy Church or not? That is what I want to know."

"Undoubtedly, fair Sir!" said Messire Renaud. "God forbid that I should be a heretic! Our holy Mother the Church has never banned the Nominalists."

"Then it is high time she did!" retorted the Baron. "I reckon she thinks they will do nobody much harm, because no mortal being can understand them. But where, in the name of all the Seven Wonders of the World, thou gattest such moonshine sticking in thy brains, shoot me if I know. It was not from my Lady, thy fair mother; and I am sure it was not from me."

Messire Renaud made no answer beyond a laugh, and the Lady Queen quickly introduced a different subject. I fancy she saw that the Baron was losing his temper. But when Messire Renaud was about to take leave, Lady Judith arose, as quietly as she does everything, and glided to his side.

"Fair Sir," she said gently, "I pray you, pardon one word from an old woman. You know years should teach wisdom."

"Trust me, Lady, to listen with all respect," said he courteously.

"Fair Sir," she said, "when you stand face to face with death, you will find *It* does not satisfy your need. You will want *Him*. You are not a thing, but a person. How can the thing produced be greater than that which produces it?"

"Your pardon, fair Lady and holy Mother!" interposed Messire Renaud quickly. "I do not object to designate the Unknowable Essence as Him. Far from

it! I do but say, as the highest minds have said,—We cannot know. It maybe Him, It, Them:—we cannot know. We can but bow in illimitable adoration, and strive to perfect, to purify and enlighten, our minds, so that they shall grow nearer and nearer to that ineffable Possibility."

A very sad look passed over Lady Judith's face.

"My son," she said, "'if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!' These are not my words, but His that died for thee."

And without another word, she glided back to her seat.

"Margot," said I, when she came to undress me, "is my body or my soul me?"

"To fall and bruise yourself, Damoiselle, would tell you the one," said she; "and to receive some news that grieved you bitterly would show you the other."

"Messire Renaud de Montluc says that only my soul is me; and that my body does not exist at all,—it only seems to be."

"Does he say the same of his own body?"

"Oh yes; of all."

"Wait till he has fleshed his maiden sword," said Margot. "If he come into my Damoiselle's hands for surgery[#] with a broken leg and a sword-cut on the shoulder, let her ask him, when she has dressed them, whether his body be himself or not."

[#] All ladies were taught surgery, and practised it, at this date.

"Oh, he says that pain is only imagination," said I. "If he chose to imagine that he had no pain, it would stop."

"Very good," said Marguerite. "Then let him set his broken leg with his beautiful imagination. If he can cure his pain by imagining he has none, what must he be if he do not?"

"Well, I know what I should think him. But his father, the Baron de Montluc, will have it just the opposite—that there is no soul, nor anything but what we can see and hear."

"Ah! they will both find out their mistakes when they come to die," said Margot. "Poor blind things! The good God grant that they may find them out a little sooner."

I asked Guy if he did not think the Baron's notion a very dangerous one. But while he said "yes," he added that he thought Messire Renaud's much more so.

"It is so much more difficult to disprove," said he. "It may look more absurd

on the surface, but it is more subtle to deal with, and much more profound."

"They both look to me very silly," said I.

"I wish they were no worse," was Guy's answer.

To-day we have been to the Church of the Nativity, at Bethlehem. This is a little city, nearly two leagues from Jerusalem, that is, half a day's ride. The way thither is very fair, by pleasant plains and woods. The city is long and narrow, and well walled, and enclosed with good ditches on all sides. Between the city and the church lies the field Floridus, where of old time a certain maiden was brought to the burning, being falsely accused. But she, knowing her innocence, prayed to our Lord, and He by miracle caused the lighted faggots to turn into red roses, and the unlighted into white roses; which were the first roses that were ever in the world.

The place where our Lord was born is near the choir of the church, down sixteen steps, made of marble and richly painted; and under the cloister, down eighteen steps, is the charnel-house of the holy Innocents. The tomb of Saint Jerome is before the holy place. Here are kept a marble table, on which our Lady ate with the three Kings that came from the East to worship our Lord; and the cistern into which the star fell that guided them. The church, as is meet, is dedicated to our Lady.

Marguerite wanted to know if I were sure that the table was marble. Because, she said, our Lady was a poor woman—only imagine such a fancy!—but she insisted upon it that she had heard Father Eudes read something about it. As if the Queen of Heaven, who was, moreover, Queen of the land, could have been poor! I told Marguerite I was sure she must be mistaken, for our Lady was a Princess born.

"That may be, of blood," said she; "but she was poor. Our Lord Himself, when on earth, was but a villein."

I was dreadfully shocked.

"O Marguerite!" I cried. "What horrible sacrilege! Art thou not afraid of the church falling on thee?"

"It would not alter that if it did," said she drily.

"Our Lord a villein!" exclaimed I. "How is such a thing possible? He was the King of Kings."

"He is the King of Kings," said Marguerite, so reverently that I was sure she could mean no ill; "and He was of the royal blood of Monseigneur Saint David. That is the Evangel of the nobles. But He was by station a villein, and wrought as a carpenter, and had no house and no wealth. That is the Evangel of the villeins. And the villeins need their Evangel, Damoiselle; for they have nothing else."

I could not tell what to answer. It is rather puzzling. I suppose it is true that our Lord was reputed the son of a carpenter; and he must have wrought as such,—Monseigneur Saint Joseph, I mean,—for the Lady de Montbeillard, who is fond of picking up relics, has a splinter of wood from a cabinet that he made. But I always thought that it was to teach religious persons[#] a lesson of humility and voluntary poverty. It could not be that He was *poor*!

[#] By this term a Romanist does not mean what a Protestant does. The only "religious persons," in the eyes of the former, are priests or monks.

Then our Lady,—I have seen a scrap of her tunic, and it was as fine stuff as it could be; and I have heard, though I never saw it, that her wedding-ring is set with gems. I said this to Marguerite. How could our Lady be poor?

"All that may be," she replied, with quiet perverseness. "But I know, for all that, Father Eudes read that our Lord was born in a cratch, or laid in one, because there was no room in the inn. And they do not behave in that way to kings and nobles. That is the lot of the villein. And He chose the villein's lot; and I, a villein, have been giving Him thanks for it."

And nothing that I could say would disturb her calm conviction.

Damoiselle Melisende told me some interesting things as we rode back to the Holy City. As,—that Jerusalem is very badly supplied with water, and the villeins collect and drink only rain-water. Of course this does not affect the nobles, who drink wine. About two leagues from Jerusalem, towards the north, is a little village called Jericho, where the walls of the house of Madame Saint Rahab are still standing. She was a great lady who received into her house certain spies sent by Monseigneur Saint Joshua, and hid them behind the arras. (Now, there again!—if that stupid old Marguerite would not have it that Madame Saint Rahab kept a cabaret. How could a great lady keep a cabaret? I wish she would give over listening, if it makes her take such fancies.) Damoiselle Melisende also told me that Adam, our first father, was buried in the place where our Lord was crucified; and our Lord's blood fell upon him, and he came to life again, and so did many others. And Adam wept for his son Abel one hundred years. Moreover, there is a rock still standing in the place where the wicked Jews had their Temple, which was in the holiest place of all; and here our Lord was wont to repose whilst His disciples confessed themselves to Him.[#]

[#] All these legends may be found in the Travels of Sir John Mandeville.

Coming home, we passed by the Golden Gate, which is the gate whereby our Lord entered the Holy City on the ass, and the gate opened to Him of its own accord. Damoiselle Melisende bade me observe three marks in the stone where the ass had set his feet. The marks I certainly saw, but I could not have told that they were the print of an ass's hoofs. I suppose I was not worthy to behold them quite distinctly.

Guy called me to him this evening.

"Little Lynette," he said, "I have something to tell thee."

"Let me spare thee the pains, Guy," answered I mischievously. "Dost thou think I have no eyes? I saw it the first night we came."

"Saw what?" asked Guy, with an astonished look.

"That thy beautiful lady had appeared," I replied. "Thou art going to wed with Lady Sybil."

"What fairy whispered it to thee, little witch?" said Guy, laughing. "Thou art right, Lynette. The King hath bestowed on me the regency of the kingdom, and the hand of his fair sister. To-morrow, in presence of the nobles, I am to be solemnly appointed Regent: and a month hence, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, I wed with the Lady Sybil."

"If thou art happy, Guy, I am very glad," said I; and I said it honestly.

"Happy? I should think so!" cried he. "To be Regent of the land of all lands! And she, Lynette—she is a gem and a treasure."

"I am sure of that, Guy," said I.

"And now, my news is not finished, little sister," said he. "The King has given Amaury a wife."

"Oh, poor thing!—who is it?" said I.

Guy laughed till his eyes were full of tears.

"Poor thing!—who?" said he. "Amaury or his bride?"

"Oh, the bride, of course," said I. "Amaury won't care a straw for her, and she will be worried out of her life if she does not dress to please him."

"Let us hope that she will, then," answered Guy, still laughing. "It is the Damoiselle Eschine d'Ibellin, daughter of Messire de Rames. Thou dost not know her."

"Dost thou?—what is she like?"

"Oh, most women are like one another," said Guy—(what a falsehood!). "Except my fair Lady, and thee, little Lynette, and the Lady Clémence, thy fair mother,—a woman is a woman, and that is all."

"Oh, indeed!" said I, rather indignantly. "A man is a man, I suppose, and that is all! Guy, I am astonished at thee. If Amaury had said such a thing, I should

not have wondered."

"Men are different, of course," answered Guy. "But a woman's business is to look pretty and be attractive. Everybody understands that. Nobody expects a woman to be over wise or clever."

"Thou hadst better be quiet, Guy, if thou dost not want thine ears boxed," said I. "If that is not a speech enough to vex any woman, I never heard one. You men are the most aggravating creatures. You seem to look upon us as a kind of pretty animal, to be kept for a pet and plaything; and if you are not too obtuse yourselves to find out that your plaything occasionally shows signs of a soul within it, you cry out, 'Look here! This toy of mine is actually exhibiting scintillations of something which really looks almost like human intellect!' Let me tell you, Sir Count, we have as much humanity, and sense, and individuality, as yourselves; and rather more independence. Pretty phrases, and courtly reverences, and professions of servitude, may sound very well in your ears; and of those you give us plenty. Does it never occur to you that we should thank you a great deal more for a little genuine respect and consideration? We are *not* toys; we are not pet animals; we are not pretty pictures. We are human creatures with human feelings like yourselves. We can put up with fewer compliments to our complexions, if you please, and a little more realisation of our separate consciences and intellects."

"'Ha, Lusignan!'" cried Guy, looking half ashamed and half amused. "'Sainte Marguerite for Poitou!' Upon my word, Lynette, I *have* had a lecture. I shall not forget it in a hurry."

"Yes," said I, "and thou feelest very much as if Lady Isabel's pet monkey had opened its mouth, and uttered some wise apothegms upon the rights of apes. Not that thou hast an atom more respect for the rights of apes in general, but that thou art a little astonished and amused with that one ape in particular."

Guy went off laughing: and I returned to my embroidery.

Really, I never did see any thing like these men. "Nobody expects a woman to be wise," forsooth! That is, of course, no man. A woman is nobody.

I do not believe that men like a woman to be wise. They seem to take it as a personal insult—as though every spark of intellect added to our brains left theirs duller. And a woman's mission in life is, *of course*, to please the men,—not to make the most of herself as an individual human soul. That is treason, usurpation, impertinence.

They will see what they will see. *I* can live without them. And I mean to

do.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PERVERSITY OF PEOPLE .

"'Do one good'! Is it good, if I don't want it done?
Now do let me grumble and groan:
It is all very well other folks should have fun;
But why can't they let me alone?"

Damoiselle Melisende and I have been busy all morning in laying out dried herbs under the superintendence of Lady Judith. The herbs of this land are not like those of Poitou. There was cassia,—of which one variety,[#] Lady Judith says, is taken as medicine, to clear the system and purify the blood,—and garlic, which they consider an antidote to poison,—and the wild gourd,[#] which is medicine for the liver,—and hyssop, spikenard, wormwood (a cure for vertigo), and many others. Two curious fruits they have here which I never heard of in Poitou; the one is a dark, fleshy stone-fruit, very nice indeed, which they call plums or damascenes;[#] they grow chiefly at Damascus. The other grows on trees around the Dead Sea, and is the apple of Sodom, very lovely to the eye, but as soon as you bite it, you find nothing but a mouthful of ashes. I was so amused with this fruit that I brought some home and showed them to Marguerite.

[#] Senna.

[#] Colocynth.

[#] Introduced into Europe by the Crusaders.

"Ah, the world is full of those!" she said, when she had tried one, and found out what sort of thing it was.

"Thou art quite mistaken, Margot," said I. "They are found but in this country, and only in one particular spot."

"Those that can be seen, very likely," said she. "But the unseen fruit, my

Damoiselle, grows all over the world, and men and women are running after it all their lives."

Then I saw what she meant.

They have no apples here at all; but citrons and quinces, which are not unlike apples. The golden citron[#] is a beautiful fruit, juicy and pleasant; and Lady Judith says some people reckon it to be the golden apples of the Hesperides, which were guarded by dragons, and likewise the "apples of gold," of which Monseigneur King Solomon speaks in Holy Writ. There are almonds, and dates, and cucumbers, and large, luscious figs, and grapes, and melons, and mulberries, and several kinds of nuts, and olives, and pomegranates. Quinces are here thought to make children clever. They make no hay in this country.

[#] Oranges.

As for their stuffs, there are new and beautiful ones. Here they weave byssus,[#] and a very fine transparent stuff called muslin. Crape comes from Cyprus, and damask from Damascus, whence it is named. But the fairest of all their stuffs is the baudekyn, of which we have none in Europe,—especially the golden baudekyn, which is like golden samite. I have bought two lovely pieces for Alix, the one gold-colour, the other blue.

[#] Cotton.

Some very curious customs they have here, which are not common in Europe. Instead of carrying lanterns when one walks or rides at night, they hang out lanterns in the streets, so that all are lighted at once. It seems to me rather a good idea.

Guy has been telling us some strange things about the Saracens. Of course I knew before that they worship idols,[#] and deal in the black art; but it seems that Saladin, when he marches, makes known his approach by a dreadful machine produced by means of magic, which roars louder than a lion,[#] and strikes terror into every Christian ear that is so unhappy as to be within hearing. This is, of course, by the machinations of the Devil, since it is impossible that any true Catholic could be frightened of a Saracen otherwise.

[#] All mediæval Christians thought this.

[#] The first drum on record.

We are all very busy preparing for the weddings. There are to be three, on three successive days. On the Saturday, Amaury is to be married to Damoiselle Eschine. (Poor thing!—how I pity her! I would not marry Amaury to be Empress.) On the Sunday, Guy weds with Lady Sybil. And on Monday, Lady Isabel with Messire Homfroy de Tours.

I think Lady Sybil grows sweeter and sweeter. I love her,—Oh, so much! She asked me if Guy had told me the news. I said he had.

"And dost thou like it, Lynette?" she asked shyly.

"Very much indeed," said I,—"if you love him, Lady."

"Love him!" she said. And she covered her face with her hands. "O Lynette, if thou knewest how well! He is my first love. I was wedded to my Lord of Montferrat when both of us were little children; we never chose each other. I hope I did my best to make him a good and dutiful wife; I know I tried to do so. But I never knew what love meant, as concerned him. Never, till *he* came hither."

Well, I am sure Guy loves her. But—shall I own to having been the least bit disappointed with what he said the other day about women?

I should not have cared if Amaury had said it. I know he despises women—I have noticed that brainless men always do—and I should not have expected any thing better. But I did not look for it from Guy. Several times in my life, dearly as I love him, Guy has rather disappointed me.

Why do people disappoint one in that way? Is it that one sets up too high a standard, and they fall short of it? I think I will ask Lady Judith what she thinks. She has lived long enough to know.

I found an opportunity for a chat with Lady Judith the very next day. We were busy broidering Lady Sybil's wedding-dress, the super-tunic of which is to be white baudekyn, diapered in gold, and broidered with deep red roses. She wears white, on account of being a widow. Lady Isabel will be in gold-coloured baudekyn, and my new sister Eschine in rose damask.

I have said nothing about Eschine, though she is here. It was because I had not any thing to say. Her eyes, hair, and complexion are of no colour in particular; she is not beautiful—nor ugly: she is not agreeable—nor disagreeable. She talks very little. I feel absolutely indifferent to her. I should think she would just do for Amaury.

Well!—we were broidering the tunic, Lady Judith doing the gold, and I the

red; and Damoiselle Melisende had been with us, working the green leaves, but the Lady Queen sent for her, and she went away. So Lady Judith and I were left alone.

"Holy Mother," said I, "give me leave to ask you a question."

"Surely, my child," said she; "any one thou wilt."

"Then, holy Mother,—do people ever disappoint you? I mean, when you fancy you know a man, does he never surprise you by some action which you think unworthy of him, and which you would not have expected from him?"

Lady Judith's first answer was an amused smile.

"Who has been disappointing thee, Helena?"

"Oh, nobody in particular," said I hastily; for how could I accuse Guy? *Loyauté d'amour* forbid! "But I mean in general."

"Generals are made of particulars, Helena. But I have not answered thy question. Yes, certainly I have known such a feeling."

"And, if it please you, holy Mother, what is the reason of it?" said I. "Does one set up one's standard of right, truth, and beauty, too high?"

"That is not possible, my child. I should rather think thou hast set up the man too high."

"Oh!" said I deprecatingly.

"Hast thou ever heard a saying, Helena, that 'a man sees only that which he brings eyes to see'? There is much truth in it. No man can understand a character which is higher or broader than his own. Admire it he may; enter into it, he cannot. Human character is a very complicated thing."

"Then one may be too low to see a man's character?"

"True; and one may be too high. A single eye will never understand a double one.—Or they may be too far asunder. A miser and a spendthrift are both in the wrong, but neither of them can feel with the other."

"But where the temperaments are alike—?" said I; for I always think Guy and I were cast in the same mould.

"They never are quite alike," she replied. "As in a shield borne by two brothers, there is always a difference."

"Pray you, holy Mother, do you think my brother Guy and me alike?"

"Alike, yet very different," she said, and smiled. "Cast from one mould,—yet he on the one side of it, and thou on the other."

"What do you think is the difference, holy Mother? May I know?"

"Wouldst thou like to know, Helena?" she said, and smiled again.

"Oh, I think I can bear to hear my faults," said I. "My pride is not of that sort."

"No," she said; "but thou art very proud, little one."

"Certainly," said I; "I am noble."

Lady Judith looked suddenly up at me, with a kind of tender look in her grey eyes, which are so like, and yet so unlike, Lady Sybil's eyes.

"Little maid, tell me one thing; is thine heart at rest?"

"I have never been at rest, holy Mother. I do not know how to get it."

"No, dear heart; thy shoulder is not under the yoke. Listen to the words of the Master—thy Lord and mine. 'Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' Little maiden, wilt thou not come and learn of Him? He is the only one in Heaven or earth who will never disappoint thee."

Rather bitter tears were filling my eyes.

"I don't know how!" I said.

"No, dear heart; He knows *how*," said Lady Judith. "Only tell Him thou art willing to learn of Him—if thou art willing, Helena."

"I have had some thoughts of going into the cloister," said I. "But—I could not leave Guy."

"Dear child, canst thou not learn the lessons of God, without going into the cloister?"

"I thought not," said I. "One cannot serve the good God, and remain in the world,—can one?"

"Ah, what is the world?" said Lady Judith. "Walls will not shut it out. Its root is in thine own heart, little one."

"But—your pardon, holy Mother!—you yourself have chosen the cloister."

"Nay, my child. I do not say I might not have done so. But, in fact, it was chosen for me. This veil has been upon my head, Helena, since I was five years old."

"Yet you would not deny, holy Mother, that a nun is better than a wife?"[#]

[#] I trust that I shall not be misunderstood, or supposed to express any approbation of conventual life. At the date of this story, an unmarried woman who was not a nun was a phenomenon never seen, and no woman who preferred single life had any choice but to be a nun. In these early times, also, nuns had more liberty, and monasticism, as well as religion in general, was free from some corruptions introduced in later years. The original nunneries were simply houses where single women could live together in comfort and safety, and were always seminaries of learning and charitable institutions. Most of them were very different places at the date of the dissolution.

"Better? I am not so sure. Happier,—yes, I think so."

"Most people would say just the opposite, would they not?" said I, laughing.

"Most men, and some women," she answered, with a smile. "But Mon-

seigneur Saint Paul thought a woman happier who abode without marriage."

"That is what I should like best: but how can I, without being a nun? Perhaps, if I were an eremitess, like your Nobility, I might still get leave from my superiors to live with Guy."

"It is always Guy with thee," remarked Lady Judith, smiling. "Does Guy never disappoint thee, my child?"

It was on my lips to say, "Oh no!"—but I felt my cheeks grow hot, and I did not quite like to tell a downright lie. I am sure Lady Judith saw it, but she kindly took no notice. However, at this point, Damoiselle Melisende came back to her leaves, and we began to talk of something else.

I asked Marguerite, at night, if people disappointed her.

"Did my Damoiselle expect never to be disappointed?" she answered, turning the question on myself at once. (Old people do. They seem to think one always means one's self, however careful one may be.) "Then I am afraid she will be disappointed."

"But why?" said I. "Why don't people do right, as one expects them to do?"

"Does one always know what is right? As to why,—there are the world, the flesh, and the Devil, against it; and if it were not for the grace of the good God, any one of them would be more than enough."

The world, the flesh, and the Devil! The world,—that is other people; and they do provoke one, and make one do wrong, terribly, sometimes. But the flesh,—why, that is me. I don't prevent myself doing right. Marguerite must be mistaken.

Then, what is grace? One hears a great deal about it; but I never properly understood what it was. It certainly is no gift that one can see and handle. I suppose it must be something which the good God puts into our minds; but what is it? I will ask Lady Judith and Marguerite. Being old, they seem to know things; and Marguerite has a great deal of sense for a villein. Then, having been my nurse, and always dwelt with nobles, she is not quite like a common villein; though of course the blood must remain the same.

I wonder what it is about Lady Isabel which I do not like. I have been puzzling over it, and I am no nearer. It feels to me as if there were something slippery about her. She is very gracious and affable, but I should never think of calling her sweet—at least, not sweet like her sister. She seems just the opposite of Lady Judith, who never stops to think whether it is her place to do any thing, but just does it because it wants doing. Lady Isabel, on the contrary, seems to me to do only what *she* wants doing. In some inexplicable manner, she slides out of every thing which she does not fancy; and yet she so manages it that one never sees

she is doing it at the time. I never can fathom people of that sort. But I do not like them.

As for darling Lady Sybil, I love her better and better every day. I do not wonder at Guy.

Of Guy himself I see very little. He is Regent of the kingdom, and too busy to attend to any thing.

"Marguerite," I said, "what is grace?"

"Does my Damoiselle mean the grace of the good God?"

I nodded.

"I think it is help," she answered.

"But what sort of help?"

"The sort we need at the minute."

"But I do not quite understand," said I. "We get grace when we receive the good Lord; but we do not get help. Help for what?"

"If my Damoiselle does not feel that she needs help, perhaps that is the reason why she does not get it."

"Ah, but we do get it in the holy mass. Can we receive our Lord, and not receive grace?"

"Do we always, and all, receive our Lord?"

"Margot! Is not that heresy?"

"Ha! I do not know. If it be truth, it can hardly be."

"But does not holy Church teach, that whenever we eat the holy bread, the presence of our Lord comes down into our hearts?"[#]

[#] Holy Church had gone no further than this in 1183. Bare transubstantiation was not adopted by authority till about thirty years later.

"I suppose He will come, if we want Him," said Marguerite thoughtfully. "But scarcely, I should think, if we ate that bread with our hearts set on something else, and not caring whether He came or not."

I was rather afraid to pursue the question with Margot, for I keep feeling afraid, every now and then, when she says things of that sort, whether she has not received some strange, heretical notion from that man in sackcloth, who preached at the Cross, at Lusignan. I cannot help fancying that he must be one of those heretics who lately crept into England, and King Henry the father had them whipped and turned out of doors, forbidding any man to receive them or

give them aid. It was a very bitter winter, and they soon perished of hunger and cold, as I suppose such caitiffs ought. Yet some of them were women; and I could not but feel pity for the poor innocent babes that one or two had in their arms. And the people who saw them said they never spoke a bitter word, but as soon as they understood their penalty, and the punishment that would follow harbouring them, they begged no more, but wandered up and down the snowy streets in company, singing—only fancy, singing! And first one and then another dropped and died, and the rest heaped snow over them with their hands, which was the only burial they could give; and then they went on, singing,—always singing. I asked Damoiselle Elisinde de Ferrers,—it was she who told me,—what they sang. She said they sang always the holy Psalter, or else the Nativity Song of the angels,—"Glory to God in the highest,—on earth peace towards men of good-will."[#] And at last they were all dead under the snow but one,—one poor old man, who survived last. And he went on alone, singing. He tottered out of the town,—I think it was Lincoln, but I am not sure,—and as far as men's ears could follow, they caught his thin, quavering voice, still singing,—"Glory to God in the highest!" And the next morning, they found him laid in a ditch, not singing,—dead. But on his face was such a smile as a saint might have worn at his martyrdom, and his eyes gazing straight up into heaven, as if the angels themselves had come down to help him to finish his song.[#]

[#] Vulgate version.

[#] This is the first persecution on record in England of professing Christians, by professing Christians.

Oh, I cannot understand! If this is heresy and wickedness, wherein lies the difference from truth and holiness?

I must ask Lady Judith.

Oh dear, why *will* people?—I do think it is too bad. I never thought of such a thing. If it had been Amaury, now,—But that Guy, of all people in all this world—

Come, I had better tell my story straight.

I was coming down the long gallery after dinner, to the bower of the Lady Queen, where I meant to go on with my embroidery, and I thought I might perhaps get a quiet talk with Lady Judith. All at once I felt myself pulled back by one of my sleeves, and I guessed directly who had caught me.

"Why, Guyon! I have not seen thee for an age!"

"And I want to see thee for a small age," answered he, laughing. "How many weddings are there to be next week, Lynette?"

"Why, three," said I. "Thou wist as well as I."

"What wouldst thou say to four?"

"Wish them good fortune, so I am not the bride."

"Ah, but suppose thou wert?"

"Cry my eyes out, I think."

Hitherto Guy had spoken as if he were jesting. Now he changed his tone.

"Seriously, Elaine, I am thinking of it. Thou knowest thou camest hither for that object."

"*I* came hither for that!" cried I in hot indignation.

"Thou wert sent hither, then," answered Guy, half laughing at my tone. "Do not be so hot, little one. Monseigneur expects it, I can assure thee."

"Art thou going to wed me against my will? O Guy! I never thought it of thee!" exclaimed I pitifully.

For that was the bitterest drop—that Guy should be willing to part with me.

"No, no, my darling Lynette!" said Guy, taking my hands in his. "Thou shalt not be wed against thy will, I do assure thee. If thou dost not like the knight I had chosen, I will never force him upon thee. But it would be an excellent match,—and of course I should be glad to see thee comfortably settled. Thou mightest guess that."

Might I! That is just what I never should have guessed. Do men ever understand women?

"'Settled,' Guy!" I said. "What dost thou mean by 'settled'? What is there about me that is unsettled?"

"Now, that is one of thy queer notions," answered Guy. "Of course, no woman is considered settled till she marries."

"I should think it was just the most unsettling thing in the world," said I.

"Lynette, thou wert born in the wrong age!" said Guy. "I do not know in what age thou wert born, but certainly not this."

"And thou wouldst be glad to lose me, Guy!"

"Nay, not glad to lose thee, little one"—I think Guy saw that had hurt me—"but glad for thine own sake. Why, Lynette, crying? For what, dear foolish child?"

I could hardly have told him. Only the world had gone dark and dreary. I know he never meant to be unkind. Oh no! I suppose people don't, generally. They do not find out that they have hurt you, unless you scream. Nor perhaps then, if they are making a noise themselves.

"My dear little sister," said Guy again,—and very lovingly he said it,—"why are all these tears? No man shall marry thee without thy leave. I am surprised. I

thought women were always ready to be married."

Ah, that was it. He did not understand!

"And thou art not even curious to hear whom it should have been?"

"What would that matter?" said I, trying to crush back a few more hundreds of tears which would have liked to come. "But tell me if thou wilt."

"Messire Tristan de Montluc," he said.

It flashed on me all at once that Messire Tristan had tried to take the bridle of my horse,[#] when we came from the Church of the Nativity. I might have guessed what was coming.

[#] Then a tacit declaration of love to a lady.

"Does that make any difference?" asked Guy, smiling.

"No," said I; "none."

"And the poor fellow is to break his heart?"

"I dare say it will piece again," said I.

Guy laughed, and patted me on the shoulder.

"Come, dry all those tears; there is nothing to cry about. Farewell!"

And away he went, whistling a troubadour song.

Nothing to cry about! Yes, that was all he knew.

I went to my own chamber, sent Bertrade out of it, and finished my cry. Then I washed my face, and when I thought all traces were gone, I went down to my embroidery.

Lady Judith was alone in the bower. She looked up with her usual kind smile as I took the seat opposite. But the smile gave way in an instant to a graver look. Ah! she saw all was not right.

I was silent, and went on working. But in a minute, without any warning, Lady Judith was softly singing. The words struck me.

"'Art thou weary, art thou languid,
Art thou sore distressed?
'Come to Me,' saith One, 'and, coming,
Be at rest.'

"'Hath He marks to lead me to Him,
If He be my Guide?'
'In His feet and hands are wound-prints,
And His side.'

"'Is there diadem, as monarch,
That His brow adorns?'
'Yea, a crown, in very surety,
But of thorns.'

"If I find Him, if I follow,
What His guerdon here?'
'Many a sorrow, many a labour,
Many a tear.'

"'If I still hold closely to Him,
What hath He at last?'
'Sorrow vanquished, labour ended,
Jordan past.'

"'If I ask Him to receive me,
Will He say me nay?'
'Not till earth, and not till heaven,
Pass away.'"

"Oh! Your pardon, holy Mother, for interrupting you," said Damoiselle Melisende, coming in some haste; "but the Lady Queen sent me to ask when the Lady Sybil's tunic will be finished."

Her leaves are finished, but not my roses, nor Lady Judith's gold diapering. I felt much obliged to her, for something in the hymn had so touched me that the tears were very near my eyes again. Lady Judith answered that she thought it would be done to-morrow; and Melisende ran off again.

"Hast thou heard that hymn before, Helena?" said Lady Judith, busy with the diaper.

"Never, holy Mother," said I, as well as I could.

"Did it please thee now?"

"It brought the tears into my eyes," said I, not sorry for the excuse.

"They had not far to come, had they, little one?"

I looked up, and met her soft grey eyes. And—it was very silly of me, but—I burst into tears once more.

"It is always best to have a fit of weeping out," said she. "Thou wilt feel better for it, my child."

"But I had—had it out—once," sobbed I.

"Ah, not quite," answered Lady Judith. "There was more to come, little one."

"It seems so foolish," I said, wiping my eyes at last. "I do not exactly know why I was crying."

"Those tears are often bitter ones," said Lady Judith. "For sometimes it means that we dare not look and see why."

I thought that was rather my position. For indeed the bitter ingredient in my pain at that moment was one which I did not like to put into words, even to myself.

It was not that Guy did not love me. Oh no! I knew he did. It was not even that I did not stand first in his love. I was ready to yield that place to Lady Sybil. Perhaps I should not have been quite so ready had it been to any one else. But—there was the sting—he did not love me as I loved him. He could do without me.

And I could have no comfort from sympathy. Because, in the first place, the only person whose sympathy would have been a comfort to me was the very one who had distressed me; and in the second place, I had a vague idea underlying my grief that I had no business to feel any; that every body (if they knew) would tell me I was exceedingly silly—that it was only what I ought to have expected—and all sorts of uncomfortable consolations of that kind. Was I a foolish baby, crying for the moon?—or was I a grand heroine of romance, whose feelings were so exquisitely delicate and sensitive that the common clay of which other people were made could not be expected to understand me? I could not tell.

Oh, why must we come out of that sweet old world where we walked hand in hand, and were all in all to each other? Why must we grow up, and drift asunder, and never be the same to one another any more?

Was I wicked?—or was I only miserable?

About the last item at any rate there was no doubt. I sat, thinking sad thoughts, and trying to see my work through half-dimmed eyes, when Lady Judith spoke again.

"Helena," she said, "grief has two voices; and many only hear the upper and louder one. I shall be sorry to see thee miss that lower, stiller voice, which is by far the more important of the two."

"What do you mean, holy Mother?" I asked.

"Dear heart," she said, "the louder voice, which all must hear, chants in a minor key, 'This world is not your rest.' It is a sad, sad song, more especially to those who have heard little of it before. But many miss the soft, sweet music of the undertone, which is,—'Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.' Yet it is always there—if we will only listen."

"But a thing which is done cannot be undone," said I.

"No," she answered. "It cannot. But can it not be compensated? If thou lose a necklace of gilt copper, and one give thee a gold carcanet instead, hast

thou really sustained any loss?"

"Yes!" I answered, almost astonished at my own boldness. "If the copper carcanet were a love-gift from the dead, what gold could make up to me for that?"

"Ah, my child!" she replied, with a quick change in her tone. It was almost as if she had said,—"I did not understand thee to mean *that*!"—"For those losses of the heart there is but one remedy. But there is one."

"Costly and far-fetched, methinks!" said I, sighing.

"Costly, ay, in truth," she replied; "but far-fetched? No. It is close to thee, if thou wilt but stretch forth thine hand and grasp it."

"What, holy Mother?"

Her voice sank to a low and very reverent tone.

"'Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.'"

"I cannot!" I sobbed.

"No, thou couldst not," she said quietly, "until thou lovest the will of Him that died for thee, better than thou lovest the will of Hélène de Lusignan."

"O holy Mother!" I cried. "I could not set up my will against the good God!"

"Couldst thou not?" was all she said.

"Have I done that?" I faltered.

"Ask thine own conscience," replied Lady Judith. "Dear child, He loved not His will when He came down from Heaven, to do the will of God His Father. That will was to save His Church. Little Helena, was it to save thee?"

"How can I know, holy Mother?"

"It is worth knowing," she said.

"Yes, it is worth knowing," said I, "but how can we know?"

"What wouldst thou give to know it? Not that it can be bought: but what is it worth in thine eyes?"

I thought, and thought, but I could not tell wherewith to measure any thing so intangible.

"Wouldst thou give up having thine own will for one year?" she asked.

"I know not what might happen in it," said I, with a rather frightened feeling.

Why, I might marry, or be ill, or die. Or Guy might give over loving me altogether, in that year. Oh, I could not, could not will that! And a year is such a long, long time. No, I could not—for such a time as that—let myself slip into nothing, as it were.

"Helena," she said, "suppose, at this moment, God were to send an angel down to thee from Heaven. Suppose he brought to thee a message from God Himself, that if thou wouldst be content to leave all things to His ordering for one year, and to have no will at all in the matter, He would see that nothing was done which should really harm thee in the least. What wouldst thou say?"

"Oh, then I should dare to leave it!" said I.

"My child, if thou art of His redeemed, He has said it—not for one short year, but for all thy life. *If*, Helena!"

"Ah,—if!" I said with a sigh.

Lady Judith wrought at her gold diapering, and I at my roses, and we were both silent for a season. Then the Lady Queen and the Lady Isabel came in, and there was no further opportunity for quiet conversation.

CHAPTER VII.

A LITTLE CLOUD OUT OF THE SEA .

"Coming events cast their shadows before."
—CAMPBELL.

It is Monday night, and I am,—Oh, so tired!

The three grand weddings are over. Very beautiful sights they were; and very pleasant the feasts and the dances; but all is done now, and if Messire Renaud feels any doubt to-night about his body being himself, I have none about mine.

Eschine made a capital bride, in the sense in which a man would use the words. That is, she looked very nice, and she stood like a statue. I do not believe she had an idea in her head beyond these: that she was going to be married, that it was a very delightful thing, and that she must look well and behave becomingly.

Is that the sort of woman that men like? It is the sort that some men seem to think all women are.

But Amaury! If ever I did see a creature more absurd than he, I do not know who it was. He fidgetted over Eschine's bridal dress precisely as if he had been her milliner. At the very last minute, the garland had to be altered because it did not suit him.

Most charming of all the weddings was Guy's. Dear Lady Sybil was so beautiful, and behaved so perfectly, as I should judge of a bride's behaviour,—a little soft moisture dimming her dark eyes, and a little gentle tremulousness in her sweet lips. Her dress was simply enchanting,—soft and white.

Perhaps Lady Isabel made the most splendid-looking bride of the three; for her dress was gorgeous, and while Lady Sybil's style of beauty is by far the more

artistic and poetical, Lady Isabel's is certainly the more showy.

So far as I could judge, the three brides regarded their bridegrooms with very different eyes. To Eschine, he was an accident of the rite; a portion of the ceremony which it would spoil the show to leave out. To Lady Isabel, he was a new horse, just mounted, interesting to try, and a pleasant triumph to subdue. But to Lady Sybil, he was the sun and centre of all, and every thing deserved attention just in proportion as it concerned him.

I almost hope that Eschine does not love Amaury, for I feel sure she will be very unhappy if she do. As to Messire Homfroy de Tours, I do not think Lady Isabel will find him a pleasant charger. He is any thing but spirited, and seems to me to have a little of the mule about him—a creature who would be given at times to taking the bit in his teeth, and absolutely refusing to go a yard further.

And now it is all over,—the pageants, and the feasts, and the dancing. And I cannot tell why I am sad.

How is it, or why is it, that after one has enjoyed any thing very much, one always does feel sad?

I think, except to the bride and bridegroom, a wedding is a very sorrowful thing. I suppose Guy would say that was one of my queer notions. But it looks to me so terribly like a funeral. There is a bustle, and a show; and then you wake up, and miss one out of your life. It is true, the one can come back still: but does he come back to be yours any more? I think the instances must be very, very few in which it is so, and only where both are, to you, very near and dear.

I think Marguerite saw I looked tired and sad.

"There have been light hearts to-day," she said; "and there have been heavy ones. But the light of to-day may be the heavy of to-morrow; and the sorrow of to-night may turn to joy in the morning."

"I do feel sorrowful, Margot; but I do not know why."

"My Damoiselle is weary. And all great joy brings a dull, tired feeling after it. I suppose it is the infirmity of earth. The angels do not feel so."

"I should like to be an angel," said I. "It must be so nice to fly!"

"And I," said Marguerite; "but not for that reason. I should like to have no sin, and to see the good God."

"Oh dear!" said I. "That is just what I should not like. In the sense of never doing wrong, it might be all very well: but I should not want never to have any amusement, which I suppose thou meanest: and seeing the good God would frighten me dreadfully."

"Does my Damoiselle remember the time when little Jacquot, Bertrade's brother, set fire to the hay-rick by playing with lighted straws?"

"Oh yes, very well. Why, what has that to do with it?"

"Does she recollect how he shrieked and struggled, when Robert and Pierre

took him and carried him into the hall, for Monseigneur himself to judge him for his naughtiness?"

"Oh yes, Margot. I really felt sorry for the child, he was so terrified; and yet it was half ludicrous—Monseigneur did not even have him whipped."

"Yet, if I remember rightly, my Damoiselle was standing by Monseigneur's side at the very time; and she did not look frightened in the least. Will she allow her servant to ask why?"

"Why should I, Margot? I had done nothing wrong."

"And why is my Damoiselle more like Jacquot than herself, when she comes to think of seeing the good God?"

"Ah!—thou wouldst like me to say, Because I have done wrong, I suppose."

"Yes; but I think there was another reason as well."

"What was that, Margot?"

"My Damoiselle is Monseigneur's own child. She knows him. He loves her, and she knows it."

"But we are all children of the good God, Margot."

"Will my Damoiselle pardon me? We are all His creatures: not all His children. Oh no, no!"

"O Margot!" said I suddenly, "didst thou note that tall, dark, handsome knight, who stood on Count Guy's left hand,—Count Raymond of Tripoli?"

"He in the mantle lined with black sable, and gold-barred scarlet hose?"

"That is the man I mean."

"I saw him. Why, if it please my Damoiselle?"

"Didst thou like him?"

"My Damoiselle did not like him?"

Marguerite is very fond of answering one question by another.

"I did not; and I could not tell why."

"Nor I. But I could."

"Then tell me, Margot."

"My Damoiselle, every man has a mark upon his brow which the good God and His angels can see. But few men see it, and in some it is not easy to see. Many foreheads look blank to our eyes. But sooner or later, one of the two marks is certain to shine forth—either the holy cross of our Lord, or the badge of the great enemy, the star that fell from heaven. And what I saw on that man's lofty brow was not the cross of Christ, but the star of Satan."

"Margot, thy queer fancies!" said I, laughing. "Now tell me, prithee, on whose forehead, in this house, thou seest the cross."

"The Lady Judith," she answered without the least hesitation; "and I think, the Lady Sybil. Let my Damoiselle pardon me if I cannot name any other, with certainty. I have weak eyes for such sights. I have hope of Monseigneur Count

Guy."

"Margot, Margot!" cried I. "Thou uncharitable old creature, only three! What, not the Lady Queen, nor the Lady Isabel, nor the holy Patriarch! Oh, fie!"

"Let my Damoiselle pardon her servant. The Lady Queen,—ah, I have no right to say. She looks blank, to me. The cross may be there, and I may be blind. But the Patriarch—no! and the Lady Isabel—the good God forgive me if I sin, but I believe I see the star on her."

"And on me?" said I, laughing to hide a curious sensation which I felt, much akin to mortification. Yet what did old Marguerite's foolish fancies matter?

I was surprised to see her worn old eyes suddenly fill with tears.

"My sweet Damoiselle!" she said. "The good God bring out the holy cross on the brow that I love so well! But as yet,—if I speak at all, I must speak truth—I have not seen it there."

I could not make out why I did not like the Count of Tripoli. He is a very handsome man,—even my partial eyes must admit, handsomer than Guy. But there is a strange look in his eyes, as if you only saw the lid of a coffer, and beneath, inside the coffer, there might be something dark and dangerous. Guy says he is a splendid fellow; but Guy always was given to making sudden friendships, and to imagining all his friends to be angels until he discovered they were men. I very much doubt the angelic nature of Count Raymond. I do not like him.

But what a queer fancy this is of old Marguerite's—that Satan puts marks on some people! Yet I cannot help wishing she had not said that about me. And I do not think it was very respectful. She might have said something more civil, whatever she thought. Marguerite always will speak just as she thinks. That is like a villein. It would never do for us nobles.

Guy has now been Regent of the Holy Land for half a year. Some people seem to fancy that he is rather too stern. Such a comical idea!—and of Guy, of all people. I think I know how it is. Guy is very impulsive in enterprise, and very impetuous in pursuing it. And he sees that during the King's illness every thing has gone wrong, and fallen into disorder; and of course it will not do to let things go on so. People must be governed and kept in their places. Of course they must. Why, if there were no order kept, the nobles and the villeins would be all mixed up with each other, and some of the more intelligent and ambitious of the villeins might even begin to fancy themselves on a par with the nobles. For there is a sort of intelligence in some of those people, though it must be of quite a different order from the intellect of the nobles. I used to think villeins never were ambitious. But I have learned lately that some of them do entertain some such feeling. It must

be a most dangerous idea to get into a villein's head!—though of course, right and proper enough for a noble. But I cannot imagine why villeins cannot be contented with their place. Did not Providence make them villeins?—and if they have plenty of food, and clothing, and shelter, and fire, and a good dance now and then on the village green, and an extra holiday when the Seigneur's daughter is married, or when his son comes of age,—what can they possibly want more?

I said so to Marguerite.

"Ah, that is all the nobles know!" she answered, quietly enough, but with some fire in the old eyes. "They do not realise that we are men, just as they are. God sent us into His world, with just as much, body and soul, as He did them. We have intellects, and hearts, and consciences, just like them. ('Just like'—only fancy!) I trust the good God may not have to teach it them through pain."

"But they ought to be satisfied," said I. "I am perfectly content with my place in the world. Why are they not contented?"

"It is easier to be content with velvet than duffle," said Marguerite more calmly. "It looks better, and feels softer, too. If my Damoiselle were to try the duffle for a day, perhaps she would complain that it felt harsh."

"To me, very likely," said I. "But a villein would not have a fine skin like mine."

"The finest skin does not always cover the finest feelings," said Marguerite in her dry way.

What a very silly idea! Of course those people cannot have such feelings as I have. It would be quite absurd to think so.

I do think, however, that what vexed me most of any thing, was that Amaury—that silly little boy!—should take it into his head to lecture Guy on the way he chose to govern. As if he could know anything about it! Why, he is two whole years younger than Guy. I told him so, feeling really vexed at his impudence; and what should he say but that I was seven years younger than he. I know that, but I am a woman; and women have always more sense than men. At least, I have more sense than Amaury. I should be an idiot if I had not.

I have made a discovery to-day which has astonished me. Lady Judith has a whole Bible, and Psalter too, of her own, not written in Latin, but in her own tongue in which she was born,—that is, Greek. And she says that a great part of the Bible—all the holy Evangels, and the writings of Messeigneurs the holy Apostles—were originally written in Greek. I always thought that holy Scripture had been written in Latin. I asked her if Latin were not the language the holy angels spoke, and our Lord, when He was upon earth. She answered, that she did not think we knew what language the holy angels spoke, and she should doubt

if it were any tongue spoken on earth: but that the good God, and Messeigneurs the holy Apostles, she had no doubt at all, spoke Greek. It sounds very strange.

Lady Isabel has had a violent quarrel with her lord, and goes about with set lips and her head erect, as if she were angry with every one.

I almost think Eschine improves upon acquaintance. Not that I find her any cleverer than I expected, but I think she is good-natured, and seems to have no malice in her. If Amaury storms—as he does sometimes—she just lets the whirlwind blow over her, and never gives him a cross word. I could not do that. I suppose that is why I admire it in Eschine.

A young nun came this morning to visit Lady Judith—one of her own Order. I could not quite understand their conversation. Sister Eudoxia—for that is her name—struck me as being the holiest religious person I have ever seen. She spoke so beautifully, I thought, about the perfection one could attain to in this life: how one's whole heart and soul might be so permeated with God, that one might pass through life without committing any deed of sin, or thinking any evil thought. Not, of course, that I could ever attain to such perfection But it sounded very beautiful and holy.

I was quite surprised to see how constrained, and even cool, Lady Judith was. It was only yesterday that she assented warmly to old Marguerite's saying that no one who served God could love any kind of sin. But with Sister Eudoxia—who spoke so much more charmingly on the same subject—she sat almost silent, and when she did speak, it seemed to be rather in dissent than assent. It puzzled me.

When Sister Eudoxia was gone, Lady Sybil said—

"Oh, what happiness, if one could attain to the perfection of living absolutely without sin!"

"We shall," answered Lady Judith. "But it will not be in this world."

"But Sister Eudoxia says it might be."

"Ah, my poor Sister Eudoxia!" said Lady Judith sadly. "She has taken up with a heresy nearly as old as Christianity itself, and worse than than that of Messire Renaud de Montluc, because it has so much more truth in it. Ay, so much mixture of truth, and so much apparent loveliness, that it can be no wonder if it almost deceive the very elect. Beware of being entangled in it, my children."

"Heresy, holy Mother!" cried Lady Sybil, with a shocked look. "I thought I had never heard any one ascribe more of the glory of our salvation to God than she did. For she said that every thing was done for us by the good Lord, and that even our perfection was wrought by Him for us."

"And not by Him in us," said Lady Judith. "The very point of the heresy,

my child. Eudoxia sees no distinction between the righteousness done for us, which is our ground of justification before God, and the holiness wrought in us, which is our conformity to His image. The first was finished on the rood, eleven centuries ago: the second goes on in the heart of every child of God, here and now. She is one of those who, without intending it, or even knowing that they do it, do yet sadly fail to realise the work of the Holy Ghost.

"But how much she spoke of the blessed Spirit!" objected Lady Sybil.

"My daughter," said Lady Judith, with a smile, "hast thou not yet found out the difference between names and things? There are many men who worship God most devoutly, but it is a God they have made to themselves. Every man on earth is ready to love and serve God with his whole heart,—if he may set up God after his own pattern. And what that really means is, a God as like as possible to himself: who will look with perfect complacency on the darling sins which he cherishes, and may then be allowed to condemn with the utmost sternness all evil passions to which he is not addicted."

"That sounds *very* shocking, holy Mother!" said Lady Sybil.

"We are all liable to the temptation," replied Lady Judith, "and are apt to slide into it ere we know it."

We all wrought for a little time in silence, when Lady Sybil said, "What do you call that heresy, holy Mother, into which you say that Sister Eudoxia has fallen?"

"If thou wilt look into the vision of the Apostle, blessed John, called the Apocalypse," answered Lady Judith, "thou wilt see what Christ our Lord calls it. 'This thou hast, that thou rejectest the teaching of the Nicolaitanes, which I hate."'

"But I thought," said Lady Sybil, looking rather surprised, "that those Nicolaitanes, who were heretics in the early Church, held some very horrible doctrines, and led extremely wicked lives? The holy Patriarch was speaking of them, not long ago."

"Ah, my child," said Lady Judith, "men do not leap, but grow, into great wickedness. Dost thou not see how the doctrine works? First, it is possible to live and do no sin. Secondly, *I* can live and do no sin. Thirdly, I do live and not sin. Lastly, when this point is reached,—Whatever my spiritual instinct does not condemn—I being thus perfect—cannot be sin. Therefore, I may do what I please. If I lie, murder, steal—which would be dreadful sins in another—they are no sins in me, because of my perfection. And is this following Christ?"

"Assuredly not! But does Sister Eudoxia really imagine that?"

"Oh no!" responded Lady Judith. "She has not reached that point. Comparatively few get so far on the road as that. But that is whither the road is leading them."

"Then what is the root of the heresy?"

"That which I believe lies at the root of every heresy—rejecting God's Word, that we may keep our own traditions. The stem may perhaps consist of two things; the want of sufficient lowliness, and the want of a right knowledge of sin. It is not enough realised that a man's conscience, like all else in him, has been injured by the fall, but conscience is looked on as a heavenly judge, still in its original purity. This, as thou mayest guess, leads to depreciation of the Word of God, and exaltation of the conscience over the Word. And also, it is not properly seen that while a man lives, the flesh shall live with him, and the flesh and the renewed spirit must be in perpetual warfare to the end."

"But we know——" said Lady Sybil,—and there she paused.

"'We know'!" repeated Lady Judith, with a smile. "Ah, my child, we think we know a great deal. And we are like children playing on the seashore, who fancy that they know all that is in the sea, because they have scooped up a little sea-water in their hands. There are heights and depths in God's Word and in God's purposes, which you and I have never reached yet,—which perhaps we shall never reach. 'For as the heaven is high above the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts.'"

I was curious to know what Marguerite would say: she always agrees so strangely with Lady Judith, even when they have not talked the matter over at all. So I said, when I went up to change my dress—

"Margot, dost thou commit sin?"

"My Damoiselle thinks me so perfect, then?" said she, with a rather comical look.

I could not help laughing.

"Well, not quite, when thou opposest my will," said I; "but dost thou know, there are some people who say that they live without sin."

"That may be, when to contradict the holy Evangels is a mark of perfection," said Marguerite drily.

"Well, what hast thou heard about that in thy listening, Margot?" said I, laughing.

"The first thing I heard perplexed me," said she. "It was of Monseigneur Saint John, who said that he that is born of God doth not commit sin: and it troubled me sorely for a time, since I knew I did sin, and feared lest I was therefore not born of God. But one day, Father Eudes read again, from the very same writing, that 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father,' and likewise that if we say we have no sin, we are liars. So then I thought, Well! how is this? Monseigneur the holy Apostle would not contradict himself. But still I could not see how to reconcile them, though I thought and thought, till my brain felt nearly cracked. And all at once, Father Eudes read—thanks be to the good

God!—something from Monseigneur Saint Paul, which put it all right."

"What was that?"

"Ah! I could not get it by heart. It was too difficult, and very long. But it was something like this: that in a Christian man there are two hearts, of which the one, which is from God, does not sin at all; and the other, which is the evil heart born in us, is always committing sin."

"But, Margot, which of thy two hearts is thyself?"

"Ha! I cannot answer such questions. The good God will know."

"But art thou sure those are not wicked people?"

"Certainly, no. Monseigneur Saint Paul said 'I' and 'me' all through."

"Oh, but, Margot!—he could not have meant himself."

"If he had not meant what he said, I should think he would have mentioned it," said Marguerite in her dry, quaint style.

"Well, a holy Apostle is different, of course," said I. "But it looks very odd to me, that anybody living now should fancy he never does wrong."

"Ah, the poor soul!" said Marguerite. "The good God knows better, if he do not."

CHAPTER VIII.

AS GOOD AS MOST PEOPLE .

The best way to see Divine light is to put out your own candle.

This morning the Lady Princess of Antioch visited the Lady Queen, and remained for the day, taking her departure only just before the gates were closed, for she preferred to camp out at night. She is quite young, and is a niece of the Lady Queen. After she was gone, we were talking about her in the bower, and from her we came to speak of the late Princess, her lord's mother.

"Pray do not talk of her!" said Lady Isabel. "She made herself a bye-word by her shameless behaviour."

"Only thoughtless," remonstrated Lady Sybil gently. "I never thought she deserved what was said of her."

"Oh no!—you never think anybody does," sneered her sister. "I could not have associated with such a woman. She must have known what was said of her.

I wonder that she was brazen enough to show herself in public at all."

"But think, Isabel! I do not believe she did know. You know she was not at all clever."

"She was half-witted, or not much better," was the answer. "Oh yes, I know that. But she must have known."

"I do not think she did!" said Lady Sybil earnestly.

"Then she ought to have known!" sharply replied Lady Isabel. "I wonder they did not shut her up. She was a pest to society."

"O Isabel!" deprecated her sister. "She was very good-natured."

"Sybil, I never saw any one like you! You would have found a good word for Judas Iscariot."

"Hardly," said Lady Sybil, just as gently as before. "But perhaps I might have helped finding evil ones."

"There are pearl-gatherers and dirt-gatherers," quietly remarked Lady Judith, who had hitherto listened in silence. "The latter have by far the larger cargo, but the handful of the former outweighs it in value."

"What do you mean, holy Mother?" inquired Lady Isabel, turning quickly to her—rather too sharply, I thought, to be altogether respectful.

"Only 'let her that thinketh she standeth, take heed lest she fall,'" said Lady Judith, with a quiet smile.

"I?" said Lady Isabel, with a world of meaning in her tone.

"My child," was the reply, "they that undertake to censure the cleanness of their neighbours' robes, should be very careful to avoid any spot on the purity of their own. Dost thou not remember our Lord's saying about the mote and the beam?"

"Well," said Lady Isabel, bringing her scissors together with a good deal of snap, "I think that those who associate with such people as the Princess Constantia bring a reflection on their own characters. Snow and soot do not go well together."

"The soot defiles the snow," responded Lady Judith. "But it does not affect the sunbeam."

"I do not understand you," said Lady Isabel bluntly.

"Those who confide in their own strength and goodness, Isabel, are like the snow,—very fair, until sullied; but liable to be sullied by the least speck. But those who take hold of God's strength, which is Christ our Lord, are the sunbeam, a heavenly emanation which cannot be sullied. Art thou the snow, or the sunbeam, my child?"

"Oh dear! I cannot deal with tropes and figures, in that style," answered she, rising. "And my work is finished; I am going now."

I fancied she did not look very sorry for it.

Great events are happening. The Lord King, finding his malady grows rather worse than better, has resolved to abdicate, in favour of his nephew, Lady Sybil's baby son. So to-morrow Beaudouin V. is to be proclaimed throughout the Holy City, and on the Day of Saint Edmund the King,[#] he will be crowned in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. They say the Lord King was a very wise man before he became a mesel; and he will still give counsel when needed, the young King being but three years old.

[#] Nov. 20.

I do not quite see what difference the abdication will make. Guy must still remain Regent for several years, and the only change is that he will govern for his step-son instead of his brother-in-law. And I feel a little jealous that Lady Sybil should be passed by. She, not her son, is the next heir of the crown. Why must she be the subject of her own child, who ought to be hers? I really feel vexed about it; and so does Guy, I am sure, though he says nothing—at least to me. As to Lady Sybil herself, she is so meek and gentle, that if a beggar in the street were put over her head, I believe she would kneel to do her homage without a cloud on her sweet face.

However, I felt at liberty to say what I thought to Amaury, though I seldom do it without being annoyed by his answer. And certainly I was now.

"She! She's a woman," said Messire Amaury. "What does a woman know about governing?"

"What does a baby know?" said I.

"Oh, but he will be a man some day," answered Amaury.

"But Guy will govern in either case," I replied, trying not to be angry with him.

He is so silly, and he thinks himself so supremely wise! I do believe, the more foolish people are, the wiser they think themselves.

"Ha!" said he. "Saving your presence, Damoiselle Elaine, I am not so sure that Guy knows much about it."

"Amaury, thou art an idiot!" cried I, quite unable to bear any longer.

"I believe thou hast told me that before," he returned with provoking coolness.

I dashed away, for I knew I might as well talk to Damoiselle Melisende's pet weasel.

I do not like the Count of Tripoli. The more I see of him, the less I like him. And I do not like his fawning professions of friendship for Guy. Guy does not see

through it a bit. I believe he only means to use Guy as a ladder by which to climb himself, and as soon as he is at the top, he will kick the ladder down behind him.

Did I not say that Amaury was an idiot? And is it not true? Here is our sister Eschine the mother of a pretty little baby, and instead of being thankful that Eschine and the infant are doing well, there goes Amaury growling and grumbling about the house because his child is a girl. Nay, he does more, for he snarls at Eschine, as if it were her fault, poor thing!

"She knows I wanted a boy!" he said this morning.

Men are such selfish simpletons!

To see how coolly Eschine takes it is the strangest thing of all.

"I was afraid he would be disappointed," she said calmly. "You see, men don't think much of girls."

"Men are all donkeys," said I, "and Amaury deserves to be king of the donkeys."

Eschine seemed to think that very funny.

"Come, Elaine, I cannot let thee say that of my lord, and sit silent. And I think Messire Homfroy de Tours quite as well qualified for the position."

"Ah," said I, "but Lady Isabel keeps her curb much tighter than thou. I really feel almost sorry for him sometimes, when she treats him like a baby before all the world."

"She may do that once too often," said Eschine.

Amaury means to call the baby Héloïse—for a reason which would never have occurred to any one but himself—because we have not had that name in the family before. And Eschine smilingly accepts it, as I believe she would Nebuchadnezzar if he ordered her.

To-day the little King was crowned in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, at noon; and in the evening the Damoiselle Héloïse de Lusignan was baptized into the Fold of Christ. The King was very good: I think he inherits much of his mother's sweet disposition. I cannot say as much for my small niece, for she cried with all her heart when the holy Patriarch took her in his arms; and he said it showed that Satan must have taken strong possession of her, and was very hard to dislodge. But no sooner had the holy cross been signed on her, and the holy Patriarch gave her back into the arms of her nurse, than, by the power of our Lord, she was quite another creature, and did not utter a single cry. So wonderful and effectual a thing is the grace of holy baptism!

"Much effect it took on thee, then," growled Amaury, to whom I said this;

"for thou didst wait until the water touched thy face, and then didst set up such screams as never were heard from mortal babe before."

"What dost thou know about it?" said I.

"Ha! Don't I?" answered he provokingly.

I have been amused to hear the different ideas of various people, when they first see the baby. The Lady Queen stroked its little face, and said pitifully—"Ah, poor little child, thou art come into a disagreeable world!" Lady Judith took it in her arms, and after rocking it a little, she said—"What possibilities lie hidden here!" Lady Sybil said—"Little darling! what a treasure thou art!" Lady Isabel's comment (for which I shall never forgive her) was—"What an ugly little spectacle! Are young babies no prettier?" Damoiselle Melisende danced it up and down, and sang it a lively nursery song. Guy (like a man) said, with an amused look, "Well! that is a funny little article. Héloïse?—that means 'hidden wisdom,' does it not? Very much hidden just now, I should think." Amaury (that stupid piece of goods!)—"Wretched little creature! Do keep it from crying!" And lastly, old Marguerite came to see her nursling's nursling's nursling. I wondered what she would say. She took it in her arms, and looked at it for some time without speaking. And then she said softly—

"Little child! He that was once a little Child, bless thee! And may He give thee what He sees best. That will most likely be something different from what we see."

"O Marguerite!" said I. "That may be an early death."

"That would be the best of all, my Damoiselle.[#] Ah! the eyes of a noble maiden of seventeen years see not so far as the eyes of a villein woman of seventy. There are good things in this world—I do not deny it. But the best thing is surely to be safe above this world,—safe with the good Lord."

[#] It would have been well for Héloïse, who bears a spotted reputation in history.

"I do not want to lose my baby, Margot," said Eschine, with a rather sad smile.

"Ah no, Dame, *you* do not," replied Marguerite, answering the smile with a brighter one. "But if the good Lord should call her, it is best to let her rise and go to Him."

Again we hear something more of those strange rumours, as though the people were not content under Guy's government. But what does it signify? They are only villeins. Yet villeins can insult nobles, no doubt. Sister Eudoxia (who was

here again yesterday) says they actually talk of a petition to the King, to entreat him to displace Guy, and set some one else in his stead. The thought of their presuming to have an idea on the question! As if *they* could understand anything about government! Discontented under Guy! my Guy! They are nothing better than rebels. They ought to be put down, and kept down.

The Lady Queen has received a letter from her kindred at Byzantium, from which she hears that the young Byzantine Cæsar, who is but a child, has been wedded to a daughter of the Lord King of France. Dame Agnes is her name, and she is but eight years old.

I wonder if it is very, very wicked to hate people? Old Marguerite will have it that it is just as bad as murder, and that the holy Evangel says so. I am sure she must have listened wrong. For I do hate Count Raymond of Tripoli. And I can't help it. I must and will hate him. He has won Guy's ear completely, and Guy sees through his eyes. I cannot bear him, the fawning, handsome scoundrel—I am sure he is one! They say, too, that he is not over good to his wife, for I am sorry to say he has a wife; I pity her, poor creature!

Lady Judith asked me, when I repeated this, who "they" were.

"I do not know, holy Mother," said I; "every body, I suppose."

"I would not put too much faith in 'them,' Helena," she said. "'They' often say a great deal that is not true."

"But one must attend to it, holy Mother!" I answered.

"Why?" replied she.

"Oh, because it would never do!"

"What would never do?"

"To despise the opinion of society."

"Why?" she gently persisted.

Really, I found it rather difficult to say why.

"Methinks, Helena, I have seen thee despise the opinion of society, when it contradicted thy will. Is it not more reasonable to despise it, when it contradicts God's will?"

"Holy Mother, I pray you, tell me—is that the world?" said I. "Because my nurse, old Marguerite, says, that Monseigneur Saint John bade us beware of the world, and the flesh, as well as the Devil: and I am not quite sure what it means, except that the world is other people, and the flesh is me. But how can I be inimical to my own salvation?"

"My child," said Lady Judith gently, "when some duty is brought to thy remembrance, is there nothing within thee which feels as if it rose up, and said, 'Oh, but I do not want to do that!'—never, Helena?"

"Oh yes! very often," said I.

"That is the flesh," said she. "And 'they that are of Christ the flesh have

crucified, with its passions and its lusts.'"

"Oh dear!" I exclaimed, almost involuntarily.

"Very unpleasant, is it not?" said Lady Judith, smiling. "Ah, dear child, the flesh takes long in dying. Crucifixion is a very slow process; and a very painful process. They that are not willing to 'endure hardness' had better not enlist in the army of Jesus Christ."

"Ah, that is what I always thought," said I; "religious persons cannot be very happy. Of course, it would not be right for them; they wait till the next world. And yet—old Marguerite always seems happy. I do not quite understand it."

"Child!" Lady Judith dropped her broidering, and the deep, sweet grey eyes looked earnestly into mine. "What dost thou know of happiness? Helena, following Christ is not a hardship; it is a luxury. The happiness—or rather the mirth—of this world is often incompatible with it; but it is because the one is so far above the other that it extinguishes it, as the light of the sun extinguishes the lamp. Yet who would prefer the lamp before the sunlight? Tell me, Helena, hast thou any wish to go to Heaven?"

"Certainly, holy Mother."

"And what dost thou expect to find there? I should be glad to know."

I could hardly tell where to begin.

"Well," I said, after a moment's thought, "I expect to fly, and to enjoy myself intensely; and never to have another pain, nor shed a tear; and to see all whom I love, and be always with them, and love them and be loved by them for ever and ever. And there will be all manner of delights and pleasures. I cannot think of anything else."

"And that is thy Heaven?" said Lady Judith, with a smile in which I thought the chief ingredient was tender compassion, though I could not see why. "Ah, child, it would be no Heaven at all to me. Verily, 'as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.' Pleasure, and ease, and earthly love—these are thy treasures, Helena. 'For where thy treasure is, there shall thine heart be.'"

"But what is the matter with my Heaven?" said I, feeling a little aggrieved.

"Why, my child, thou hast left out the central figure. What were a coronation if there were no king? or a wedding where there were no bride? Why, what was left would be equivalent to nothing. Ask thine old nurse, and see if thy Heaven would satisfy her. Ah, 'whom have we in Heaven but *Thee*? and there is none upon earth that we desire in comparison of Thee!' Old Marguerite understands that. Dost thou, my maiden?"

I shook my head. I felt too mortified to speak. To have a poor, ignorant villein woman held up to me, as knowing more than I knew, and being happier than I, really was humiliating. Yet I could not resent it from one so high as Lady Judith.

Lady Judith would have said more, I fancy, but Melisende came in, and she quietly dropped the matter, as she generally does if any third person enters. But the next morning, as Marguerite was dressing my hair, I asked her what her notion of Heaven was.

"Inside with the blessed Lord, and the Devil and all the sins and evil things left outside," she said. "Ah, it will be rest to be rid of evil; but it will be glory to be with the Lord."

"And the pleasures, and the flying, and all the delightful things, Margot!" said I.

"Ah, yes, that will be very nice," she admitted. "And to meet those whom we have lost—that will be the very next best thing to seeing the good Lord."

"Hast thou lost many whom thou hast loved, Margot?"

"Ah, no—very few, compared with some. My mother, and my husband, and my two children:—that is all. I never knew my father, and I was an only child. But it may be, the fewer one has to love, the more one loves them."

"An only child!" said I. "But Perette calls thee aunt?"

"Ah, yes, she is my husband's niece,—the same thing."

I think Marguerite seems to agree with Lady Judith, though of course she does not express herself so well.

And I cannot help wondering how they arrange in Heaven. I suppose there will be thrones nearest the good Lord for the kings and the princes who will be there: and below that, velvet settles for the nobles; and beneath again, the crowd of common people. I should think that would be the arrangement. Because, of course, no one could expect them to mingle all together. That would be really shocking.

Yet I cannot altogether make it out. If Messeigneurs the holy Apostles were originally fishermen, and worked for their living—it is very queer. I do not understand it. But I suppose the holy angels will take care to put it right, and have a proper barrier between the Apostles and the nobles, and the poor villeins, who are admitted of special grace, through their own good deeds, and the super-abundant merits of the holy saints.

In the afternoon, when Guy was in audience of the Lord King and the Lady Queen, and Lady Isabel and Melisende were riding forth, with Messire Homfroy and Amaury as their cavaliers, I found Lady Judith and Lady Sybil busy spinning, and I brought my broidery and sat down with them. We did not talk much for a while,—only a few words now and then: when all at once Lady Judith said—

"Helena, wilt thou try this needle for thy work?"

I took the needle, and threaded it, and set to work again: but I found to my surprise that I could not get on at all. The needle would hardly go through the silk, and it left an ugly hole when it did. Lady Judith went on with her spinning

for a few minutes, but at length she looked up and said—

"Well, Helena, how dost thou like that needle?"

"Not at all, holy Mother, if it please you," said I, "for I cannot get on with it."

She selected another, and gave it me.

"Oh, this is beautiful for broidery!" I said; "so fine and sharp."

"It is the answer to a question thou wert asking me yesterday," said Lady Judith, "and I gave thee no reply. Canst thou guess what the question was?"

I could not, and said so. I did not remember asking anything that had to do with needles, and I never thought of any hidden meaning.

"Thy question was, What is the world?—and, what harm does the world do to us? That needle that I first gave thee has its point blunted. And that is what the world does to a child of God. It blunts his point."

"I do not understand," said I.

"Little Helena," said Lady Judith, "before a point can be blunted, there must be one to blunt. Thou couldst not sew with a wooden post. So, before the world can injure thy spiritual life, there must be spiritual life to injure. There is no poison that will harm a dead man."

"But, holy Mother, are there two worlds?" said I. "For religious persons give up the world."

"My child, thine heart is a citadel which the foe can never enter, unless there be a traitor within the walls to open the postern gate. But there is such a traitor, Helena; and he is always on the watch. Be thou ever on the watch too. Yet another matter stands first:—Who reigns in thy citadel? Hast thou ever given thine heart to God, maiden?"

"Can I give my heart, holy Mother? It seems to me that love is rather like a plant that grows, than like a treasure that is given."

"Thou art right: but the planting must be sometime. Hast thou ever asked God to take thine heart? For as a holy man of old hath said,—'If Thou leave me to myself, I shall not give it Thee.'"

I shook my head. It all sounded strange to me.

"If the usurper is in the citadel, dear child, he will hold the gates against the rightful King: and, Helena, there are no traitors in His camp. Thou art not a sword, nor a shield, which can do nothing of itself; but a human creature with a living will, which can choose either to open the gates to the King, or to shut them against His trumpeter when He sends thee summons to surrender. Nay, thou not only canst choose; thou must: at this moment, at every moment, thou art choosing. What message hast thou sent back to thy rightful Lord, both by right and purchase? Is it 'Come Thou, and reign over me;' or is it, 'Go back to Thy place, for I will have none of Thee'?"

I would willingly not have answered: but I felt it would be to fail in respect to Lady Judith's age and position. I stammered out something about hoping that I should make my salvation some time.

"My child, didst thou ever do any thing at any time but *now*?" said Lady Judith.

I suppose that is true; for it is always now, when we actually come to do it.

"But, holy Mother, there is so much to give up if one becomes religious!" said I.

"What is there to give up, that thou couldst take with thee into Heaven?"

"But there will be things in Heaven to compensate," said I.

"And is there nothing in Christ to compensate?" she replied, with a momentary flash in the grey eyes. "What is Heaven but God? 'The City had no need of the sun, for the glory of God did lighten her:' 'and temple I saw none in her, for the Lord God the Almighty is Temple to her, and the Lamb.'"

Lady Sybil seemed interested; but I must confess that I thought the conversation had assumed a very disagreeable tone; and I wondered how it was that both Lady Judith and my old Marguerite spoke to me as if they thought I did not serve God. It is very strange, when I hear the holy mass sung every morning, and I have only just offered another neuvaine at the Holy Sepulchre. However, Easter will soon be here, and I mean to be very attentive to my devotions throughout the Holy Week, and see if that will satisfy Lady Judith. I don't want her to think ill of me. I like her too well for that, though I do wish she would not talk as if she fancied I did not serve God. I am sure I am quite as good as most people, and that is saying a great deal.

No, it can never be wrong to hate people. It can't be, and it shan't! And I just wish I could roast that Count of Tripoli before the fire in the Palace kitchen till he was done to a cinder. I am white-hot angry; and like Jonah the Prophet, I do well to be angry. The mean, fawning, sneaking, interloping rascal! I knew what he meant by his professions of love and friendship! Guy's eyes were shut, but not mine. The wicked, cruel, abominable scoundrel!—to climb up with Guy's help to within an inch of the top where he sat, and then to leap the inch and thrust him out of his seat! I cannot find words ugly enough for him. I hate, hate, hate him!

To have supplanted my Guy! After worming himself into the confidence of the Lord King, through Guy's friendship—ay, there is the sting!—to have carried to the King all the complaints that he heard against Guy, until he, poor helpless Seigneur! (I don't feel nearly so vexed with him) really was induced to believe Guy harsh and incapable, and to take out of his hands the government of the kingdom. And then he put in that serpent, that false Judas, that courtly hypocrite—Oh dear! I cannot find words to describe such wickedness—and he is Regent of the

Holy Land, and Guy must kneel to him.

I could cut him in slices, and enjoy doing it!

I am angry with Melisende, who can find nothing to say but—"Ah, the fortune of Courts—one down to-day, another up to-morrow." And I am almost angry with Marguerite, who says softly—"Hush, then, my Damoiselle! Is it not the good God?"

No, it is not. It is the Devil who sends sorrow upon us, and makes us hate people, and makes people be hateful. I am sure the good God never made Count Raymond do such wicked things.

Instead of casting Adam and Eva out of Paradise,—Oh why, why did the good God not cast out the Devil?

"Is my Damoiselle so much wiser than the Lord?" quietly asks Marguerite.

I cannot understand it. The old cry comes up to me again,—Oh, if I could know! Why cannot I understand?

And then Lady Judith lays her soft hand on my head, and says words which I know come from the holy Evangel,—"'What I do, thou knowest not now.'" Ay, I know not I must not know. I can only stretch forth appealing hands into the darkness, and feel nothing. Not like her and Marguerite. They too stretch forth helpless hands into the darkness, but they find God.

It must be a very different thing. Why cannot I do the same? Is He not willing that I should find Him too?—or am I not worthy?

I suppose it must be my fault. It seems as if things were always one's own fault. But I do not think they are any better on that account; especially when you cannot make out where your fault lies.

Guy behaves like a saint. He does not see any fault in Count Raymond: I believe he won't. Lady Sybil, poor darling! looks very grieved; but not one word of complaint can I get her to utter.

As to Amaury, when I have quite finished slicing up the Count, if he does not mind, I shall begin with him. What does he say but—"Well, a great deal of it is Guy's own fault. Why wasn't he more careful? Surely, if he has any sense, he might expect to be envied and supplanted, when he had climbed to such a height."

"If he has any sense!" Pretty well for Messire Amaury!

CHAPTER IX.

ELAINE FINDS MORE THAN SHE EXPECTED .

”And when I know not what Thou dost,
I’ll wait the light above.”
—DODDRIDGE.

Both Guy and Lady Sybil are in a state of the highest ecstasy, and say that they are abundantly recompensed for all their past disappointments. And this is because they are disappointed just like Amaury, but they bear it in as different a style as possible. I think, if I were they, I should consider I had more right to be troubled of the two, for little Héloïse is a strong child enough, and is growing almost pretty: while dear Lady Sybil’s baby girl is a little delicate thing, that the wind might blow away. Of course I shall love her far better, just because she is Guy’s and Sybil’s; and she crept into the warmest corner of my heart when she showed me her eyes—not Lady Sybil’s gentle grey, but those lovely flashing dark eyes of Guy’s; the most beautiful eyes, I think, that were ever seen.

”Marguerite, is not she charming?” I cried.

”Ah, the little children always are,” said the old woman.

(I don’t agree with her—little children can be great teases.) But Marguerite had more to say.

”My Damoiselle sees they are yet innocent of actual sin; therefore they are among the best things in God’s world. I may be wrong, but I think the good God must have been the loveliest babe ever seen. How I should have liked to be there!—if the holy Mother would have allowed me to hold Him in my arms!”

”Ah, I suppose only the holiest saints would be allowed to touch Him,” said I.

”I am not so sure, if my Damoiselle will pardon me. She was no saint, surely, that crept into the Pharisee’s house to break the casting-bottle[#] on His feet; yet the hardest word she had from Him was ’Go in peace.’ Ah, I thank the good God that His bidding is not, ’Come unto Me, all ye that are holy.’ There are few of us would come, if it were! But ’Come unto Me, all ye that are weary’—that takes us all in. For we are all weary some time. The lot of a woman is a weary lot, at the best.”

[#] Used to sprinkle perfumes.

”Well, it may be, among the villeins,” said I.

”My Damoiselle, I never saw more bitter tears than those of the old Lady de Chatelherault—mother of the Lady de Lusignan—when her fair-haired boy was

brought in to her in the bower, with the green weeds in his long bright hair, and the gold broidery of his velvet tunic tarnished by the thick stagnant water. Early that morning he had been dancing by her, with the love-light in his beautiful blue eyes; and now, when the dusk fell, they laid him down at her feet, drowned and dead, with the light gone out of the blue eyes for ever. Ah, I have seen no little sorrow amongst men and women in my seventy years!—but I never saw a woman look, more than she did, as if she had lost the light of life. The villeins have a hard lot, as the good God knows; but all the sorrow of life is not for the villeins—no, no!"

How oddly she puts things! I should never have thought of supposing that the villeins had any sorrow. A certain dull kind of coarse grief, or tired feeling, perhaps, they may have at times, like animals: but sorrow surely is a higher and finer thing, and is reserved for the nobles. As to old Marguerite herself, I never do quite think of her as a villein. She has dwelt with nobles all her life, so to speak, and is not of exactly the same common sort of stuff that they are.

Yesterday afternoon Lady Sybil and I were alone in the bower, and she had the baby in her arms. The little creature is to be made a Christian on Sunday. I asked her what name it was to have. I expected her to say either Marie, which is the Lady Queen's name, or Eustacie, the name of Guy's mother. But she said neither. She answered, "Agnes." And she spoke in that hushed, reverent voice, in which one instinctively utters the names of the beloved dead. I could not think whose it could be. The name has never been in our House, to my knowledge; and I was not aware of it in Lady Sybil's line.

"Dost thou not know whose name it is, Helena?" asked Lady Sybil. I fancy she answered my look.

"No," said I.

"My dear lord has been very good to me," she said. "He made not the least objection. It was my mother's name, Helena."

"Oh!" said I, enlightened. "Lady Sybil, do tell me, can you remember the Lady Queen your mother? How old were you when she died?"

She did not answer me for an instant. When I looked up, I saw tears dropping slowly on the infant's robes.

"When she—died!" There was a moment's pause. "Ay, there are more graves than men dig in the churchyard! When she—*died*,—Helena, I was six years old."

"Then you can remember her?" I said eagerly. "Oh, I wish I could remember mine."

"Ay, memory may be intense bliss," she answered; "or it may be terrible torture. I can remember a fair face bent down over mine, soft, brooding arms

folded round me, loving kisses from gentle lips. And then——O Helena, did my lord tell thee she was dead? It was kind of him; for he knows."[#]

[#] I trust it will not be imagined from this that I think lightly of "white lies." Romanists, as a rule, are very lenient towards them.

Lady Sybil was sobbing.

"Then she is not dead?" I said, in a low voice.

"I do not know!" she replied. "No one knows. She is dead to us. Oh, why, why does holy Church permit such terrible things?—What am I saying? May the good Lord pardon me if I speak against Him!—But I cannot understand why it must be. They had been wedded nearly ten years, Helena,—I mean my parents,—when it was discovered that they were within the prohibited degrees. Why cannot dispensations be given when such things occur? They knew nothing of it. Why must they be parted, and she be driven into loneliness and obscurity, and I—— Well, it was done. A decree of holy Church parted them, and she went back to her people. We have never heard another word about her. But those who saw her depart from Jerusalem said she seemed like one whose very heart was broken."

"And she never came back?" I said pityingly.

"Is it much wonder?" answered Lady Sybil, in a low voice, rocking the child gently in her arms. "It would have been much, I think, for the crowned and anointed Queen of Jerusalem to steal into her capital as Damoiselle de Courtenay. But it would have been far more for the wife and mother to come suing to her supplanter for a sight of her own children. No, I cannot wonder that she never, never came back."

I was silent for a little while, then I said—

"Was the Lord King as grieved as she? I cannot understand, if so, why they should not have obtained a dispensation, and have been married over again."

Lady Sybil shook her head, and I saw another tear drop on the baby's robe.

"No, Helena," she said, hardly above a whisper: "I do not think he was. He had the opportunity of allying himself with the Cæsars. And there are men to whom a woman is a woman, and one woman is just as good as another, or very nearly so. Do men selling a horse stop to consider whether it will be as happy with the new master as the old? They do not care. And, very often, they cannot understand."

Ay, Amaury is one of that sort.

"And you think—if she be alive—that she will never come?" I asked.

"I hope she might. But I think she will not. Ah, how I have hoped it! Helena, hast thou wondered how it is that nothing short of absolute impossibility will suffer me to depute to another the daily distribution of the dole at the postern gate to those poor women that come for alms? Canst thou not guess that amongst all the faces I look but for one—for the one that might creep in there unrecognised to look on me, and that must never, never go away with a soreness at her heart, saying, 'She was not there!' Every loaf that I give to a stranger, I say, 'Pray for the soul of Agnes of Anjou!' And then, if some day she should creep in among the rest, and I should not know her—ah! but I think I should, if it were only by the mother-hunger in the eyes—but if she should, and hear that, and yet not speak, she will say in her heart, 'Sybil loves me yet.' And if she could only creep one step further,—'*God* loves me yet!' For He does, Helena. Maybe He has comforted her long ago: but if she should not have found it out, and be still stretching forth numb hands in the darkness—and if I could say it to her! Now thou knowest why I call the babe by her name. I know not where she is, nor indeed if she is on earth. But He knows. And He may let her hear it. If she come to know that I have called my child by her name, she may not feel quite so lost and lonely. I have no other way to say to her,—'I have not forgotten thee; nor has God. I love thee; I would fain help thee. He loves thee and is ready to save thee.' Who can tell?—she *may* hear."

"Oh dear, this is a bad world!" said I. "Why are people so hard on each other? We are all fellow-sinners, I suppose."

"Ah, Helena!" said Lady Sybil, with a sorrowful smile. "Hast thou not found, dear, that the greater sinner a man is himself, very generally, the harder he will be on other sinners—especially when their sins are of a different type from his own. The holier a man is, the more he hates sin, and yet the more tenderly will he deal with the sinner. For as sin means going away from God, so holiness must mean coming near God. And God is more merciful than men to all who come to Him for mercy."

Lady Judith came in while the last words were being spoken.

"I never can quite tell," said I, "what sin is. Why should some things be sin, and other things not be sin?"

"Go on, Helena," said Lady Judith, turning round with a smile. "Why should so many things be wrong, which I like, and so many things be right, which I do not like?"

"Well, holy Mother, it is something like that," said I, laughing. "Will you please to tell me why?"

"Because, my child, thou hast inherited a sinful nature."

"But I do not like sin—as sin," said I.

"Then temptation has no power over thee. Is it so? Art thou never 'drawn

away of thine own lust, and enticed'?"

"Well, I am not perfect," said I. "I suppose nobody expects to be."

"Yet without absolute perfection, Helena, thou canst never enter Heaven."

"O holy Mother!" cried I.

"Where art thou about to get it?" said she.

"I am sure I do not know!" I replied blankly.

"Thou shouldst know, my child," she responded gently. "Think about it."

I cannot guess what she means. I am sure I may think about that for a year, and be no nearer when I have done.

I have had a great pleasure to-day, in the shape of a letter from Monseigneur our father, addressed to Guy, but meant for us all three. He wrote about six months after we set out; and I should hope he has before now received my letter, which I sent off on the first opportunity after our arrival in the Holy City. Every body seems to be well, and Alix has a baby boy, whom she means to call after Monseigneur—Geoffrey. There is no other special news. Level, he says, misses us sorely, and lies at my door with his nose between his paws, as if he were considering what it could all mean. I wonder whether he thinks he comes to any satisfactory solution.

The Lord King, I hear, has been more indisposed for some days past. The Lady Queen is very attentive to him. Lady Isabel and her lord have gone through another tremendous quarrel,—about what I do not know.

Early yesterday morning our sister Eschine's second baby was announced, and in the afternoon the holy Patriarch baptized it by Guy's name. Amaury was in ecstasies with his boy; but alas! in the evening the poor little thing fell into convulsions, and barely lived to see the dawn of another day. Amaury passed from the climax of triumph to the depths of despair. He growled and snarled at every body, and snapped at Eschine in particular, as though he thought she had let her child die on purpose to vex him. That she could be in as much distress as himself, did not seem to occur to him. If anything could have provoked me more than Amaury's unreasonableness, it would have been the calm patience with which Eschine took it. There he stalked about, grumbling and growling.

"Why did you all let the child die?" he wanted to know—as if we could have helped it. "There is not one of you has any sense!"—as if he had! "Alix's boy manages to live. She knows how to treat him. Women are all idiots!" (Alix, apparently, not being a woman.)

Poor Eschine lay still, a few tears now and then making their way down her white cheeks, and meekly begging her lord and master's pardon for what she had not done. When he was gone, she said—I think to anticipate what she saw

on the tip of my tongue—

"Thou knowest, Elaine dear, he is not angry with me. Men do set such store by a son. It is only natural he should be very much distressed."

She will persist in making excuses for him.

"Distressed?—well!" said I. "But he does not need to be so silly and angry. Natural!—well, yes,—I think it is natural to Amaury to be an idiot. I always did think so."

"O Lynette! don't, dear!" pleaded Eschine.

I am beginning to think I have been rather unjust to Eschine when I said there was nothing in her; but it has taken a long while to come out. And it seems to come rather in the form of doing and bearing, than of thinking and saying.

But that Amaury is a most profound donkey no mortal man can doubt,—or at any rate, no mortal woman.

I was awfully startled this morning when Marguerite undrew my curtains, and told me that our Lord King Beaudouin had been commanded to God. It seems now that for some time past he has been more ill than any one knew, except the Lady Queen his stepmother. What that wicked Count of Tripoli may have known, of course, I cannot say. But I am sure he has had a hand in the late King's will. The crown is left to the little King, Beaudouin V., and our sweet Sybil is disinherited. What that really means, I suppose, is that the Count is jealous of Guy's influence over his Lady, and imagines that he can sway the child better than the mother.

There are to be various changes in consequence of the Lord King's death. The Lady Queen returns to her own family at Byzantium. I do hope Lady Judith will not go with her; but I am very much afraid she may. Guy talks about retiring to his city of Ascalon, but though I am sure Lady Sybil will submit to his will, I can see she does not want to leave her boy, though I do not believe she distrusts that wicked Tripoli as I do.

I asked Marguerite if she did not feel very angry.

"No," she said quietly. "Is my Damoiselle very angry?"

"Indeed I am," said I.

"Does my Damoiselle know what are the good Lord's purposes for Monseigneur Count Guy? It is more than old Marguerite does."

"Of course not: but I see what has happened."

"And not what will happen? Ah, that is not seeing much."

"But what can happen, to put things right again, Margot?"

"Ha! Do I know, I? No better than Monseigneur Saint Jacob, when his son, Monseigneur Saint Joseph, sent for his little brother, and refused to send the meal

until he came. That is so beautiful a history!—and so many times repeated in this world. The poor old father!—he thought all these things were against him. He did not know what the good God was making ready for him. He did not know! And the good God will never be hurried. It is we that are in a hurry, poor children of time,—we want every thing to happen to-day. But He, who has eternity to work in, can afford to let things take their time. My Damoiselle does not know what old Helweh said to me yesterday."

"No. Who is Helweh?" said I.

"She is an Arab woman who serves in the kitchen."

"A Paynim? O Marguerite! What can a Paynim say worth hearing? Or is she a Christian?"

"If to be baptized is to be a Christian, as people always say, then Helweh is a Christian. But if to be a Christian is really to know and follow the Lord Christ—and it seems to me as if the Evangel always meant that—then I do not know. I am afraid Helweh does not understand much about that."

"Oh, if she has been christened, she must be a Christian," said I. "Well, what did she say?"

"She said—'All things come to him who knows how to wait.' It is a Saracen proverb."

"Well, I do not believe it."

"Ah, let my Damoiselle pardon me, but it is true."

"Well!" said I, half laughing, "then I suppose I do not know how to wait."

"I do not think my Damoiselle does," answered Marguerite quietly.

"Wilt thou teach me, Margot?"

"Ha! It takes the good God to teach that."

"I should not think it wanted much teaching."

"Let my Damoiselle bear with her servant. The good God has been teaching it to me for seventy years, and I dare not make so bold as to say I have learned it yet."

"Why, Margot, thou art as quiet, and calm, and patient as a stone."

"Ah! not *here*," she said, laying her hand upon her bosom. "Perhaps here,—and here,"—touching her eyes and lips. "But down there,—no!"

"But for what, or for whom, art thou waiting, Margot?" I asked, rather amused.

"Ha!—it ought to be only whom. But it is too often *what*. We are like the little children, waiting for the father to come home, but thinking more of the toys and bonbons he may bring than of himself. And then there is another thing: before we can learn to wait, we must learn to trust."

"To trust what, Margot?"

"I believe we all trust in something, if my Damoiselle pleases. A great

many trust in themselves; and a great many more trust in circumstances,—fate, or chance, or luck,—as they call it. Some few trust in other human creatures; and their waking is often the saddest of all. But it seems as if the one thing we found it hardest to do was to trust the good God. He has to drive us away, often, from every other trust, before we will learn to trust Him. Oh, how we must grieve His heart, when He has done so much for us, and yet we *will not* trust Him!"

I wonder what she means. I feel as if I should like to know, and could not tell how to begin.

The Lady Queen is gone back to her people. And I am so glad—Lady Judith is not gone with her. I was sadly afraid she would do. But Melisende is gone, and Messire Renaud de Montluc, for whom the Lady Queen trusts to obtain some high position at the Court of the Byzantine Cæsar.

I am not at all sorry that Messire Renaud is gone. He made me feel uncomfortable whenever I looked at him. I cannot well express my feeling in words; but he gave me a sensation as if nothing stood on any thing, and every thing was misty and uncertain. I fancy some people like that sort of feeling. I detest it. I like figures (though Amaury says it is a very unladylike taste) because they are so definite and certain. Two and two make four; and they will make four, do what you please with them. No twisting and turning will persuade them to be either three or five. Now I like that—far better than some arts, more interesting in themselves, such as music, painting, or embroidery, of which people say, "Yes, it is very fair,—very good,—but of course it might be better." I like a thing that could not be better. Guy says that is very short-sighted, and argues a want of ambition in me. I do not quite see that. If a thing be the best it can possibly be, why should I want it to be better?

"Oh, but one wants an aim," says Guy; "one must have a mark to shoot at. If I were besieging a castle, and knew beforehand that I could not possibly take it, it would deprive me of all energy and object. There is nothing so devoid of interest as doing something which leads to nothing, and is worth nothing when done."

"Well," I say then, "I think if sieges and wars were done away with, it would be no bad thing. Just think what misery they cause."

But such an outcry comes upon me then! Amaury informs me that he is incomparably astonished at me. Is not war the grandest of all employments? What on earth could the nobles do, if there were no wars? Would I have them till the earth like peasants, or read and write like monks, or sew and dress wounds like women?

And Guy says, good-naturedly,—"Oh, one of Elaine's curious notions. She

never thinks like other people."

"But think," I say, "of the suffering which comes from war—the bereft widows and fatherless children, and human pain and sorrow. Does a woman weeping over her husband's corpse think war grand, do you suppose?"

"Stuff!" says Amaury. "Can't she get another?"

(Would he say, if Eschine were to die,—"Never mind, I can get another"? Well, I should not much wonder if he would!)

Once, after a rather keen contest of this sort, I asked old Marguerite if she liked war. I saw her eyes kindle.

"Damoiselle," she said, "my husband followed his Seigneur to the war, and left me ill at home in my cot. He had no power to choose, as my Damoiselle must know. The night fell, and the Seigneur came home with banners flying, and along the village street there were bonfires and rejoicings for a great victory. But my husband did not come. I rose from my sick-bed, and wrapped myself in a sheepskin, and went out to the fatal field. Like a candle in the sunlight, the pain of the heart put out the pain of the body. What I saw that night my Damoiselle will not ask. It were not meet to rehearse in the ears of a young noble lady. I do not know how I bore it, only that I did bear—going from one to another in the moonlight, and turning my lantern on the dead still faces, ever looking for that face which I feared to find. And at last I found him, my Piers, the one love of my young life,—where the fight had been the most terrible, and the dead lay thickest. I knew that he had acquitted himself right well, for his face was to the foe, and the broken shaft of his Seigneur's pennon was still grasped tightly in his hand. Damoiselle, there was no funeral pageant, no table tomb, no herald's cry for him. Strangers' hands buried him where he lay, as they might have buried the Seigneur's horse, if need were. And there were no white weeds and seclusion for me, his young widow, who knelt by my baby's cradle, too miserable for tears. But may be, in those halls where all souls are alike before the King of Kings, the Voice from the Throne said to him, 'Well done!' And the Voice did verily say to me, 'Fear not! Come unto Me, and I will give thee rest.'—Ah, my Damoiselle knows now what her old nurse thinks of war."

Oh, why must there be such things?

"How else could a knight win his spurs?" indignantly demands Amaury.

But surely, the winning of Amaury's spurs is not the only thing of any consequence in the world. Does the good God Himself take no account of widows' tears and orphans' wails, if only the knights win their spurs? Could not some other way be contrived for the spurs, which would leave people alive when it was finished?

"Now, Elaine, don't be such a simpleton!" says Amaury.

So at last, as nobody else (except Marguerite, who is nobody) seems to

understand me, I ask Lady Judith what she thinks.

"My child," she says, "'He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth; He breaketh the bow, and snappeth the spear in sunder, and burneth the chariot in the fire.' 'The Father of the age to come, the Prince of Peace!' It is one of His fairest titles. But not till He comes, Helena. Till then, earth will be red with the blood of her sons, and moistened with the tears of her daughters. Let us pray for His coming."

"But holy Mother, that is ages off!" said I.

"Is it?" she made answer. "Has the Lord told thee so much, Helena? Ah! it may be—I know not, but I see nothing else to keep Him—it may be, that if all the earth would come to Him to-day, He would come to us to-morrow."

"Holy Mother, I do not know what you mean by 'coming' to Him!"

"Dear Helena," she said gently, "thou wilt not know, till thou art ready to come."

"But I do not understand that," said I. "How am I to get ready?"

"'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink.' 'If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given to thee water of life.' Art thou not athirst? and dost thou not know the gift of God, dear maiden? Then ask Him to bestow on thee the thirst, and the knowledge."

I really do not know whether it was right or wrong, but that night, after I had finished my Credo, and Paters, and the holy Angelical Salutation, I ventured to say, in my own words,—"Fair Father, Jesu Christ, give me what Lady Judith and Marguerite talk about." I hope it was not very wicked. I did so tremble! And I do not properly know what this thing is, only that it seems to make them happy; and why should I not be happy too? I suppose the good God will know all about it. And as He appears to be so condescending as to listen to Marguerite, who is but a villein, surely He will hear me, who am noble.

It is so odd that Amaury, who is such a simpleton himself, should be perpetually calling me a simpleton. I do think, the more foolish people are, the more fond they are of exhorting others not to be silly. It is very funny. But this world is a queer place.

"It is, indeed, Lynette," says Guy, with mock gravity, when I make the remark to him. "The queerest place I have been in these thirty years."

As Guy is scarcely twenty-seven, it may be supposed I cannot help laughing.

But there is another queer thing. It does really seem as if villeins—at least some villeins—had genuine feelings, just like us nobles. I have always thought that it was because Marguerite had associated so much with nobles, that she seemed a little different—just as you might impart the rose-scent to a handkerchief, if you shut it in a drawer with rose-leaves. But I know she did not become

my mother's nurse until after her husband was dead: so she must have had feelings before that, while she was no better off than any other villein. It is very incomprehensible. And I suppose, too, when one comes to think about it, we are all children of Adam and Eva. How did the difference come, to begin with?

It is very difficult to tell how things began. It is a great deal easier to see how they end. Who would suppose, if men had never found out, that the great river Danube, which rolls into the Black Sea, almost like a sea itself in volume, came from the meltings of the ice and snow upon the hills of Switzerland?

"Ha!" says Marguerite, when I repeat my thoughts to her, "the great God is so rich that He can bring the large things out of the small. We others, we can only bring the small out of the large."

"That sounds like spoiling things," said I.

"Men are very apt to spoil what they touch," she answered. "The good Lord never touches anything that He does not leave more beautiful. Has He not blessed childhood and manhood, by becoming Child and Man? Is not the earth fairer since He dwelt on it? and the little children dearer, since He took them in His arms and blessed them? Ah, He might have cared for me, and felt with me, just as much, if He had never been a Man: but it would not have been the same thing to me. And He knew it. When we love one very much, Damoiselle, we love what he has touched: and if he touch us, ourselves, it sends a delicious thrill through us. The good Lord knew that when He took on Him our nature, with all its sufferings and infirmities,—when He touched us every where—in sorrow, and weariness, and poverty, and hunger, and pain, and death. We can suffer nothing which He has not suffered first,—on which He has not laid His hand, and blessed it for His chosen. Thanks be to His Name! It is like honey sweetening everything. And the things that are bitter and acid want the most sweetening. So the good Lord chose poverty and pain. Ease and riches are sweet of themselves. I have heard Father Eudes read of one or two feasts where He was: He blessed joy as well as sorrow,—perhaps lest we should fancy that there was something holy in pain and poverty in themselves, and something wicked in being comfortable and happy. Some people do think so, after all. But I have heard Father Eudes read a great deal more of funerals than feasts, where the blessed Lord was. He seemed to go where people wanted comforting, much oftener than where they were comfortable. He knew that many more would sorrow than rejoice."

What strange eyes Marguerite has! She can look at nothing, but she sees the good God. And the strangest thing is, that it seems to make her happy. It always makes me miserable. To think of God, when I am bright and joyous, is like dropping a black curtain over the brightness. Why cannot I be like Marguerite? I ought to be a great deal happier than she. There is something wrong, somewhere.

Then of course there must be something holy in poverty—voluntary

poverty, that is—or why do monks and nuns take the vow of poverty? I suppose there is nothing holy in simply being poor, like a villein. And if our Lord really were poor, when He was on earth, that must have been voluntary poverty. I said as much to Margot.

"Damoiselle," said she, "every man who follows our Lord must carry his cross. His own cross,—not somebody else's. And that means, I think, the cross which the good God lays on His shoulders. The blessed Christ Himself did not cut His own cross. But we others, we are very fond of cutting our crosses for ourselves, instead of leaving the good God to lay them on us. And we always cut them of the wrong wood. We like them very light and pretty, with plenty of carving and gilding. But when the good Lord makes the crosses, He puts no carving on them; and He often hews out very rough and heavy ones. At least, He does so for the strong. He makes them light, sometimes, for the weak; but there is no gilding—only the pure gold of His own smile, and that is not in the cross itself, but in the sunlight which He sends upon it. But my Damoiselle will find, when men sort out the crosses, the strong walk away with the light ones, and the rough and heavy fall to the weak. The good Lord knows better than that."

"But we don't all carry crosses, Margot," said I; "only religious persons."

Marguerite shook her head decidedly.

"Damoiselle, all that learn of the good Lord must bear the cross. He said so. 'If any man serve Me, let him follow Me'—and again, 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.' Father Eudes read them both. My Damoiselle sees—'*any* man.' That must mean all men."

Well, I cannot understand it I only feel more puzzled than ever. I am sure it would not make me happier to carry a heavy cross. Yet Lady Judith and Marguerite are happy; I can see they are. Religion and good people seem to be full of contradictions. How is one to understand them?

CHAPTER X.

PREPARING FOR THE STRUGGLE .

"He that hath a thousand friends hath not a friend to spare,
And he that hath one enemy shall find him every where."

I have thought, and thought, about Lady Judith's question concerning perfection, and, as I expected, I cannot see my way through it at all. And what is more, I do not see how to reconcile it with what she said herself of Sister Eudoxia. So this morning I took the liberty of asking her what she meant.

Lady Judith smiled, and replied, "Wert thou puzzled, Helena?"

"Yes, holy Mother," said I, "very much."

"I am glad of it," she answered. "I wanted to puzzle thee, and make thee think."

"I have been thinking a great deal," I said, "but I cannot think my way out of the labyrinth."

"We must take counsel of Holy Writ to find our way out," answered Lady Judith; and she laid her hand on her Greek Bible, which is a very handsome book, bound in carved wood, and locked with a golden clasp. She unlocked it with the little key which hangs from her girdle, and said, "Now listen, Helena. In the days when our Lord dwelt on middle earth, there were certain men amongst the Jews, called Pharisees, who were deemed exceedingly holy persons. So exact were they in the fulfilment of all duties, that they did not reckon their tithes paid, unless they taxed the very pot-herbs in their gardens. Yet our Lord said to His disciples,—'If your righteousness surpass not that of the Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.'"

"Likely enough," said I. "Surely any christened man could easily be better than heathen Jews."

"But He said more, Helena. 'Be ye then perfect, even as your Father, He in the heavens, is perfect.'"

"Perfect as the good God is perfect!" I exclaimed.

"That is our standard," she responded. "We are not to rest short of that."

"But we cannot! You yourself said it, holy Mother, when we were talking of Sister Eudoxia."

"I did, my child. Let us take two more passages from Holy Writ, and see if they cast any light upon it. 'The end of the law is Christ, unto righteousness, to every believer.' 'And ye are in Him complete.'"

"I do not understand them, holy Mother."

"I have heard thee speak, Helena, of thy favourite legend of the two good knights of Greece. What was it that Sir Pythias agreed to do for Sir Damon?"

"To suffer death in his stead, if he did not return home at the appointed time."

"Suppose that Sir Pythias had suffered death before Sir Damon's return, and that when Sir Damon came back, the Lord King had put him to death also: what wouldst thou call that?"

"Oh, that would never have been just!" said I.

"But why? Sir Damon had been sentenced to die."

"Yes, but when another had died for him—Oh, it would be cruelly unfair!"

"In other words, Sir Damon would be reckoned to have died, so far as the law was concerned, in the person of his friend?"

"Exactly," said I.

"And this friend, remember, had voluntarily given his life. Now, this is the point to which I want to bring thee. The death of Sir Pythias would have been reckoned to Sir Damon; and this last would have been accounted to have paid the full penalty to which he was sentenced, and to be thenceforward a free and blameless man."

"Of course," said I. "There could have been no other result."

"Now, Helena dear, this is what Christ has done for all believers. His death is reckoned to them, and they are thenceforward free and blameless—perfect as He is perfect, 'complete in Him.' Not in themselves, mind: never! In themselves they are sinners to the last hour of life. But in Him, on account of His atoning death and holy obedience, God's holy law reckons them perfect as Himself. So that, in one sense, they are perfect for ever: in another sense, they are utterly imperfect so long as they live. 'For by one offering He hath perfected in perpetuity the hallowed ones.'"

"But, holy Mother," I asked, "what do you mean by 'in Him'?"

"My child," she answered, "I doubt if any but God knows all that is meant by that deep word. And what man knows cannot be told to another,—it can only be felt. But it means light, and life, and joy, Helena: the very light that God is, the life of all the ages, the joy with which no stranger intermeddleth. Only taste it, and see. No draught of sin can be truly sweet to thee again, after one drop of that wine of Heaven."

I am quite delighted to find that Messire Tristan de Montluc, who has exasperated me for nearly two years past by playing the broken-hearted lover, has got his heart mended again. I was beginning to entertain a desperate wish that he would take the cowl, for it made me feel a perfect wretch whenever I looked at him: and yet what could I have said to Guy but what I did? I feel indescribably relieved to hear that he is going after his brother to Byzantium, and intensely delighted to find that he is privately engaged to Melisende de Courtenay. I believe she will make him a good wife (which I never could have done): and it is such a comfort to know that he has given over caring about me.

It does seem not unlikely that we may have war. There are flying rumours of Saladin's drawing nearer. May the good God avert it! I believe Amaury would tell me that I was a simpleton, if he heard me say so.

The holy Patriarch Heraclius, and the Lord Roger, Master of the Temple, have set forth on a pilgrimage to the shrines of the West. They intend to visit Compostella and Canterbury, amongst others.

Count Raymond has been behaving rather better lately—that is, we have not seen quite so much of him.

A letter from Alix came to hand last week; but there is nothing of interest in it, except that every one is well. She says her child begins to walk, and can already prattle fluently: which called forth a growl from Amaury, who wants to know why every body's children thrive but his. It is not true, for little Héloïse is really an engaging child, and has excellent health.

"Ah!—but then," says Guy, aside to me, with arched eyebrows, "she is only a girl, poor little good-for-nothing!"

I know Guy does not think so, for he is devoted to his little Agnes; and Héloïse is certainly the prettier child. But neither of them is equal to the little King, who is a most beautiful boy, and has the quaintest sayings ever heard from a child.

There, now! Did any body ever see any thing like these men?

Messire Tristan set forth yesterday morning; and what should he say to Guy (who told me, with his eyes full of fun) but—

"Damoiselle Elaine will find out that it does not do to trifle with a man's heart. She will doubtless be angry at my defection; but I have borne long enough with her caprice, and have now transferred my affections to one who can be truer!"

Was ever mortal creature so misrepresented? Why, the man must have thought I did not mean what I said! My caprice, indeed! Trifle with a man's heart! And as if affection could be transferred at will from one person to another!

Guy seemed excessively amused with my exclamations.

"What a conceited set of people you men must be!" said I.

"Well, we are rather a bad set," answered Guy, laughing. "O little Elaine, thou art so funny!"

"Pray, what is there funny about me?" said I. "And please to tell me, Guy, why men always seem to fancy that women do not know their own minds?"

"Well, they don't," said Guy.

"Only the silly ones, who have no minds to know," I replied.

"Just so," answered he. "But those, thou seest, are the generality of women. Rubies are scarce; pebbles are common."

"Only among women?" said I.

"Possibly not," responded Guy, looking very much amused. "Poor De

Montluc appears to be a ruby in his own eyes, and I presume he is only a pebble in thine. Let us hope that Damoiselle Melisende will consider him a gem of priceless value."

Well, I am sure I have no objection to that.

But another idea occurs to me, which is by no means so pleasant. Since other people are always misunderstanding me, can it be possible that I am constantly misunderstanding other people? I do think I have misunderstood Eschine, and I am sorry for it. I like her a great deal better now than I ever expected to do, and I almost admire that quiet endurance of hers—partly because I feel Amaury so trying, and partly, I suspect, because I have so little of the quality myself. But is it—can it be—possible that I am misunderstanding Count Raymond?

I do not think so. Why should I think of a beautiful serpent whenever I look at him? Why should I feel a sensation, of which I cannot get rid, as if that dark handsome face of his covered something repugnant and perilous? It is not reason that tells me this: it is something more like instinct. Is it a true warning to beware of the man, or only a foolish, baseless fancy, of which I ought to be ashamed?

And—I cannot tell why—it has lately assumed a more definite and dreadful form. A terror besets me that he has some design on Lady Sybil. He knows that she is the rightful heir of the crown: and that—I do believe, through his machinations—she has been set aside for her own son. If his wife were to die—the holy saints defend it!—I believe him capable of poisoning Guy, in order to marry Sybil, and to make himself King of Jerusalem.

Am I very wicked, that such ideas come into my head? Yet I do not know how to keep them out. I do not invite them, yet they come. And in the Count's manner to Lady Sybil there is a sort of admiring, flattering deference, which I do not like to see,—something quite different from his manner towards her sister. I do not think she is conscious of it, and I fancy Guy sees nothing.

Oh dear, dear! There is something very wrong in this world altogether. And I cannot see how it is to be set right.

I asked Lady Judith this evening if she believed in presentiments.

She answered, "Yes, when they come from God."

"Ah!—but how is one to know?"

"Ask Him to remove the feeling, if it be not true."

I will try the plan. But if it should not answer?

The heats of summer are so great, and the Holy City is considered so very unhealthy, that the Regent proposes to remove the Lord King to the city of Acre, until the hot weather is over. Guy and Lady Sybil are going to stay at Ascalon,

a city which is Guy's own, and close to the coast, though not actually a sea-port like Acre. I cannot help being glad to hear that there will be something like a week's journey between Guy and Count Raymond. I may be unjust, but—I do not know. I have offered seven Paters every evening, that the good God might take the thought out of my heart if it be wicked: but it seems to me that it only grows stronger. I told Lady Judith that her plan did not answer; that is, that the presentiment did not go.

"What is this thought which troubles thee, little one?" said she.

"Holy Mother," said I, "do you ever utterly mistrust and feel afraid of some particular person, without precisely having a reason for doing so?"

Lady Judith laid down her work, and looked earnestly at me.

"I generally have a reason, Helena. But I can quite imagine—Who is it, my child? Do not fear my repeating what thou mayest tell me."

"It is the Lord Regent," said I. "I feel afraid of him, as I might of a tamed tiger, lest the subdued nature should break out. I do not believe in his professions of friendship for Guy. And I do not at all like his manner to Lady Sybil."

Lady Judith's eyes were fixed on me.

"I did not know, Helena, how sharp thine eyes were. Thou wert a child when thou camest here; but I see thou art one no longer. So thou hast seen that? I thought I was the only one."

It struck me with a sensation as of sickening fear, to find that my suspicions were shared, and by Lady Judith.

"What is to be done?" I said in a whisper. "Shall I speak to Guy?—or Lady Sybil?"

Lady Judith's uplifted hand said unmistakably, "No!"

"Watch," she said. "Watch and pray, and wait. Oh, no speaking!—at least, not yet."

"But till when?" I asked.

"I should say, till you all return here—unless something happen in the interim. But if thou dost speak, little one—do not be surprised if nobody believe thee. Very impulsive men, like thy brother, rarely indulge suspicion or mistrust: and Sybil is most unsuspicious. They are likely enough to think thee fanciful and unjust."

"It would be too bad!" said I.

"It would be very probable," she responded.

"Holy Mother," said I, "what do you think he aims at doing?"

I wanted to know, yet scarcely dared to ask, if the same dread had occurred to her as to me.

"I think," she said unhesitatingly, "he aims at making himself King, by marriage, either with Sybil or with Isabel."

"But he would have to murder his own wife and the lady's husband!" cried I.

"No need, in the first case. The Lady Countess suffers under some internal and incurable disorder, which must be fatal sooner or later; it is only a question of time. Her physicians think she may live about two years, but not longer. And so long as she lives, thy brother's life is safe."

"But if she were to die—?"

"Then it might be well to warn him. But we know not, Helena, what may happen ere then. The Lord reigneth, my child. It is best to put what we love into His hands, and leave it there."

"But how do I know what He would do with it?" said I, fearfully.

"He knows. And that is enough for one who knows Him."

"It is not enough for me," said I sadly.

"Because thou dost not know Him. Helena, art thou as much afraid of the good God as of the Lord Regent?"

"Not in the same way, of course, holy Mother," I replied; "because I think the Lord Regent a wicked man."

"No, but to the same extent?"

"I don't know. I think so," said I, in a low voice.

"Of Christ that died, and that intercedeth for us? Afraid of Him, Helena?"

"O holy Mother, I don't know!" I said, bursting into tears. "I am afraid it is so. And I cannot help it. I cannot tell how to alter it. I want to be more like you and old Marguerite; but I don't know how to begin."

"Wilt thou not ask the Lord to show thee how to begin?"

"I have done: but He has not done it."

Lady Judith laid her hand on my bowed head, as if to bless me.

"Dear Helena," she said, "do not get the idea into thine head that thou wilt have to persuade God to save thee. He wishes it a great deal more than thou. But He sometimes keeps his penitents waiting in the dark basilica outside, to teach them some lesson which they could not learn if they were admitted at once into the lighted church. Trust Him to let thee in as soon as the right time comes. Only be sure not to get weary of knocking, and go away."

"But what does He want to teach me, holy Mother?"

"I do not know, my child. He knows. He will see to it that thou art taught the right lesson, if only thou wilt have the patience to wait and learn."

"Does God teach every body patience?" said I, sighing.

"Indeed He does: and perhaps there is scarcely a lesson which we are more slow to learn."

"I shall be slow enough to learn that lesson, I am sure!" said I.

Lady Judith smiled.

"Inattentive children are generally those that complain most of the hardness of their tasks," said she.

We were both silent for a while, when Lady Judith said quietly—

"Helena, what is Christ our Lord to thee?"

"I am not sure that I understand you, holy Mother," said I. "Christ our Lord is God."

"Good; but what is He *to thee*?"

I felt puzzled. I did not know that He was any thing more to me than to every body else.

"Dost thou not understand? Then tell me, what is Monseigneur the Count of Ascalon to thee?"

"Guy?" asked I in a little surprise. "He is my own dear brother—the dearest being to me in all the world."

"Then that is something different from what he is to others?"

"Of course!" I said rather indignantly. "Guy could never be to strangers what he is to me! Why, holy Mother, with all deference, you yourself know that. He is not that to you."

"Thou hast spoken the very truth," said she. "But, Helena, that which he is to thee, and not to me,—that dearest in all the world, ay, in all the universe,—my child, Christ is that to me."

I looked at her, and I saw the soft, radiant light in the grey eyes: and I could not understand it. Again that strange, mortified feeling took possession of me. Lady Judith knew something I did not; she had something I had not; and it was something which made her happier than any thing had yet made me. There was a gulf between us; and I was on the rocky, barren side of it, and she on the one waving with corn and verdant with pasture.

It was not at all a pleasant feeling. And I could see no bridge across the gulf.

"You are a religious person, holy Mother," said I. "I suppose that makes the difference."

Yet I did not believe that, though I said so. Old Marguerite was no nun; and she was on the flowery side of that great gulf, as well as Lady Judith. And if Lady Sybil were there also, she was no nun. That was not the difference.

"No, maiden," was Lady Judith's quiet answer. "Nor dost thou think so."

I hung my head, and felt more mortified than ever.

"Dost thou want to know it, Helena?"

"Holy Mother, so much!" I said, bursting into tears. "You and Marguerite seem to me in a safe walled garden, guarded with men and towers; and I am outside in the open champaign, where the wolves are and the robbers, and I do not know how to get in to you. I have been round and round the walls, and I can

see no gate."

"Dear child;" said Lady Judith, "Jesus Christ is the gate of the Garden of God. And He is not a God afar off, but close by. Hast thou asked Him, and doth it seem as though He would not hear? Before thou say so much, make very sure that nothing is stopping the way on thy side. There is nothing but love, and wisdom, and faithfulness, on His."

"What can stop the way?" I said.

"Some form of self-love," she replied. "It has as many heads as the hydra. Pride, indolence, covetousness, passion—but above all, unbelief: some sort of indulged sin. Thou must empty thine heart, Helena, if Christ is to come in: or else He will have to empty it for thee. And I advise thee not to wait for that, for the process is very painful. Yet I sometimes fear it will have to be the case with thee."

"Well!" said I, "there is nobody in there but Guy and Lady Sybil, and a few more a good deal nearer the gate. Does our Lord want me to empty my heart of them?"

I thought that, of course, being religious, she would say yes; and then I should respond that I could not do it. But she said—

"Dear, the one whom our Lord wants deposed from the throne of thy heart is Hélène de Lusignan."

"What, myself?"

"Thyself," said Lady Judith, in the same quiet way.

I made an excuse to fetch some gold thread, for I did not like that one bit. And when I came back, things were even better than I hoped, for Lady Isabel was in the room; and though Lady Judith will talk of religious matters freely enough when Lady Sybil is present, yet she never does so before her sister.

Lady Judith is entirely mistaken. I am quite sure of that. I don't love me better than any one else! I should think myself perfectly despicable. Amaury does, I believe; but I don't. No, indeed! She is quite mistaken. I scarcely think I shall be quite so glad as I expected that Lady Judith is going to stay in the Holy City. I do like her, but I don't like her to say things of that kind.

"Marguerite," I said, an hour or two later, "dost thou think I love myself?"

"My Damoiselle does not think herself a fool," quietly answered the old woman.

"No, of course not," said I; "I know I have brains. How can I help it? But dost thou think I love myself,—better than I love other people?"

"We all love either ourselves or the good God."

"But we can love both."

Marguerite shook her head. "Ha!—no. That would be serving two masters. And the good God Himself says no one can do that."

I did not like this much better. So, after I finished my beads, I kissed the crucifix, and I said,—"Sir God, show me whether I love myself." Because,—though I do not like it,—yet, perhaps, if I do, it is best to know it.

We reached Ascalon a week ago, making three short days' journey of it, so as not to over-fatigue the little ones. Those of us who have come are Guy and Lady Sybil, myself, Amaury and Eschine, and the little girls, Agnes and Héloïse. I brought Marguerite and Bertrade only to wait on me. Lady Isabel prefers to stay at Hebron, which is only one day's journey from the Holy City. She and Messire Homfroy quarrelled violently about it, for he wished to go to Acre, and wanted her to accompany him; but in the end, as usual, she had her own way, and he will go to Acre, and she to Hebron.

The night before we set forth, as I was passing Lady Judith's door, her low voice said—

"Helena, my child, wilt thou come in here? I want a word with thee."

So I went into her cell, which is perfectly plain, having no hangings of any sort, either to the walls or the bed, only a bénitier[#] of red pottery, and a bare wooden cross, affixed to the wall. She invited me to sit on her bed, and then she said—

[#] Holy water vessel.

"Helena, unless thou seest some very strong reason, do not speak to the Count touching the Count of Tripoli until we meet again."

"Well, I thought I should not," said I. "But, holy Mother, will you tell me why?"

"We may be mistaken," she answered. "And, if not, I am very doubtful whether it would not do more harm than good. After all, dear maiden, the shortest cut is round by Heaven. Whenever I feel doubtful how far it is wise to speak, I like to lay the matter before the Lord, and ask Him to speak for me, if He sees good. He will make no mistake, as I might: and He can tell secrets without doing harm, as probably I should. It is the safest way, Helena, and the surest."

"I should be afraid!" said I. "But of course, holy Mother, for you"——

"Yes," she said, answering my half-expressed thought. "It is a hard matter to ask a favour of a stranger, especially if he be a king. But where he is thy father——Dost thou understand me, maiden?"

Ay, only too well. Well enough to make me feel sick at heart, as if the gulf

between grew wider than ever. Should I never find the bridge across?

We lead such a quiet, peaceful life here! Some time ago, I should have called it dull; but I am tired of pageants, and skirmishes, and quarrels, and so it is rather a relief—for a little while. Lady Sybil, I can see, enjoys it: she likes quiet. Amaury fumes and frets. I believe Eschine likes it, but won't say so, because she knows Amaury does not. I never saw the equal of Eschine for calm contentedness. "All right"—"never mind it"—"it does not signify"—are the style of her stock phrases when any thing goes wrong. And "Won't it be all the same a hundred years hence?" That is a favourite reflection with her.

"Oh dear, Eschine!" I could not help saying one day, "I do hate that pet phrase of thine. A hundred years hence! That will be the year of our Lord 1285. Why, thou and I will be nowhere then."

"Nay, I suppose we shall be somewhere," was Eschine's grave answer.

"Oh, well, don't moralise!" said I. "But thou knowest, if we were always to look at things in that style, nothing would ever signify any thing. It makes me feel as queer as Messire Renaud's notions—as if all the world, and I in it, had gone into a jelly, and nothing was any thing."

Eschine laughed. But Eschine's laughter is always quiet.

"I think thou dost not quite understand me, Elaine," said she. "I do not use such phrases of things that do matter, but of those that do not. I should not say such words respecting real troubles, however small. But are there not a great many events in life, of which you can make troubles or not, as you choose? An ill-dressed dish,—a disappointment about the colour of a tunic,—a misunderstanding about the pattern of a trimming,—a cut in one's finger,—and such as these,—is it not very foolish to make one's self miserable about them? What can be more silly than to spend half an hour in fretting over an inconvenience which did not last a quarter?"

"My dear Eschine, it sounds very grand!" said I. "Why dost thou not teach Amaury to look at things in that charming way? He frets over mistakes and inconveniences far more than Guy and I do."

Eschine's smile had more patience than amusement in it.

"For the same reason, Elaine, that I do not teach yonder crane to sing like a nightingale."

I can guess that parable. It would be mere waste of time and labour.

Guy did not forget my birthday yesterday; he gave me a beautiful coral necklace, which one knows is good against poison. (I will take care to wear it whenever

Count Raymond is present.) Lady Sybil gave me a lovely ring, set with an opal; and if I were at Acre, and had a bay-leaf to wrap round it, I would go into the Count's chamber invisible, and listen to him. Eschine's gift was a silver pomander, with a chain to hang it by. Amaury (just like him!) forgot all about it till this morning, and then gave me a very pretty gold filagree case, containing the holy Evangel of Saint Luke, to hang round my neck for an amulet.

Am I really nineteen years of age? I begin to feel so old!—and yet I am the youngest of us.

I do think that nothing really nice ever lasts in this world. The Baron de Montluc arrived here last night from Byzantium with all sorts of bad news. In the first place, Saladin, with his Paynim army, has re-entered the Holy Land, and is marching, as men fear, upon Neapolis. If he do this, he will cut off Acre from the Holy City, and the young Lord King cannot reach his capital. The Baron sent a trusty messenger back to Acre, to Count Raymond, urging him to hasten to the Holy City with the King, and lose not an hour in doing it. The coast road is still clear; or he could come by sea to Jaffa. Messire de Montluc sent his own signet as a token to Count Raymond—which ring the Count knows well. Guy has ordered us all to pack up, and return without loss of time to the Holy City, where he will take the command till Count Raymond arrives.

"Now, Elaine!—how wouldst thou like a siege?" triumphantly asks Amaury.

May all the holy saints avert such a calamity!

But there is, if possible, even worse behind: inasmuch as a foe without the gates is less formidable than a traitor within them. The Patriarch (I will not call him holy this time) and the Lord Roger had returned as far as Byzantium a few days before Messire de Montluc left that city, and it comes out now, what all their fine talk of pilgrimage meant. They have been at the Court of England on purpose to offer the crown of Jerusalem to King Henry the father, seeing (say they) the distracted state of the kingdom, the peril of Paynim war, and the fact that King Henry is the nearest heir of King Foulques of Anjou. Well, upon my word! As if the crown of Jerusalem were theirs to offer!

It seems to me, too—but every body, even Guy, says that is only one of my queer, unaccountable notions—that, since King Foulques of Anjou had no right to the crown except as the husband of Queen Melisende, so long as her heirs remain in existence, they should be preferred to his heirs by another wife. But Amaury laughs at me for saying this. He says, of course, when Count Foulques married Queen Melisende, and became King, all her right passed to him, and she was thenceforth simply his consort, his children having as much right as hers. It does not seem just and fair to me; but every one only laughs, and says I have

such absurd fancies.

"Why, what would be the good of marrying an heiress at all," says Amaury, "if you had to give up her property when she died before you?"

Still I do not see that it is just. And I wonder if, sometimes, the queer ideas of one century do not become the common ideas of the next. But Amaury seems to think that notion exquisitely ridiculous.

"Nonsense, Elaine!" says he. "It was a simple matter of family arrangement. Don't go and fancy thyself the wisest woman in the world! Thou hast the silliest ideas I ever heard."

"Well, I don't, Amaury," said I, "any more than I fancy thee the wisest man."

Guy laughed, and told Amaury he had a Roland for his Oliver.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM .

"It was but unity of place
Which made me dream I ranked with him."
—TENNYSON.

Here we are, safe in the Holy City, after a hurried and most uncomfortable journey. All the quiet is assuredly gone now. For the Holy City is full of tumult—cries, and marchings, and musters, and clashing of arms—from morning till night. Lady Judith, looking as calm as ever, received us with a blessing, and a soft, glad light in her eyes, which told that she was pleased to have us back. The Patriarch and the Master of the Temple have not yet arrived. Guy thinks they may tarry at Acre with Count Raymond, and come on in his train.

The Lord de Clifford has come from England, by way of Jaffa, with the answer of King Henry the father. It seems that the Patriarch actually took with him the keys of the Holy City and the blessed Sepulchre. I am astonished that Count Raymond should have entrusted them to him. More than this, they travelled by way of Rome, and through their wicked misrepresentations obtained letters from the Holy Father, urging King Henry to take on himself this charge. King Henry

was holding Court at Reading when they came to him, and the Patriarch says he was moved to tears at their account of the miserable state of the Holy Land. (Well, I am not going to deny the misery; but I do say it is Count Raymond's fault, and that if matters had been left in Guy's hands, they would never have come to this pass.) King Henry, however, would not give his answer at once; but bade them wait till he had convoked his great council, which sat at Clerkenwell on the eighteenth of March in last year. The decision of the Parliament was that in the interests of England the offer ought to be refused.

"Well!" said Guy, "as a mere question of political wisdom, that is doubtless right; for, apart from the pleasure of God, it would be the ruin of England to have the Holy Land clinging round her neck like a mill-stone. Yet remember, Lord Robert the Courthose never prospered after he had refused this crown of the world. He impiously blew out the taper which had been lighted by miracle; and think what his end was!"

"But dost thou think, my Lord," asked Lady Sybil, looking up, "that he meant it impiously? I have always thought his words so beautiful—that he was not worthy to wear a crown of gold in the place where our Lord had worn for us the crown of thorns."

"Very beautiful, Lady," said Guy a little drily, "if he had not heard just before the conference of the death of his brother, King William the Red."

Well!—when King Henry gave his answer, what did the Patriarch, but ask that one of his sons might be substituted,—and Guy thinks he specially indicated the Count of Poitou.[#] Guy says there are great possibilities in our young Count; but Amaury sneers at the idea. However, the King and the Parliament alike declined to accept in the name of any of the Princes, seeing none of themselves were present: and the Patriarch had to content himself with a promise of aid alone. King Henry took him in his train to Normandy, and after celebrating the holy Easter at Rouen, they had an interview with the French King at Vaudreuil. Both the Kings promised help, swearing on the souls of each other;[#] and many nobles, both French and English, took the holy cross. It is hoped that the King of France and the Count of Poitou may lead an army hither in a few months.

[#] Richard Cœur-de-Lion, whose reputation was yet to be made.

[#] The usual oath of monarchs in solemn form.

"If we can manage to conclude a truce meanwhile, and they do not come here to find us all slaughtered or prisoners to the Paynim," says Guy. "Great bodies move slowly; and kings and armies are of that description."

Saladin has taken Neapolis! Our scouts bring us word that he is ravaging and burning all the land as he marches, and he has turned towards the Holy City. Almost any morning, we may be awoke from sleep with his dreadful magic engine sounding in our ears. Holy Mary and all the saints, pray to the good God for His poor servants!

And not a word comes from the Regent. Four several messengers Guy has sent, by as many different routes, in the hope that at least one of them may reach Acre, earnestly urging him to send instructions. We do not even know the condition of matters at Acre. The King and the Regent may themselves be prisoners. Oh, what is to be done?

Guy says that whatever may become of him, the kingdom must not be lost: and if ten days more pass without news of the Regent, he will parley with Saladin, and if possible conclude a truce on his own responsibility. I feel so afraid for Guy! I believe if Count Raymond could find a handle, he would destroy him without mercy. Guy himself seems to perceive that the responsibility he is ready to assume involves serious peril.

"Nevertheless, my Lady's inheritance must not be lost," he says.

I asked Lady Judith this morning if she were not dreadfully frightened of Saladin. They say he eats Christian children, and sometimes maidens, when the children run short.

"If I felt no alarm, I should scarcely be a woman, Helena," said she. "But I took my fear to the Lord, as King David did. 'What time I am afraid,' he says, 'I will trust in Thee.' And I had my answer last night."

"Oh!" said I. "What was it, if it please you, holy Mother?"

She lifted her head with a light in the grey eyes.

"'I am, I am thy Comforter. Know whom thou art, afraid of a dying man, and of a son of men who wither like grass: and thou forgettest God thy Maker, the Maker of the heaven and Foundation-Layer of the earth, and fearest ever, every day, the face of the fury of thine oppressor.... And now, where is the fury of thine oppressor?'"

"Did the good God speak to you in vision, holy Mother?"

"No, Helena. He spake to me as He does to thee—in His Word."

I thought it would have been a great deal more satisfactory if she had been told in vision.

"But how do you know, holy Mother," I ventured to say, "that words written in holy Scripture, ever so long ago, have something to do with you now?"

"God's Word is living, my child," she said; "it is not, like all other books, a dead book. His Word who is alive for evermore, endureth for ever. Moreover, there is a special promise that the Holy Spirit shall bring God's words to the remembrance of His servants, as they need. And when they come from Him,

they come living and with power."

"Then you think, holy Mother, that the Paynim will be driven back?"

"I do not say that, my child. But I think that the God who turned back Sennacherib is alive yet: and the Angel who smote the camp of the Assyrians can do it again if his Lord command him. And if not—no real mischief, Helena,—no real harm—can happen to him or her who abideth under the shadow of God."

"But we might be killed, holy Mother!"

"We might," she said, so quietly that I looked at her in amazement.

"Holy Mother!" I exclaimed.

"Thou dost not understand our Lord's words, Helena!—'And they shall kill some of you, ... and a hair from the head of you shall not be lost.'"

"Indeed I do not," said I bluntly.

"And I cannot make thee do so," she added gently. "God must do it."

But why does He not do it? Have I not asked Him, over and over again, to make me understand? I suppose something is in the way, and something which is my fault. But how am I to get rid of it when I do not even know what it is?

The ten days are over, and no word comes from the Regent. Guy has assumed, as Vice-Regent, the command of the Holy City. Of course he is the person to do it, as Lady Sybil's husband. Our scouts report that Saladin is marching through the pass of Gerizim. Guy has sent out a trumpeter with a suitable armed escort, to sound a parley, and invite the Paynim to meet with him and arrange for a truce at Lebonah. Until the trumpeter returns, we do not know whether this effort will succeed.

Lady Sybil, I can see, is excessively anxious, and very uneasy lest, if Guy go to parley with Saladin, the wicked Paynim should use some treachery towards him.

"It is God's will!" she said; but I saw tears in her sweet eyes. "The battle, and the toil, and the triumph for the men: the waiting, and weeping, and praying for the women. Perhaps, in their way, the humble bedeswomen do God's will as much as the warrior knights."

The trumpeter returned last night, with a message from Saladin almost worthy of a Christian knight. It seems very strange that Paynims should be capable of courtesy.[#]

[#] A most expressive word in the Middle Ages, not restricted, as now, civility, but including hon-

ourable sentiments and generous conduct.

Saladin is willing to conclude a truce, and will meet Guy at Lebonah to do so; but it is to be for six months only, and Guy says the terms are somewhat hard. However, it is the best thing he can do: and as the Regent maintains his obstinate silence, something must be done. So far as our envoys could learn, the Paynim army has not been near Acre, and only crossed the Jordan some thirty miles lower down. It appears clear, therefore, that the Regent might have answered if he would.

Guy and Amaury set out yesterday morning for Lebonah to meet Saladin. It is two or three days' journey from the Holy City, and allowing three days more for conference, it must be ten days at least ere they can return.

I wander about the house, and can settle to nothing. Lady Sybil sits at work, but I believe she weeps more than she works. Eschine's embroidery grows quietly. I have discovered that she carries her heart out of sight.

We were talking this morning—I hardly know how the subject came up—about selfishness. Lady Isabel said, with a toss of her head, that she was sure no reasonable being could call her selfish. (Now I could not agree with her, for I have always thought her very much so.) Lady Judith quietly asked her in what she thought selfishness consisted.

"In being stingy and miserly, of course," said she.

"Well, but stingy of what?" responded Lady Judith. "I think people make a great mistake when they restrict selfishness merely to being miserly with money. I should say that the man is unselfish who will give willingly that which he counts precious. But that means very different things to different people."

"I wonder what it means to us five," said I.

Lady Judith looked round with a smile. "I almost think I could tell you," said she.

"Oh, do!" we all said but Lady Isabel.

"Well, to me," answered Lady Judith, "it means, submitting,—because some one wishes it who has a right to my submission, or else as a matter of Christian love—to do any thing in a way which I think inferior, absurd, or not calculated to effect the end proposed. In other words, my ruling sin is self-satisfaction."

We all exclaimed against this conclusion: but she maintained that it was so.

"Then," she continued, "to Sybil, it means depriving herself of her lord's society, either for his advantage or for that of some one else."

Lady Sybil smiled and blushed. "Then my ruling sin——?" she said interrogatively.

"Nay, I did not undertake to draw that inference in any case but my own," said Lady Judith with an answering smile.

We all—except Lady Isabel—begged that she would do it for us. She seemed, I thought, to assent rather reluctantly.

"You will not like it," said she. "And if you drew the inference for yourselves, you would be more likely to attend to the lesson conveyed."

"Oh, but we might do it wrong," I said.

Lady Judith laughed. "Am I, then, so infallible that I cannot do it wrong?" said she. "Well, Sybil, my dear, if thou wouldst know, I think thy tendency—I do not say thy passion, but thy tendency—is to idolatry."

"Oh!" cried Lady Sybil, looking quite distressed.

"But now, misunderstand me not," pursued Lady Judith. "Love is not necessarily idolatry. When we love the creature *more* than the Creator—when, for instance, thou shalt care more to please thy lord than to please the Lord—then only is it idolatry. Therefore, I use the word tendency; I trust it is not more with thee.—Well, then, with Isabel"——

Lady Isabel gave a toss of her head,—a gesture to which she is very much addicted.

"With Isabel," continued Lady Judith, "unselfishness would take the form of resigning her own ease or pleasure to suit the convenience of another, Her temptation, therefore, is to indolence and self-pleasing. With Helena"——

I pricked up my ears. What was I going to hear?

"With Helena," said she, smiling on me, "it would be, I think, to fulfil some duty, though those whom she loved might misunderstand her and think her silly for it."

"Then what is my besetting sin, holy Mother?"

"Pride of intellect, I think," she answered; "very nearly the same as my own."

"Holy Mother, you have left out Dame Eschine!" said Lady Isabel rather sharply.

"Have I?" said Lady Judith. "Well, my children, you must ask the Lord wherein Eschine's selfishness lies, for I cannot tell. I dare not deny its existence; I believe all sinners have it in some form. Only, in this case, *I* cannot detect it."

Eschine looked up with an expression of utter amazement.

"Holy Mother!" she exclaimed. "It seemed to me, as you went on, that I had every one of those you mentioned."

Lady Judith's smile was very expressive.

"Dear child," she said, "these are not my words,—'Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.'"

Does she think Eschine the best of us all? Is she? Dear me! I never should have thought it.

"Well!" said Lady Isabel, with a sort of snort, and another toss, "I am quite sure that I have not one of those faults you mentioned."

"Ah, my child!" responded Lady Judith. "Take heed of the Pharisee spirit—Eschine, what wouldst thou say was thy besetting sin?"

"I really cannot tell, I have so many!" answered Eschine modestly. "But I sometimes think that it may be—perhaps—a want of meekness and patience."

I stared at her in astonishment.

"Well, thank the saints, I am in no want of patience!" said Lady Isabel. "And if any one knew all I have to try it"——

I turned and looked at her, if possible, in astonishment still greater.

Really, how very, very little, people do know themselves! If there be a patient creature in this world, it is Eschine: and if there be an impatient one, it is Lady Isabel.

I wonder whether I know myself? I do not think I should have set myself down as proud of my intellect. But we Lusignans always have had brains—except Amaury; he has stepped out of the ranks. And I don't like people to disagree with me, and contradict me, nor to behave as if they thought I had no sense. That is true enough. I suppose I must be proud.

And yet, it cannot be wrong to know that one has brains. What is pride? Where does the knowledge end, and the sin begin? Oh dear! how is one ever to know?

If two and two would only make four in every thing! Or is it that one makes mistakes one's self in the adding-up?

Lady Judith asked me this morning if I was vexed with her yesterday, for what she said of me.

"Oh no!" I answered at once. "But I did not know that I was proud of my intellect. I think I knew that I was proud of my rank."

"Thou art right there, my child," she said. "Yet I fear the pride of intellect is more likely to harm thee, just because thou art less conscious of it."

"Holy Mother," said I, "do you think my sister Eschine the best of us?"

"We human creatures, Helena, are poor judges of each other. But if thou wouldst know—so far as I am able to judge—I think the two holiest persons in all this Palace are Eschine and thine old Margarita."

"Better than Lady Sybil!" I cried.

"I do not undervalue Sybil. She is good and true; and I believe she does earnestly desire to serve God. But it seems to me that the most Christ-like spirit

I know is not Sybil, but Eschine."

I must think about it, and study Eschine. I certainly made a sad mistake when I thought there was nothing in her. But the holiest person in the house! That seems very strange to me. I believe, now, that what I took for absence of feeling is a mixture of great humility and profound self-control. But the queerest thing is, that I think she really loves Amaury. And how any creature can love Amaury is a puzzle to me. For no being with an atom of brains can look up to him: and how can you love one whom you cannot respect? Besides which, he evidently despises Eschine—I believe he does all women—and he scolds and snubs her from morning to night for everything she does or does not do. Such treatment as that would wear my love in holes—If it were possible for me ever to feel any for such an animal as Amaury. If I were Eschine, I should be anxious to get as far away from him as I could, and should be delighted when he relieved me of his company. Yet I do think Eschine really misses him, and will be honestly glad when he comes back, It is very unaccountable.

Our anxieties are all turned to rejoicing at once. Guy and Amaury returned last night, having concluded a six months' truce with Saladin: and Eschine had the pleasure—I am sure she felt it a very great one—when Amaury entered her chamber, of placing in his arms the boy for whom he had so fervently longed, who was born three days before they came back. Little Hugues—Amaury says that must be his name—seems as fine a child as Héloïse, and as likely to live. Amaury was about as pleased as it is in his nature to be; but he always seems to have his eyes fixed on the wormwood of life rather than the honey.

"Thou hast shown some sense at last!" he said; and Eschine received this very doubtful commendation as if it had been the most delightful compliment. Then Amaury turned round, and snapped at me, because I could not help laughing at his absurdity.

I asked Marguerite this evening what she thought was her chief fault.

"Ha!—the good God knows," she said. "It is very difficult to tell which of one's faults is the worst."

"But what dost thou think?" said I.

"Well," she answered, "I think that my chief fault is—with all deference—the same as that of my Damoiselle: and that is pride. Only that we are proud of different things."

"And of what art thou proud, Margot?" asked I laughingly, but rather struck to find that she had hit on the same failing (in me) as Lady Judith.

"Ha! My Damoiselle may well ask. And I cannot tell her. What is or has an old villein woman, ignorant and foolish, to provoke pride? I only know it is there. It does not fasten on one thing more than another, but there it is. And pride is a very subtle sin, if it please my Damoiselle. If I had nothing in the world

to be proud of but that I was the ugliest woman in it, I believe I could be proud of that."

I laughed. "Well, and wherein lies my pride, Margot?" said I, wishful to see whether she altogether agreed with Lady Judith.

"Can I see into the inmost heart of my Damoiselle? It is like a shut-up coffer, this human heart. I can only look on the outside, I. But on the outside, I see two things. My Damoiselle is noble, and she is clever. And she knows both."

"Which is the worse, Margot?"

"Ha! Both are bad enough, to make pride. But this I think: that even a king can never fancy himself so noble as the good God; yet a good many of us think ourselves quite as wise."

"O Margot!—who could think that?"

"Does my Damoiselle herself never think that she could arrange matters better than the good God is ordering them? What is that, but to say in our hearts, 'I am the wiser'?"

It is very queer, how Lady Judith and Marguerite always do think alike.

"Margot, who wouldst thou say was the holiest woman in this house?"

The answer was unhesitating.

"I do not know; I can only guess. But if my Damoiselle wishes me to guess—the noble Lady Judith, and Dame Eschine."

How very odd!

"When I asked thee once before, Margot, thou didst not mention Eschine at all."

"Let my Damoiselle pardon me. I did not know enough of her then. And she is not one to know in a minute. Some are like an open book, quickly read: and others are like a book in a strange tongue, of which one knows but little, and they have to be spelt out; and some, again, are like a locked book, which you cannot read at all without the key. Dame Eschine, if my Damoiselle pleases, is the book in the strange tongue; but the book is very good, and quite worth the trouble to learn it."

"Where didst thou find such a comparison, Margot? Thou canst not read."

"I? Ha!—no. But I can see others do it."

"And what kind of book am I, Margot?"

"Ha!—my Damoiselle is wide, wide open."

"And the Lady Sybil?" asked I, feeling much amused.

"Usually, open; but she can turn the key if she will."

I was rather surprised. "And Count Guy?"

"Quite as wide open as my Damoiselle."

"Then where dost thou find thy locked book, Margot?"

I was still more astonished at the answer.

"If my Damoiselle pleases,—the Lady Isabel."

"O Margot! I think she is quite easy to read."

"I am mistaken," said Marguerite with quiet persistence, "if my Damoiselle has yet read one page of that volume."

"Now I should have called the Regent a locked book," said I.

"Hardly, if my Damoiselle pleases. There is a loose leaf which peeps out."

"Well, that romance is not a pleasant one," said I.

"Pleasant? Ha!—no. But it is long, and one cannot see the end of the story before one comes to it."

At last, a letter has come from the Regent.

It is quite different to what I expected. He approves of all that Guy has done, and more,—he actually thanks him for acting so promptly. (Are we misjudging the man?) The King is in good health, and the Regent thinks he will very shortly do well to return to the Holy City, as soon as the autumn rains are well over. The Lady Countess, he says, is suffering greatly, and he fears the damp weather increases her malady. He speaks quite feelingly about it, as though he really loved her.

Early this morning was born dear Lady Sybil's second baby—still, like Agnes, a little frail thing; and still a daughter. But Guy seems just as pleased with his child as if it were a healthy boy. He is so different from Amaury!

Both Guy and Lady Sybil wish the infant to bear my name. So this evening the Patriarch is to christen her Helena,—thus placing her under the safe protection of the blessed Saint Helena, mother of the Lord Constantine the Emperor, and also of the holy Queen of Adiabene, who bestowed such toil and money on the holy shrines.

As if to show that joys, as well as misfortunes, do not come single, this afternoon arrived a courier with letters from Lusignan,—one from Monseigneur to Guy, another from Raoul for Amaury, and one from Alix for me. All are well, thank the saints!—and Alix has now three children, of whom two are boys. Raoul is about to make a grand match, with one of the richest heiresses in Normandy,—the Lady Alix, Countess of Eu. Little Valence, Guillot's elder child, has been betrothed to the young Seigneur de Parthenay. I am rather surprised that Guillot did not look higher, especially after Guy's marriage and Raoul's.

Guy asked me to-day when I meant to be married.

"Oh, please, Guy, don't talk about it!" said I. "I would so much rather not."

"Dost thou mean to be a nun, then?" asked he. I think he hardly expected

it.

"Well," said I, "if I must, I must. But I want to know why I could not go on living quietly without either?"

"Ah, one of the original notions of the Damoiselle de Lusignan," said he. "Because, my eccentric Elaine, nobody ever does."

"But why does nobody?" said I. "And why should not I begin it? Every thing must begin some time, and with somebody."

But Guy seemed so much amused that I did not pursue the topic.

"Please thyself," said he, when he had finished laughing. "But why dost thou prefer single life?"

"For various reasons," said I. "For one, I like to have my own way."

"Well, now, women are queer folks!" said Guy. "Oh my most rational sister, wilt thou not have to obey thine abbess? And how much better will that be than obeying thine husband?"

"It will be better in two respects," I answered. "In the first place, an abbess is a woman, and would therefore be more reasonable than a man; and in"——

"Oh dear! I did not understand that!" said Guy. "I am rather ignorant and stupid."

"Thou art," said I. "And in the second, I should try, as soon as possible, to be an abbess myself."

"My best wishes attend thy speedy promotion, most holy Mother!" said Guy, bowing low, but laughing. "I perceive I was very stupid. But thou seest, I really did not know that women were such extremely reasonable beings. I fancied that, just now and then, they were slightly unreasonable."

"Now, Guy, give over!" said I. "But can I not wait a while? Must I decide at once?"

"Of course not, if that be thy wish," said Guy. "But thou art past the usual age for profession."

"Then I shall be all the more likely to receive promotion quickly," I replied.

"Fairest of nuns, here is my sword!" said Guy, kneeling and offering me the hilt. "I surrender myself, a vanquished prisoner, to thy superior wisdom."

So the matter passed off in a good laugh.

Now that the truce is concluded, all is peaceful and happy. It is so nice, after the tumult, and suspense, and anxiety, to have nothing to think of but what robe one shall wear to this feast, and how one shall arrange one's jewels for that dance. I wish it would last for ever!—if only one did not get tired even of pleasant things, when they have gone on for a while. If one could get hold of some pleasure of which one never got tired!

I want to introduce our national dance of Poitou, the minuet. I have taught it to Lady Isabel, and two or three of the damsels in waiting: and Perette and

Bertrade will help. Lady Isabel admires it very much; she says it is a grand, stately dance, and fit for a princess.

It seems very odd to me, that the ladies of this country look upon it as beneath them to superintend the cooking, and leave it all to their servants. How strange it would be if we did that in Poitou! They order what is to be done, but they never put their own hands to the work. I know what Alix would look like, if I told her.

The first banquet was to have been on Monday, but it is an unlucky day, as the moon will be in opposition to Mars; so it had to be deferred. We heard yesterday that the Countess of Edessa actually gave a banquet last week on a vigil, and what should she do but invite just enough to make thirteen! I suppose she never thought about either. She is the most thoughtless woman I ever saw. Messire de Montluc was one of the guests, and when he perceived the calamity, he feigned to bleed at the nose, and asked leave to retire. I suppose he did not wish to run the risk of dying within a year and a day. How can people be so careless? Why, it is almost as bad as murder.

CHAPTER XII.

WILL SHE GIVE HIM UP?

Elmina.—We can bear all things!
Gonsalez.—Can ye bear disgrace?
Ximena.—We were not born for this.
—FELICIA HEMANS.

I suppose it is only about thirty hours, yet it looks as if it might be as many weeks, since I sat in the bower with Lady Judith, broidering a mantle of cramoisie for Lady Sybil. We were talking of different things, carrying on no special train of conversation. Lady Sybil had been with us; but, a few minutes before, Guy had called her into the hall, to assist in receiving a messenger just arrived with letters from the Regent. Something which Lady Judith said amused me, and I was making a playful reply, when all at once there broke on us, from the hall, such a bitter, wailing cry, as instantly told us that something terrible must have happened. The mantle was dropped upon the rushes, and Lady Judith and I were

both in the hall in an instant.

The messenger, a young knight, stood at the further side of the daïs, where were Guy and Lady Sybil. She had apparently fainted, or was very near it, and he was holding her in his arms, and endeavouring to whisper comfort.

"Oh, what is the matter?" broke from me, as my eyes sought first Guy and then the messenger.

Guy did not answer. I am not sure that he heard me. It was the young knight who replied.

"Damoiselle, if it please your Nobility, our young Lord Beaudouin the King has been commanded to the Lord."

I never wished I was not noble until that minute. Had I been a villein, he would have told me without considering the pleasure of my Nobility, and I should have been out of suspense one second sooner.

Lady Judith's one thought seemed to be for the poor mother, who was utterly overcome by the sudden news of her first-born's death. She actually opened the casement with her own hands, though there were plenty of damsels and squires in the hall, whom she might have called to do it. One she sent for water, and sprinkled a few drops on Lady Sybil's face, entreating her to drink some wine which a squire brought in haste. She appeared to swallow with difficulty, but it seemed to revive her, and her voice came back.

"Oh, my boy, my boy!" she cried piteously. "And I was not there! It was not in my arms he died. My first-born, my darling! I was not there."

Ay, that seemed the climax of her misery—she was not there! I was very, very sorry, both for her and for the child. But another thought soon darted into my brain, and it was too hard for me to solve. Who was the King of Jerusalem now? When I thought it meet, I whispered the question to Guy. He made me no answer in words, but his quick downward glance at the golden head still bowed upon his arm told me what he thought. And all at once the full significance of that death flashed upon me. Lady Sybil was the Queen of the World, and might have to do battle for her glorious heritage.

There was no doubt concerning the right. Only two remained of the House of Anjou: and there could be no question as to whether the elder or younger sister should succeed. Lady Sybil's right had been originally set aside: and now it had come back to her.

In an instant I saw, as by a flash of lightning, that the idea had occurred to others; for the squire had offered the wine upon the knee.

But the Regent! Would he acquiesce meekly in a change which would drive him back to his original insignificance, and restore Guy to his place of supreme honour? Lady Sybil is no child, but a woman of full age. There might (in a man's eyes) be an excuse in putting her aside for her son, but there could be none for

her sister or her daughter.

It was not for some hours that I saw the Regent's letter; not till Lady Sybil's bitter wailing had died down to peace, and we were able to turn our eyes from the past to the future. Then Guy showed it me. I was astonished at the quiet matter-of-fact way in which Count Raymond recognised Lady Sybil's right, and deferred to Guy as the person to decide upon every thing. I asked Lady Judith, this morning, what she thought it meant. Was this man better than we had supposed? Had we been unjust to him?

"I cannot tell yet, Helena," she said; "but I think we shall know now very soon. It either bodes great good to Sybil,—or else most serious mischief."

"He says no word about his Lady Countess," I suggested.

"No," said Lady Judith. "I should have liked it better if he had done."

"Then what can we do?" I asked.

"Wait and pray," responded she.

"Wait!" Oh dear me!—it is always waiting. I detest it. Why can't things happen in a lump and get done with themselves?

Count Raymond—for I must give over calling him the Regent,—(and dear me! I must learn to call Lady Sybil the Queen as soon as she is crowned,—however shall I do it?)—Count Raymond says, in the end of his letter, that he will reach the Holy City, if it please the saints, about ten days hence, with the coffin of the young Lord King, that he may be laid with his fathers in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. So, I suppose, for these ten days we shall know nothing. I would scratch them out of the calendar, if I had pumice-stone of the right quality.

And yet—it comes over me, though I do hate to think it!—suppose these ten days should be the last days of peace which we are to know!

"Holy Mother, how *can* you wait to know things?" I asked Lady Judith.

"How canst thou?" said she with a little laugh.

"Why, I must!" said I. "But as to doing it patiently!"——

"It is easier to wait patiently than impatiently, my child."

"O holy Mother!" cried I.

"It is," she gently persisted. "But that patience, Helena, is only to be had from God."

"But can you help longing to know?" said I.

"Rebelliously and feverishly thirsting to know, I can. But it is only in God's strength that I can do it. Certainly I cannot help feeling that I shall be relieved when His time is come. I should be more or less than woman, if I could."

"But how," said I, "do you keep yourself patient?"

"*He* keeps me patient, Helena. I cannot keep myself. He knows: He is at the helm: He will guide me to the haven where I would be. Ah, my child, thou hast yet to learn what that meaneth,—'When He giveth quietness, who shall then

condemn?'"

Indeed I have. And I do not know how to begin.

We have been very busy, after all, during the terrible interval, and it hardly seems ten days since the news came. All the mourning robes were to be made of sackcloth—bah! how rough and coarse it is!—one need be a villein to stand it!—and the hoods of cloth of Cyprus. I never remember being in mourning before Amaury's poor little baby was born and died in one day, and I did hope then that I should never need it again. It is so abominable to wear such stuff—and how it smells!—and to have to lay aside one's gloves, just like a bourgeoise! Count Raymond is expected to-night.

I did not properly guess what a dreadful scene it would be, when the coffin was borne into the hall by four knights, and laid down on the daïs, and the lid opened, and the embalmed body of the fair child brought to view, clad in the cowl of the holy brethren of Saint Benedict, which was put on him just before he died. The holy Patriarch—I suppose he is holy, being a patriarch—held the holy censer, which he swung to and fro by the head of the coffin; and a royal chaplain at his side bore the bénitier, from which each of us, coming forward, took the asperge, and sprinkled the still face with holy water.

It was Lady Sybil's turn last, of course. But she, the poor mother, broke down utterly, and dropped the asperge, and if Guy had not sprung forward and caught her, I think she would have fainted and fallen on the coffin of her child. Oh, it was terrible!

Later in the evening, there was a family council, at which Count Raymond suggested—and Guy said it was an excellent idea—that Lady Sybil should convene a council of all the nobles, when her title should be solemnly recognised, and no room be left for any dissension about it in future. The council, therefore, will meet on Midsummer Day next, and at the same time it will be decided what to do after the truce with Saladin has expired.

I tapped at Lady Judith's door as I went up to bed.

"Well, holy Mother," said I, when I was inside, and the door shut, "what think you now of the Count of Tripoli?"

"What thinkest thou, Helena?" answered she.

"Truly, I hardly know what to think," I said. "He speaks fair."

"Ay," she said; "he speaks fair."

I thought I detected the slightest possible emphasis on the verb.

"I think you mean something, holy Mother," said I bluntly.

"Helena, when the Lord Count was proposing the convention of the council, and all that was to follow, and Count Guy assented, and said he thought it a good idea,—didst thou happen to look at Count Raymond's face?"

"No, holy Mother, I did not."

"I did. And at the instant when Count Guy assented to his proposal, I caught one triumphant flash in his eyes. From that hour I was certain he meant mischief."

My heart fell,—fell.

"What sort of mischief?" I asked fearfully.

"The Lord knoweth," quietly said she; "and the Lord reigneth, Helena. 'Wonderful are the ragings of the sea: wonderful in the heights is the Lord.'"

And that seems to comfort her. I wish it would comfort me.

The Council is holding its sitting: and so serious are its deliberations considered, that only one woman beside Lady Sybil herself is permitted to attend it. Of course it was not meet she should be without any lady or damsel. But she chose Lady Judith, with a pretty little apology to me, lest I should fancy myself slighted.

"Lady Judith is old and very wise," she said. "I should like her to hear the deliberations of the nobles, that I may have, if need be, the benefit of her counsel afterwards."

I suppose it is the swearing of allegiance that takes such a long time. They have been four hours already.

Sir God, have mercy upon me! I never dreamed of the anguish that was in store for me. I do not know how to bear it. O fair Father, Jesu Christ, by the memory of Thine own cross and passion, help me, if it be only to live through it!

I wondered why, when the Council broke up, Lady Sybil shut herself up and refused to admit any one, and Guy was nowhere to be found. I felt a vague sort of uneasiness, but no more, till a soft hand was laid upon my shoulder, and I looked up in Lady Judith's face.

And then, in an instant, the vague uneasiness changed to acute terror.

Her look was one of such deep, overwhelming compassion, that I knew at once she had that to tell me which she justly feared might break my heart.

"What—?" I gasped.

"Come here with me," she said; and she took me into her own cell, and barred the door. "Helena, dear child, there is something to tell thee which thou wilt find very bitter, and thy brother and Sybil think best that I should tell it."

"Go on, if you please, holy Mother. Any thing but suspense!"

"The Council of nobles," she said, "are agreed to admit Sybil's right, and to

pay their homage to her as Queen, if she on her part will accept one condition dictated by them. But if she refuse the condition, they refuse the allegiance; and will raise against her the banner of Isabel, who was called into the Council, and declared herself ready to accept it."

"And—the condition?"

"That she shall divorce Count Guy, and wed with one of themselves."

It seemed to me as though my head went round, but my heart stood still. And then a cry broke from me, which was a mixture of fear, and indignation, and disdain, and cruel, cruel anguish.

Sybil to divorce Guy! Our sweet-eyed, silver-voiced Sybil, whom we so loved, to divorce my Guy, my king of men! To be willing to do it!—to purchase her fair, proud inheritance at the price of the heart which loved her, and which she loved! My heart and brain alike cried out, Impossible!

Was I dreaming? This thing could not be,—should not be! Holy Saints, let me wake and know it!

"It is not possible!" I shrieked. "She will not—she cannot! Did she not say so?"

"Her first words," said Lady Judith, "were utterly and indignantly to refuse compliance."

"Well!—and then?"

"Then several of the nobles pressed it upon her, endeavouring to show her the advantages to be derived from the divorce."

"Advantages!" I cried.

"To the country, dear," said Lady Judith gently. "But for four hours she held out. No word was to be wrung from her but 'I could not dream of such a thing!' 'Then, Lady,' said the Lord Count of Edessa, 'you can no longer be our Queen.'"

"And did that sway her?" I cried indignantly.

"Nothing seemed to sway her, till Count Guy rose himself, and, though with faltering lips, earnestly entreated her assent. Then she gave way so far as to promise to consider the question."

That was like Guy. If he thought it for her good, I am sure he would urge it upon her, though it broke his own heart. But for her to give way *then*——!

"Holy Mother, tell me she will not do it!" I cried.

"She has locked herself up, to think and pray," said Lady Judith. "But it is well to know the worst at once,—I think she will, Helena."

"Holy Mother, you must have gone mad!"

I did not mean to be rude. I was only in too great agony to see any thing but itself. And Lady Judith seemed to understand.

"Who proposed it?" I demanded.

Ah! I knew what the answer would be. "Count Raymond of Tripoli."

"Well, he cannot be the one she weds!" said I, grinding my teeth.

"He can, Helena. The Countess has been dead these four months. He says he wrote to tell us, and his letter must have miscarried."

"And is Satan to have it all his own way?" I cried.

"No, assuredly, dear child. Christ is stronger than he."

"Holy Mother, can you see one speck of light in this thick and horrible darkness?"

"I never see but one light in any darkness," she said. "'God is light, and darkness in Him there is none at all.' Dear Helena, wilt thou not put thine hand in His, and let Him lead thee to the light?"

"Could the good God not have prevented all this?" I wailed.

"Perhaps not, for thy sake," she said softly.

"Oh, she will not, she will not!" I moaned. "Holy Mother, tell me she never will!"

"I cannot, dear. On the contrary, I think she will."

"I never could have believed it of Lady Sybil!"

Lady Judith made no reply; but I thought the expression of pain deepened in her face.

"Dear Helena," was her gentle answer, "sometimes we misunderstand our friends. And very often we misunderstand our Father."

She tried to comfort me: but I was past comfort. I was past food, sleep,—every thing. I went to bed,—it was a miserable relief to get away from the daylight; but I could not sleep, and no tears would come. Only one exceeding bitter cry,—

"Help me, Jesu Christ!"

Would He help me? What had I ever been to Him, or done for Him, that He should? He had shed His life-blood on the holy rood for me; and I had barely ever so much as thanked Him for it. I had never cared about Him. Where was the good of asking Him?

Yet I must cry to Him, for who else was there? Of course there were Mary Mother and the holy saints: but—Oh, I hope it was not wicked!—it seemed as if in my agony I pushed them all aside, and went straight up to Him to whom all prayer must come at last.

"Help me, Jesu Christ!"

Where was Guy?—feeling, in his darkened chamber, as if his heart were breaking?

Where was Sybil?—awake, perhaps, with a lighted lamp, wrestling between the one love of her heart and the pride of life.

And where was God? Did He hear me? Would He hear? And the cry came again, wrung from my very life as if I must have help.

”Help me, Jesu Christ! I have no help. I can do nothing. I can even think of nothing. I can bear no more. Help me, not because I deserve help, but because I want Thee!”

And the darkness went on, and the quiet beats of the water-clock, and the low, musical cry of the watchmen outside; and the clang of arms as they changed guard: but no holy angel came down from Heaven to tell me that my prayer was heard, and that it should be to me even as I would.

Was there no help?—was there no hope?—was there no God in Heaven?

Oh, it cannot, cannot be that she will decide against him! Yet Lady Judith thinks she will. I cannot imagine why. Our own sweet Sybil, to whom he has seemed like the very life of her life! No, it can never be true! She will never, never give him up.

CHAPTER XIII.

WAITING FOR THE INEVITABLE .

”Oh, hard to watch the shore-lights,
And yet no signal make!
Hardest, to him the back on Love,
For Love’s own blessed sake!
For me the darkness riseth,
But not for me the light;
I breast the waters’ heaving foam
For love of Love, to-night.”

She has given him up,—my Guy, my hero, my king of men!

No, I could never have believed it! One short month ago, if all the prophets and wise women and holy monks in Palestine had come in a body and told me this thing, I should have laughed them to scorn,—I should have thought the dead would rise first.

Ah! this is not our Sybil who has played this part. The Sybil whom I loved, next to Guy himself, has vanished into nothingness, and in her stead has come a creature that wears her face, and speaks with her voice,—cold, calculating, false!

It was again Lady Judith who told me. I thought I was prepared for this.

But I found that I was not. By the crushing pain which struck me, I knew that I had not really believed it would be thus,—that I had clung, like a drowning man, to the rope which failed me in this extremity—that I had honestly thought that the God to whom I had cried all night long would have come and saved me.

That Sybil should fail was bitterness enough. But what was I to do when Christ failed me? Either He could not hear at all, or He would not hear me. And I did not see that it was of much consequence which it was, since, so far as I was concerned, both came to the same thing.

The comfort Lady Judith tried to offer me sounded like cruel mockery. Even the soft pressure of her hand upon my head rasped my heart like a file.

"Poor, dear child!" she said. "It is so hard to walk in the dark. If the Lord have marked thee for His own—as by the strivings of His Spirit with thee, I trust He has—how sorry He must be for thee, just now!"

Sorry! Then why did He do it? When I am sorry for one I love, I do not give him bitter pain. I felt as if I should sink and die, if I did not get relief by pouring out my heart. I broke from Lady Judith,—she tried in vain to stop me—and I dashed into Lady Sybil's chamber. Queen or villein, it was all one to me then. I was far past any considerations of that sort. If she had ordered me to be instantly beheaded, I should not have thought it signified a straw.

I found her seated on the settle in the window. Oh, how white and worn and weary she looked! Dark rings were round her eyes, worn by pain and weeping and watching through that dreadful night. But I heeded not the signs of her woe. She deserved them. Guy's wrong burned in my heart, and consumed every thing but itself.

She rose hastily when she saw me, and a faint flush came to her white cheek.

"Ah,—Helena!"

She spoke in a hesitating tone, as if she scarcely knew what to say. She might well tremble before Guy's sister!

What a strange thing it is, that when our hearts are specially wrung with distress, our eyes seem opened to notice all sorts of insignificant minutiæ which we should never see at another time, or should never remember if we did see them. I perceived that one of the buttons of Lady Sybil's robe had caught her chatelaine, and that a bow of ribbon on her super-tunic was coming loose.

"May it please your Grace," I said—and I heard a hard metallic ring in my own voice,—"have I heard the truth just now from Lady Judith?"

"What hast thou heard, Helena?"

I did not spare her for the crushing clasp of her hands, for the slight quiver of the under lip. Let her suffer! Had she not wronged my Guy?

"I have heard that your Grace means to give way before the vulgar clamour

of your inferiors, and to repudiate your wedded lord at their dictation."

No, I would not spare her so much as one adjective. She pressed her lips close, and a sort of shudder went over her from head to foot. But she said, in a calm, even voice, like a child repeating some formal lesson—

"Thou hast heard the truth."

If she would have warmed into anger, and have resented my words, I think I might have kept more within bounds. But she was as cold as ice, and it infuriated me.

"And you call yourself a Christian and a Catholic?" cried I, raising my voice.

"The Lord knoweth!" was her cool answer.

"The Lord look upon it, and avenge us!" I cried. "Do you know how I loved you? Next to my love for Guy himself,—better than I loved any other, save you two, in earth or Heaven! You!—was it you I loved? My sister Sybil loved Guy, and would have died rather than sacrifice him to a mob of parvenu nobles. She is gone, and you are come in her stead, the saints know how! You are not the Sybil whom I loved, but a stranger,—a cold, calculating, politic, false-hearted woman. Heartless, ungenerous, faithless, false! I sweep you out of my heart this day, as if you had never entered it. You are false to Guy, and false to God. I will never, never, never forgive you! From this hour you are no more to me than the meanest Paynim idolatress whom I would think scorn to touch!"

I do not know whence my words came, but they poured out of me like the rain in a tempest. I noted, without one spark of relenting, the shudder which shook her again from head to foot when I named Guy,—the trembling of lips and eyes,—the pitiful, appealing look. No, I would not spare one atom of misery to the woman who had broken my Guy's heart.

Perhaps I was half mad. I do not know.

When I stopped, at last, she only said—

"It must look so to thee. But trust me, Helena."

"Trust you, Lady Sybil!—how to trust you?" I cried. "Have I not trusted you these four years, before I knew you for what you are? And you say, 'Trust me!'—Hear her, holy Saints! Ay, when I have done trusting the scorpions of this land and the wolves of my own,—trust me, I will trust you!"

She rose, and came to me, holding out both hands, with a look of piteous appeal in those fair grey eyes that I used to love so much.

"I know," she said,—"I know. Thou must think so. Yet,—trust me, Helena!"

I broke from her, and fled. I felt as if I could not bear to touch her,—to look at her another moment. To my own chamber I ran, and casting myself on the bed, I buried my face in the pillow, and lay there motionless. I did not weep; my eyes were dry and hard as stones. I did not pray; there was no good in it. Without God, without hope, without any thing but crushing agony and a sense of cruel

wrong,—I think in that hour I was as near Hell as I could be, and live.

It was thus that Marguerite found me.

I heard her enter the room. I heard the half-exclamation, instantly checked, which came to her lips. I heard her move quietly about the chamber, arranging various little things, and at last come and stand beside my bed.

"Damoiselle!"

I turned just enough to let her see my face.

"Is Satan tempting my Damoiselle very hard just now?"

What made her ask that question?

"No, Margot," I said, sitting up, and pushing the hair off my forehead. "God is very, very cruel to me."

"Ah, let my Damoiselle hush there!" cried the old woman, in a tone of positive pain. "No, no, never! She does not mean to cut her old nurse to the heart, who loves her so dearly. But she will do it, if she says such things of the gracious Lord."

"Now, Margot, listen to me. I thought something was going to happen which would wring my heart to its very core. All night long I lay awake, praying and crying to God to stay it. And He has not heard me. He has let it happen—knowing what it would be to me. And dost thou not call that cruel?"

"Ah, I guessed right. Satan is tempting my Damoiselle, very, very hard. I thought so from her face.—Damoiselle, the good Lord cannot be cruel: it is not in His nature. No, no!"

"Dost thou know what has happened, Margot?"

"I? Ha!—no."

"The Lady Sybil, incited by her nobles, has consented to divorce Count Guy, and wed with another."

I saw astonishment, grief, indignation, chase one another over old Marguerite's face, followed by a look of extreme perplexity. For a few moments she stood thus, and did not speak. Then she put her hands together, like a child at prayer, and lifted her eyes upward.

"Sir God," she said, "I cannot understand it. I do not at all see why this is. Good Lord, it puzzles poor old Marguerite very much. But Thou knowest. Thou knowest all things. And Thou canst not be hard, nor cruel, whatever things may look like. Thou art love. Have patience with us, Sir God, when we are puzzled, and when it looks to us as if things were going all wrong. And teach the child, for she does not know. My poor lamb is quite lost in the wilderness, and the great wolf is very near her. Gentle Jesu Christ, leave the ninety and nine safe locked in the good fold, and come and look for this little lamb. If Thou dost not come, the great wolf will get her. And she is Thy little lamb. It is very cold in the wilderness, and very dark. Oh, do make haste!"

"Thou seemest to think that God Almighty is sure to hear thee, Margot," said I wearily.

Yet I could not help feeling touched by that simple prayer for me.

"Hear me?" she said. "Ah no, my Damoiselle, I cannot expect God Almighty to hear me. But He will hear the blessed Christ. He always hears Him. And He will ask for me what I really need, which is far better than hearing me. Because, my Damoiselle sees, I make so many blunders; but He makes none."

"What blunders didst thou make just now, Margot?"

"Ha! Do I know, I? When He translated it into the holy language of Heaven, the blessed Christ would put them all right. Maybe, where I said, 'Be quick,' He would say, 'Be slow.'"

"I am sure that would be a blunder!" said I bitterly.

"Ha! Does it not seem so, to my Damoiselle and her servant? But the good God knows. If my Damoiselle would only trust Him!"

"'Trust'!" cried I, thinking of Sybil. "Ah, Margot, I have had enough of trusting. I feel as if I could never trust man again—nor woman."

"Only one Man," said Marguerite softly. "And He died for us."

After saying that, she went away and left me. I lay still, her last words making a kind of refrain in my head, mingling with the one thought that seemed to fill every corner.

"He died for us!" Surely, then, He cannot hate us. He is not trying to give us as much suffering as we can bear?

I rose at last, and went to seek Guy. But I had to search the house almost through for him. I found him at length, in the base court, gazing through one of the narrow windows through which the archers shoot. The moment I saw his face, I perceived that though we might be one in sorrow we were emphatically two in our respective ways of bearing it. The quiet, patient grief in that faraway look which I saw in his eyes, was dictated by a very different spirit from that which actuated me. And he found it, too.

Not a word would he hear against Sybil. He nearly maddened me by calmly assuming that her sufferings were beyond ours, and entreating me not to let any words of mine add to her burden. It was so like Guy—always himself last! And when I said passionately that God was cruel, cruel!—he hushed me with the only flash of the old impetuosity that I saw in him.

"No, Elaine, no! Let me never hear that again."

I was silent, but the raging of the sea went on within.

"I think," said Guy quietly, "that it is either in a great sorrow or a serious illness that a man really sees himself as he is, if it please God to give him leave. I have thought, until to-day, in a vague way, that I loved God. I begin to wonder this morning whether I ever did at all."

His words struck cold on me. Guy no true Christian!—my brave, generous, noble, unselfish Guy! Then what was I likely to be?

"Guy," I said,—"*will* she?" I could bear the torture no longer. And I knew he would need no more.

"I think so, Elaine," was his quiet answer. "I hope so."

"'*Hope* so'!"

"It is her only chance for the kingdom. The nobles are quite right, dear. I am a foreigner; I am an adventurer; I am not a scion of any royal house. It would very much consolidate her position to get rid of me."

"And canst thou speak so calmly? I want to curse them all round, if I cannot consume them!"

"I am past that, Elaine," said Guy in a low voice, not quite so firmly as before. "Once, I did—— May the good Lord pardon me! His thunders are not for mortal hands. And I am thankful that it is so."

"I suppose nobody is wicked, except me," I said bitterly. "Every body else seems to be so terribly resigned, and so shockingly good, and so every thing else that he ought to be: and—I will go, if thou hast no objection, Guy. I shall be saying something naughty, if I don't."

Guy put his arm round me, and kissed my forehead.

"My poor little Lynette!" he said. "We can go home to Poitou, dear, and be once more all in all to each other, as we used to be long ago. Monseigneur will be glad to see us."

But I could not stand that. Partly Guy's dreadful calm, and partly that allusion to the long ago when we were so much to each other, broke me down, and laying my head down upon Guy's arm, I burst into a passionate flood of tears.

Oh, what good they did me! I could scarcely have believed how much quieted and lightened I should feel for them. Though there was no real change, yet the most distressing part of the weight seemed gone. I actually caught myself fancying what Monseigneur would say to us when we came home.

Guy said he would go with me to my chamber. I was glad that we met no one below. But as we entered the corridor at the head of the stairs, little Agnes came running to us, holding up for admiration a string of small blue beads.

"See, Baba!—See, Tan'!—Good!"

These are her names for Guy and me. Every thing satisfactory is "good" with Agnes—it is her expressive word, which includes beautiful, amiable, precious, and all other varieties. I felt as if my heart were too sore to notice her, and I saw a spasm of pain cross Guy's face. But he lifted the child in his arms, kissed her, and admired her treasure to her baby heart's content. If I were but half as selfless as he!

"And who gave thee this, little one?"

”Amma. Good!”

It was the child’s name for her mother. Ah, little Agnes, I cannot agree with thee! ”Amma” and ”good” must no longer go into one sentence. How could she play, to-day, with Guy’s children?

Yet I suppose children must be fed, and cared for, and trained, and amused,—even though their elders’ hearts are breaking.

Oh, if I might lie down somewhere, and sleep, and awake eighteen years ago, when I was a little sorrowless child like Agnes!

The coronation is fixed for Holy Cross Day. And Lady Sybil has undertaken, as soon as she is crowned, to select her future husband. One condition she has insisted on herself. Every noble, on the coronation day, is to take a solemn oath that he will be satisfied with and abide by her decision, and will serve the King of her choice for ever. This seems to me a very wise and politic move, as it will prevent any future disputes. Every body appears to have no doubt on whom her choice will fall. All expect the Count of Tripoli.

Guy has requested permission to retire to Ascalon; and she has accorded it, but with the express stipulation that he is to be in his place, with the rest of her peers, at the coronation. It does seem to me a piece of needless cruelty. Surely she might have spared him this!

I also have asked permission to retire from Court. Of course I go with Guy. Whoever forsakes him, the little sister shall be true.

For about the first time in my life, I am thoroughly pleased with Amaury. He is nearly as angry as I am—which is saying a great deal. And he is the only person in whose presence I dare relieve my feelings by saying what I think of Sybil, for Guy will not hear a word.

Eschine has the most extraordinary idea. She thinks that Sybil’s heart is true, and that only her head is wrong. It is all nonsense! Heart and head go together.

The worst item of the agony is over—the divorce.

The ceremony was short enough. A speech—from Count Raymond—stating to the public the necessities of the case; a declaration from both parties that they acted of their own free will; a solemn sentence from the holy Patriarch:—and all was over, and Guy and Sybil were both free to wed again.

I did think Sybil would have fainted before she could get through the few words she had to speak. But Guy was as calm and quiet as if he were making some knightly speech. I cannot understand him. It seems so unnatural for Guy.

I expressed some surprise afterwards.

"O Lynette! how could I make it harder for her!"

That was his answer. It was all for her. He seems to think himself not worth considering.

We leave for Ascalon very early to-morrow; and as this was my last night, I went to Lady Judith's cell to say farewell to her. On my way I met Count Raymond, returning from an audience of Lady Sybil, with triumph flashing in his eyes as he met mine. He evidently agrees with the multitude that he has a good chance of the crown. My heart swelled against him, but I managed to return his bow with courtesy, and passing on, tapped at Lady Judith's door.

"Helena, dear child!—Come in," she said.

"I am come to bid you good-bye, holy Mother."

Lady Judith silently motioned me to a seat on her bed, and sat down beside me.

"Is it quite as dark, my child?"

"Yes, quite!" I said, sighing.

"Poor child! I would give much to be able to comfort thee. But, please God, thou wilt be comforted one day."

"The day seems a long way off, holy Mother."

"It seemed a long way off, dear, to the holy Jacob, the very day before the waggons arrived to carry him down to his son Joseph. Yet it was very near, Helena."

I listened with respect, of course: but I could not see what that had to do with me. The waggons were not coming for me—that one thing was certain.

"Wilt thou be here for the coronation, my child?"

"I shall be where Guy is," I said shortly. "But—O holy Mother, she might have spared him that!"

Lady Judith's look was very pitiful. Yet she said—

"Perhaps not, my child."

Why, of course she might, if she would. What was to hinder her? But I did not say so, for it would have been discourteous.

Even between me and my dear old Lady Judith there seemed a miserable constraint. Was it any marvel? I rose to go. Almost noiselessly the door opened, and before I could exclaim or escape, Sybil stood before me.

"And wert thou going without any farewell—me,—little sister, Helena?"

I stood up, frozen into stone.

"I ask your Grace's pardon. We are not sisters *now*."

She turned aside, and covered her face with her hands.

"O Lynette! thou makest it so hard, so hard!"

"So hard?" said I coldly. "I hope I do. If your heart had not been harder than the nether millstone, Lady Sybil, you would never, never have required our presence at your coronation. God give you what you deserve!"

"That is a terrible prayer, in general," she said, turning and meeting my eyes. "And yet, Lynette, in this one thing, I dare to echo it. Ay, God render unto me what I deserve!"

How could she? Oh, how could she?

Lady Judith kissed me, and I went away. I believe Sybil would have kissed me too, but I would not have it from her.

It was easy, after that, to say farewell to the rest.

"I wish I were going too!" growled Amaury.

Then why does he not? He might if he chose. Just like Amaury!

"Farewell, dear," said Eschine. "I shall miss thee, Elaine."

—And nobody else. Yes, I know that.

So we go forth. Driven out of our Paradise, like Adam and Eva. But the flaming sword is held by no angel of God.

I always thought it such a dreadful thing, that our first parents should be driven out of Paradise. Why could not God have let them stay? It was not as if He had wanted it for the angels. If He had meant to use it for any thing, it would be on the earth now.

I cannot understand! Oh, why, why, *why* are all these terrible things?

"I cannot understand either," says old Marguerite. "But I can trust the good God, and I can wait till He tells me. I am happier than my Damoiselle,—always wanting to know."

Well, I see that I marvel if there is any maiden upon earth much more miserable than I am. Last night, only, I caught myself wishing—honestly wishing—that I could change with Marguerite, old and poor as she is. It must be such a comfort to think of God as she does. It seems to answer for every thing.

The sultry quiet here is something almost unendurable to me. There is nothing in the world to see or hear but the water-carriers crying "The gift of God!" and strings of camels passing through the gateway, and women washing or grinding corn in the courts. And there is nothing to do but wait and bear, and prepare, after a rather sluggish fashion, for our return home when the coronation is over. Here, again, old Marguerite is better off than I am, for she has constantly things which she must do.

I do not think it likely that Amaury will come with us. Things never take hold of him long. If he be furiously exasperated on Monday, he is calmly dis-

gusted on Tuesday, supremely content on Wednesday, and by Thursday has forgotten that he was ever otherwise. And he seems disposed to make his home here.

To me, it looks as though my life divided itself naturally into two portions, and the four years I have passed here were the larger half of it. I seem to have been a woman only since I came here.

Three months to wait!—and all the time we are waiting for a dreadful ordeal, which we know must come. Why does Lady Sybil give us this suffering? And far more, why, why does the good God give it to us?

If I could only understand, I could bear it better.

"Ha!" says Marguerite, with a rather pitying smile. "If my Damoiselle could but know every thing, she would be content not to know more!"

Well! I suppose I am unreasonable. Yet it will be such a relief when the worst is over. But how can I wish the worst to come?

CHAPTER XIV.

SYBIL'S CHOICE .

"'Gifts!' cried the friend. He took: and, holding it
High towards the heavens, as though to meet his star,
Exclaimed,—'This, too, I owe to thee, Giafàr!'"
LEIGH HUNT.

It came at last—neither sooner for my dreading it, nor later for my wishing it—Holy Cross Day, the coronation morning.

Guy and I reached the Holy City the night before, and took up our quarters with the holy Patriarch and his Lady Irene. We were just opposite the Palace. We could see lights flashing through the loop-holes, and now and then a shadow pass behind them. It was hard to know that that house held all that we loved, and we were the only ones that dared not enter it.

The Patriarch was most disagreeably loquacious. He told us every thing. He might have been cooking the banquet and broidering the robes, for all the minute details he seemed to know. The Queen, he told us, was to be arrayed in golden baudekyn, and the Lady Isabel in rose and silver. Both the Princesses

would be present, attired in gold and blue. Poor little Agnes and Helena! How little they would understand of their mother's actions!

As little, perhaps, as any of us could understand of God's dealings in this matter!

The officers of state were to surround the throne, which was to be placed on the highest step of the choir; the nobles of the Council were to stand, in order according to the date of their creation, round the nave below.

Lady Irene was as silent as her lord was talkative. But at night, when she brought me up to the chamber she had prepared for me, she told me the one thing I did care to know. A place had been specially reserved for me, in the nave, immediately behind Guy; and the Lady Irene's own place was next to me.

"I am obliged to the Master of the Ceremonies," said I: for that was just where I wished to be.

"Nay," quietly said Lady Irene, as she took up her lamp; "the Damoiselle is obliged to the Lady Sybil."

Had Sybil thought of my fancy? What a strange compound she was!—attending to one's insignificant likings, yet crushing one's very heart to dust!

I did not sleep till very late, and I was aroused in the early morning by a flourish of trumpets, announcing that the grand day had dawned. I dressed myself, putting off my mourning for a suit of leaf-green baudekyn, for I knew that Guy would not be pleased if I wore any thing sombre, though it would have suited my feelings well enough. A golden under-tunic and kerchief, with my best coronet, were the remainder of my attire. I found Guy himself flashing in golden armour,[#] and wearing his beautiful embroidered surcoat, which Sybil herself wrought for him, with the arms of Lusignan.

[#] This phrase was used of steel armour ornamented with gold.

How could she bear to see that existing token of her own dead love? The surcoat had worn better than the heart.

We took our appointed places—Lady Irene, Guy, and I,—and watched the nobles arrive,—now an odd one, now half-a-dozen together. The Patriarch of course left us, as he was to officiate.

He told us last night that eighty out of every hundred felt no doubt at all that the Count of Tripoli would be the future King. (That Patriarch is the queerest mortal. It never seemed to enter his head that such information would not be highly entertaining to Guy and me.)

Now was the time to discern our enemies from our friends. Those who did

notice us risked Court favour. But Messire de Montluc came all the way from the choir to salute us; and I felt a throb of gratitude to him in my heart. The Count of Edessa was not able to see us, and Count Raymond—O serpent, demon that he is!—looked straight at us, as if he had never met us before.

It was an additional pang, that the order of precedence placed Count Raymond the very next to Guy. I sincerely wished him at the other end of the nave, though it would have placed him close to the throne.

And now the important persons began to arrive. Lady Judith, in the quiet brown habit of her Order, stopped and scanned the groups all round, till her eyes reached us, and then she gave us a full smile, so rich in love and peace, that my heart throbbed with sympathy, and yet ached with envy.

Then came a lovely vision of rich rose and gleaming silver, which did *not* look for us, and I felt that was Lady Isabel. And then two sweet little fairy forms in blue and gold, and I saw Guy crush his under-lip as his eyes fell upon his children.

Last came the Queen that was to be—a glorious ray of gold, four pages bearing her train, and her long fair hair, no less golden than her robes, streaming down them to her feet. She took her seat by Lady Isabel, on the velvet settle near the throne.

Then the Patriarch came forward into the midst of the church, to a faldstool set there: and announced in loud tones, that all the nobles of the Council of Sybil, shortly to be crowned Queen of Jerusalem, should come forward in rotation to the faldstool, and swear between his hands[#] to bear true and faithful allegiance, as to his King, to that one of them all whom it should please her to choose for her lord.

[#] Homage was always performed in this manner, the joined hands of the inferior, or oath-taker, being held between the hands of the superior lord, or person who administered the oath.

One by one, they came forward: but I saw only two. Count Raymond knelt down with an air of triumphant command, as though he felt himself King already: Guy with an aspect of the most perfect quietness, as if he were thinking how he could spare Sybil.

When all the nobles were sworn, the Patriarch went back to the choir, and Sybil, rising, came and stood just before the throne. The coronation ceremony followed, but I was not sufficiently at ease to enter into it. There were prayers in sonorous Greek, and incense, and the holy mass, and I cannot properly tell what else. The last item was the actual setting of the crown—the crown of all the

world—on the head of Sybil of Anjou.

And then came a gentle rush of intense expectation, as Sybil lifted the crown royal from her head, and prepared to descend the steps of the throne.

Her choice was to be made now.

Down the damask carpeting of the nave she came, very, very slowly: carrying the crown in both hands, the holy Patriarch following and swinging the holy censer behind her. Her eyes were cast down. It was evident that she knew perfectly well where he stood who was to wear that crown.

Slowly, slowly, all along the nave. Past one eligible noble after another, face after face gathering blankness as she went. At last she turned, ever so little, to the right.

I could bear no more. I covered my face with my mantle. Let who would gaze on me—let who would sneer! She was coming—no doubt any longer now—straight towards Count Raymond of Tripoli.

And never—with the faint flush in her cheeks, and the sweet, downcast eyes—had I seen her look so beautiful. And all at once, athwart my anger, my indignation, my sense of bitter wrong, came one fervent gush of that old, deep love, which had been mine for Sybil: and I felt as though I could have laid down my life that hour to save, not Guy, but her, from the dreadful consequences of her own folly,—from that man who had crushed Guy's heart as he might have crushed a moth.

Then came a dead hush, in which a butterfly's wing might almost have been heard to beat. Then, a low murmur, half assent, half dissent. Then, suddenly bursting forth, a cheer that went pealing to the roof, and died away in reverberations along the triforium. The choice was made.

And then—I had not dared to look up—I heard Sybil's voice. She was close, close beside me.

"Sir Guy de Lusignan," she said, "I choose thee as my lord, and as Lord of the land of Jerusalem; for—" and a slight quiver came into the triumphant, ringing voice—"whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder!"

Then I looked up, and saw on my Guy's head the crown of the world, and in Sybil's dear eyes the tender, passionate love-light which she had locked out of them for months for love's own sake, and I knew her at last for the queen of women that she is.

And then——I heard somebody speak my name, and felt Lady Irene's arms close round me, and darkness came upon me, and I knew no more.

When I came to myself, I was lying in my own old chamber in the Palace, and beside me were old Marguerite fanning me with a handkerchief, and Lady Judith

bending over me.

"Helena, darling,—all is well!" she said.

"Is all well?" I said, sadly, when I could speak. "It is well with Guy, and therefore all else matters little. But I wonder if I shall ever be forgiven?"

"By whom?" asked Lady Judith.

"God and Sybil," I answered in a low voice.

"Ask them both," she said softly. "Sybil is coming to thee, as soon as ever the banquet is over. And there is no need to wait to ask God."

"Did you guess, holy Mother, how it would end?"

"No, Helena," she answered with a smile. "I knew."

"All along?"

"Yes, from the first."

I lay still and thought.

"Dost thou marvel why I did not tell thee, dear, and perhaps think it cruel? Ask Sybil why she made me her sole confidante. I think thou wilt be satisfied when thou hast heard her reason. But though I did not guess Sybil's purpose,—" and she turned with a smile to Marguerite,—"here, I fancy, is one who did."

"Ay, very soon," said Margot quietly: "but not quite at first, Lady."

"Thou wicked old Marguerite!" cried I. "And never to tell me!"

"Suppose I had been mistaken," she replied. "Would my Damoiselle have thanked me for telling her then?"

I felt quite sufficiently restored to go down to the bower, though not able to bear the banquet. So Lady Judith and I went down. She told me all that had taken place after I fainted: how Messire de Montluc and Lady Irene had taken care of me; that the Patriarch had immediately bestowed the nuptial benediction upon Sybil and Guy, and had then anointed the King—(the King!)—that the Knights Templars had escorted the King and Queen to the banquet; and that after the banquet, homage was to be done by all the nobles. Guy and Sybil, therefore, were likely to be detained late.

Suddenly something climbed up on the settle, and I felt myself seized round the neck, and tumultuously caressed.

"Tantine! Tantine!—Come—good! Baba and Tantine—*both* come. Good!—Oh, good!"

Of course I knew who that was, and alternated between returning the warm kisses, and entreating Agnes not to murder me by suffocation.

Then came a much calmer kiss on my brow, and I looked up at Eschine.

And then strolled in Messire Amaury, with his hands in the pockets of his haut-de chausses, talking to Messire de Montluc.

"But the strangest thing, you know"—that sagacious youth was observing—"the strangest thing—O Elaine, is that thee!—the strangest thing is that a mere

simple, ignorant woman could have formed and carried out such a project. Surely some man must have given her the idea! I can hardly—Oh, *pure foy*!"

The last exclamation was due to a smart and sudden application of my right hand to the left ear of my respected brother. Messire de Montluc was convulsed with laughter.

"Well done, Damoiselle Elaine! You regard the honour of your sex."

"The next time thou speakest contemptuously of women," said I, "look first whether any overhear thee."

"Trust me, I will make sure of my sister Elaine," said Amaury, still rubbing his ear. "On my word, Lynette, thou art a spitfire!"

One after another kept coming, and all expressing pleasure in seeing me. I could not help wondering whether all of them would have been quite so pleased to see Elaine de Lusignan, if she had not been the King's sister. Lady Judith and Eschine would, I believed. Nor do I think it would have made the least difference to Agnes. Considerations of that kind do not begin to affect us till we are over three years old.

But time wore on, and Sybil was not released from her regal duties; and the strain which both body and mind had had to sustain told upon me, and I began to feel very tired. Lady Judith noticed it.

"Dear Helena," she said, "do put that white face to bed. Sybil will come to thee."

"I have no right to ask it of her," I said huskily.

"Dost thou think she will wait till thou hast?"

I was beginning to remonstrate that it would not be respectful, when Lady Judith put her arm round me, and said laughingly—"Sir Amaury, help me to carry this wilful child to bed."

"Fair Mother, I dare not for all the gold in Palestine," said my slanderous brother. "My ear has not done stinging yet."

"Am I wilful?" said I. "Well, then I will do as I am told.—As to thee, Amaury, thou hast just thy desert."

"Then I am a very ill-deserving man," responded he.

Lady Judith and Eschine both came with me to my chamber, and the latter helped me to undress. I had but just doffed my super-tunic, however, when a slight sound made me turn round towards the door, and I saw Sybil,—Sybil, still in her coronation robes, coming towards me with both hands held out, as she had done that last sad time we met. I threw myself on the ground before her, and tried to kiss the hem of her golden robe. But she would not let me.

"No, no, my darling, no!"

And she stooped and drew me into her arms, and kissed me as if we had never disagreed,—as if I had never uttered one of those bitter words which it now

made my cheeks burn even to remember.

I could only sob out,—"Forgive me!"

"Dear little sister, forgive thee for loving Guy?"

"No, no!" I said, "but for not loving—for misunderstanding, and slandering, and tormenting thee!"

"Nay, dearest Helena!" she said, at once tenderly and playfully,—"Thou didst not slander me. It was that other Sybil with whom thou wert so angry,—the Sybil who was not true to her lord, and was about to forsake him. And I am sure she deserved every word. But that was not I, Helena."

"But how my words must have tortured thee!"

"Not in one light, dear. It was a rich ray of hope and comfort, to know, through all my pain, how true the dear little sister was to Guy,—what a comfort she was likely to be to him,—that whoever forsook him, his Lynette would never do it. Now finish thine undressing. There is one other thing I want to say to thee, but let me see thee lying at rest first."

She sat down on the settle, just as she was, while Bertrade finished undressing me. Then they all said "Good night," and left me alone with Sybil.

"Helena, darling!" she said, as she sat beside me, my hand clasped in hers,—"this one thing I wish thee to know. I could not spare thee this pain. If the faintest idea of my project had ever occurred to Count Raymond,—though it had been but the shadow of a shade,—it would have been fatal. Had he guessed it, I could never have carried it out.[#] And he has eyes like a lynx, and ears like a hare. And, little sister,—thy face talks! Thou couldst not, try as thou wouldst, have kept that knowledge out of thine eyes. And the Count would have read it there, with as little trouble as thou wouldst see a picture. The only chance, therefore, to preserve my crown for my lord, and him for me, was to leave him and thee in ignorance. Trust me, it cost me more than it did you!"

[#] The extraordinary item of this series of incidents (which are historical) is, that Count Raymond did not guess it.

Ah! had she not said that once before,—"Trust me!" And I had not trusted her. Yet how well she deserved it!

I hardly know what I sobbed out. I only know that I was fully and undeservedly forgiven, that I was loved through all my mistrust and unworthiness and cruel anger,—and that Sybil knew how I loved her.

Then she left me to rest.

But as I lay there in the darkness, a thought came to me, which seemed

to light up the dark wilderness of my life,—as though a lamp had been suddenly flashed into a hidden chamber.

What if it be just so with God?

And it seemed to me as if He stood there, at the summit of that ladder which Monseigneur Saint Jacob was permitted to behold: and He looked down on me, with a look tenderer and sweeter even than Sybil's; and He held forth His hands to me, as she had done, but in these there were the prints of the cruel nails,—and He said—

"Elaine, I could not spare thee this pain. If I had done, in the end it would have been worse for thee. Look upon My hands and My feet, and see if I spared Myself, and, remembering that this was for thy sake, say whether, if it had been possible, I would not have spared thee!"

I cannot tell whether I was dreaming or awake. But I crept to the foot of the ladder, and I said to Him who stood above it—

"Fair Father, Jesu Christ, I put myself in Thy mercy.[#] I see now that I was foolish and ignorant. It was not that Thou wert cruel. It was not that Thou didst not care. Thou dost care. At every pang that rent my heart, Thine heart was touched too. Forgive me, for Sybil has done, and I have sinned more against Thee than against her. Teach me in future to give up my will, and to wish only to do Thine."

[#] A rebel, who returned to his allegiance unconditionally, was said to "put himself in the King's mercy."

I am afraid it was a very poor prayer. There was no Angelus nor Confiteor—not even an Ave in it. Yet was it all a dream, that a voice said to me, "Thy sins are forgiven thee: go in peace"? And I sank into dreamless sleep the next instant.

It is all settled now. Next week, I shall be professed of Lady Judith's Order,—an Order which will just suit my wants, since the nuns have no abbess over them, are bound only by terminable vows, and (with assent of the community) may dwell where they think fit, even in their own homes if need be.

Lady Judith thinks that she can easily obtain leave for me to dwell with Monseigneur, as she will kindly represent it to the Order that he is now an old man, and has no wife nor unmarried daughter to care for him but me.

I think he is my first duty now. And I know he will be so glad, so glad!

It will be hard to part with Guy and Sybil. But I think that is where the

Lord is leading me,—home to Lusignan; and I do wish to follow His leading, not my own.

Old Marguerite startled me very much last night.

"Damoiselle," she said, "the cross is shining out at last."

"Where, Margot?" said I, rather puzzled.

"Where I have so longed to see it," she said, "on my darling's brow. Ah, the good God has not brought her through the fire for nothing! Where there used to be pride and mirth in her eyes, there is peace. He will let His old servant depart now, for it was all she had to live for."

But I can never, never do without her! Oh, I do hope the good God will not take dear old Marguerite. Why, I am only just beginning to understand and value her. But I think I am learning, very slowly,—Oh, I am so slow and stupid!—that real happiness lies not in having my way, but in being satisfied with His,—not in trying to make myself happy, but in trying to please Him. I am constantly fancying that I have so learned this lesson that I shall never forget it again. And then, within an hour, I find myself acting as though I had never heard of it.

And I see, too, what I never understood before.—that it is only by taking our Lord's yoke upon us, and becoming meek and lowly in heart, that we can find rest to our souls. Eschine's deep humility is the source of her calm endurance. Pride is not peace; it is its antidote. In Christ we have peace,—first through the purchase of His blood, and secondly, in growing like Him, which is, to grow in love and lowliness, and to lose ourselves in Him.

I think I never before saw the loveliness of humility. And I am sure I never saw the fair beauty of Eschine's character and life. Oh, how far she rises above me! And to think that I once looked down upon her—dismissed her with a careless word of scorn, as having "nothing in her"—when the truth was that I was too low down to see her in reality.

Oh, how much the good God has had, and will have, to forgive and bear with me!

I am now only just beginning to understand Him. But that is a lesson which I may go on learning and enjoying for ever. And how happy it will be, if we all gather together in His halls above,—Guy, and Sybil, and me, and old Marguerite, and Lady Judith, and Monseigneur, and Eschine, and the little children, and all,—never again to hear Paynim cry nor woman's wail,—safe for ever, in the banquet-hall of God.

At home again at last!

How strangely glad they all seem to see me! I do not think I ever knew how they all loved me. I have lived for myself, and a little for Guy. Now, with His grace, I fain would live for God, and in Him for every one.

We sat round the centre fire last night in the old hall,—I close to Mon-

seigneur, with his hand upon my shoulder, now and then removed to stroke my hair—and we had all so much to say that it made us very silent. It was Alix who spoke first.

"Elaine," she said, "I want to give a name to my baby girl that shall mean 'truth' or 'fidelity.' And I do not like any of the French names that have those meanings; they are not pretty. Tell me the words for them in the tongue of the Holy Land."

I did not answer that the Court language of Jerusalem was the Langue d'Oc, and that Alix would be no better off for knowing. A rush of feeling came over me, and I let it dictate my reply. And that was only—

"Sybil."

HISTORICAL APPENDIX.

I. GUY DE LUSIGNAN

The history of Guy and Sybil, after the story leaves them, is a sad one. Raymond Count of Tripoli, who had fancied himself sure of the crown matrimonial, never forgave either. He immediately entered into a secret alliance with Saladin, by which he promised to betray Guy into his hands in the next battle. On the fourth of July, 1187, Tripoli, who was standard-bearer, so behaved himself in battle that the King was taken prisoner. Sybil, in conjunction with the Patriarch Heraclius, held Jerusalem until the second of October, when she gave up the city to Saladin on terms including liberty of ransom to all who could afford it. The Queen now retired to Ascalon, within whose fortified walls she and her little daughters remained until 1189, when Guy's ransom was effected on the hard terms that Sybil should capitulate at Ascalon, that Guy should abdicate, and that he should go beyond sea. Guy, who had been kept in chains a whole year at Damascus, consulted the clergy as to the necessity of keeping faith with Saladin. They were all of the Roman, but unscriptural opinion, that no faith need be kept with a Paynim. Instead of abdicating and going abroad, Guy, with Sybil and the children, marched to Acre, which he invested, with a hundred thousand men who had flocked to his

standard. The Queen and Princesses were lodged at Turon, looking towards the sea. In 1190 King Philippe of France arrived before Acre, and on June 10, 1191, King Richard Cœur-de-Lion; and at last, on July 12, Saladin gave up the city to the allied forces. But the pestilence had been very rife during the siege. Baldwin Archbishop of Canterbury, and numbers of French and English nobles, died in the camp: and among others the hero-Queen, Sybil of Anjou, and her two fragile children.

Raymond of Tripoli was dead also. He died in his sleep, unabsolved; and evidence of his having formally apostatized to Mahometanism was found after his death.

After thus taking "last leave of all he loved," Guy—brave, rash, impetuous Guy—appears to have become almost reckless. Of course, by right, Sybil was succeeded by her sister Isabel; but Guy still clung to his title of King, and the privileges appurtenant to it, and disputed with Conrado of Monferrato, the husband of Isabel, the right to the customs of the port of Acre. Conrado was an extremely quarrelsome man, and Guy's opposition seems to have been personally directed to him; for on his death (which of course Guy and Cœur-de-Lion were accused of forwarding) Guy readily acknowledged Isabel and her third husband, on condition of receiving the island of Cyprus as compensation for all his claims. King Richard had sold Cyprus to the Templars, but he coolly took it from them, and gave it to Guy, who, being apparently more honest of the two, paid a hundred thousand crowns to the Templars as compensation. This is the last that we hear of Guy de Lusignan, except the mere date of his death, which occurred, according to different authorities, from one to four years after the cession of Cyprus.

Few historical characters have had less justice done them by modern writers, than Guy de Lusignan and Sybil his wife. In the first place, Guy is accused of having, in 1167-8, assassinated Patrick Earl of Salisbury, in returning from a pilgrimage to Saint Iago de Compostella. King Henry II., we are told, was greatly enraged, and banished Guy from Poitou, whereupon he assumed the cross, and set out for the Holy Land. Now the truth is that in 1167-8, it is scarcely possible that Guy could be above ten years old. Either it was another Guy de Lusignan, or the outrage was committed by persons of whom the child Guy was the nominal head. But all the circumstances tend to show that Guy's arrival in the Holy Land was little, if at all, before 1180, and that at that time he was a very young man.

We next find Guy accused of such boundless ambition, that he not only induced King Baldwin IV. to put all the affairs of the kingdom into his hands, but even to promise him the succession after his death. But when Baldwin had bestowed upon Guy his sister and heir presumptive, Sybil, how could he either promise him the succession or lawfully deprive him of it? The reversion of the crown was hers. Baldwin did her a cruel injustice, and committed an illegal act,

when he passed her over, and abdicated in favour of her infant son.

Then, on the death of Baldwin V., we are actually told that Sybil, urged by her ambitious husband, *usurped* the crown. Usurped it from whom? Surely not from her own daughters!—surely not from her younger sister! Matthew of Westminster distinctly remarks that "there was none to succeed but his mother Sybilla." Sybil merely took back her own property, of which she had been unjustly deprived.

Again, with respect to her action at her coronation, poor Sybil comes in again for her share of blame. She had no business, we are assured, to choose Guy, who had already proved himself an unsatisfactory governor; and in the interest of the kingdom, she ought to have married some one else. In other words, she ought to have committed sin in the interest of her subjects!

Lastly, a wholesale charge of poisoning is brought against both Guy and Sybil. Probabilities are thrown overboard. They are accused of poisoning young Baldwin V.; and Guy is charged with the murder of his wife and children, though their death entirely destroyed his claim to the royal title. The truth is, that in the twelfth century, any death not easily to be accounted for was always set down to poison: and the nearest relatives, totally irrespective of character, were always suspected of having administered it. Men of Guy's disposition,—impulsive, rash, and generous even to a fault, loving and self-sacrificing,—are not usually in the habit of murdering those they love best: and considered merely from a political point of view, the simultaneous deaths of Sybil and her children were the worst calamities which could have fallen upon Guy.

II. THE ROYAL FAMILY OF JERUSALEM.

Melisende, Queen of Jerusalem, eldest of the four daughters of Baldwin II., and Morsise of Armenia, *succeeded* her father in 1131, and *died in* 1141 or 1144. She *married*—

Foulques V., Count of Anjou; *married* 1128; *died* at Acre, by accident, November, 1142. [He had previously been married to Ermengarde of Maine, by whom he had four children,—Geoffrey Plantagenet; Hélie Count of Maine; Sybil, Countess of Flanders; and Alice, Crown Princess of England.]

Issue of Queen Melisende:—

1. Baldwin III, *born* 1129, *died* Feb., 1162, without issue. *Married*—

Theodora Comnena, daughter of Isaac I., Emperor of the East

2. Amaury I., *born* 1132-6; *died* July 11, 1173. *Married*—
(A) Agnes de Courtenay, daughter of Josceline, Count of Edessa: *divorced.*
(B) MARIA COMNENA, daughter or niece of Manuel I., Emperor of the East: living 1190. [Character imaginary.]

Issue of Amaury I. By Agnes:—

1. BALDWIN IV., the Leper; *born* 1158; *abdicated* 1183; *d.* March 16, 1185. Never married.
2. SYBIL I., *crowned* Sept., 1186; *died* at Acre, during the siege, 1190. [Character historical] *Married*—

(A) Guglielmo, Marquis of Monferrato: *died* 1180.

(B) GUY DE LUSIGNAN: *mar.* 1183; *died* September (Fabyan) 1193 (ib.) 1194 (Moreri, Woodward and Coates Chron. Cycl.) 1195 (Roger de Hoveden) 1196 (Anderson). [Character historical]

By Maria:—

3. ISABEL I. [Character historical] *Married*—
(A) HOMFROY DE TOURS: *mar. circ.* 1183; *divorced* 1190; *died* 1199. [The legality of the divorce was very doubtful, and caused many subsequent counter-claims to the throne.]
(B) Conrado, Marquis of Monferrato, Count of Tyre: *mar.* 1190; *assassinated* at Tyre, Apr. 27, 1192.
(C) Henri, Count of Champagne: *mar.* 1193, *died* at Acre, by accident, 1196-7.
(D) AMAURY DE LUSIGNAN, brother of Guy: *mar.* 1197, *d.* 1205. [Character imaginary.]

Issue of Sybil I. By Guglielmo:—

1. BALDWIN V., *born* 1180, *crowned* Nov. 20, 1183; *died* at Acre, 1186. [Character imaginary.]

By Guy:—

2, 3. DAUGHTERS, died with mother, during siege of Acre, 1190. [Some writers ascribe four daughters to Sybil.]

Issue of Isabel I. By Conrado:—

1. Marie, or Violante, I. Married—
Jean de Brienne, third son of Erard II. Count of Brienne, and Agnes de Montbeliard; Emperor of the East, 1233; *died* Mar. 21, 1237.

By Henri:—

2. Alix I., *died cir.* 1246. Married—
(A) HUGUES DE LUSIGNAN, son of Amaury de Lusignan and Eschine d'Ibellin: *died* 1219.

(B) Bohemond IV., Prince of Antioch: *divorced.*

(C) Raoul, Count of Soissons: *died circ.* 1246.

3. Philippa, *mar.* 1214, Erard de Brienne, Lord of Rameru; living 1247.

By Amaury:—

4. Sybil, *mar.* Leon I., King of Armenia.
5. Robert, Abbot of St. Michael
6. Amaury, *died* young.

Issue of Marie I.

Violante, *mar.* at Brindisi, 1223-5, Friedrich II., Emperor of Germany: *died* 1228-9.

From this marriage the Emperors of Germany and Austria derive the empty title of Kings of Jerusalem. They have no right to it, since the posterity of Violante became extinct in the second generation. The Kings of Italy, on the contrary,

have a right to the title, being descendants of Anna of Cyprus, the heir general of Alix I.

III. HOUSE OF LUSIGNAN.

It will be perceived from the following table, that in the story, the three Williams, sons of Count Geoffrey, have been made into one; and that the sisters, Alix and Elaine, are fictitious characters.

The House of Lusignan begins about A.D. 900, with Hugues I., surnamed *Le Veneur*. Eighth in descent from him we find—
Hugues VIII., died 1164. *Married*—
Bourgogne, daughter of Geoffroy de Rançon.

Issue:—

1. Hugues IX, *died* 1206. *Married*—
Mahaud, daughter of Wulgrain III., Count of Angoulême.
2. GEOFFROY, COUNT DE LA MARCHE, living 1210. [Character imaginary.] *Married*—

(A) Eustacie de Chabot.

(B) Clémence, daughter of Hugues Viscount de Châtelhérault. [Character imaginary.]

Issue of Hugues IX. and Mahaud:—
Hugues X., le Brun: *killed* at Massoura, 1249. *Married*—
Isabelle, Countess of Angoulême, and widow of John King of England; *mar.* 1217-21; *died* 1246.
[From this marriage sprang the House of Valence, Earls of Pembroke, famous in English history.]

Issue of Count Geoffroy and Eustacie:—

1. GUILLAUME, surnamed *à la grande dent*, *died* issueless before 1250. *Married*—

UMBERGE, daughter of the Viscount de Limoges. [Character imaginary.]
2. GUILLAUME, Lord of Mairevant. *Married*—
[Unknown.]
3. GUILLAUME de Valence, *died* 1170.
4. GUY, Count of Jaffa and Ascalon: *crowned* King of Jerusalem, Sept. 1186; *died Sept.*, 1193-6. [See the previous article.]
5. AMAURY, *died* 1205. *Married*—
(A) ESCHINE, daughter of Beaudouin d'Ibellin, Lord of Rames; *died* 1193. [Character imaginary.]

(B) ISABEL I., Queen of Jerusalem. [See last article.]

6. RAOUL d'Issoudun, *d.* 1218-9. *Married*, before Aug. 31, 1199.
Alice, Countess of Eu: living Sept. 19, 1119.

Issue of Guillaume Lord of Mairevant:—

1. VALENCE, *mar.* Hugues, Lord of Parthenay.
2. Elise, or Aline, *mar.* Bartholomé, Lord de La Haye.

Issue of Amaury and Eschine:—

1. GUY, *died* young.
2. Jean, *died* young.
3. HUGUES, *died* 1219. *Married*—
Alix I., Queen of Jerusalem. [See last article]
4. Bourgogne, *mar.* Gaultier de Montbelliard.
5. HÉLOÏSE, *mar.* (1) Eudes de Dampierre; (2) Rupin, Prince of Antioch.
[For issue of Amaury and Queen Isabel, see last article.]

TITLES.

Society was divided in the twelfth century into four ranks only,—nobles, clergy, bourgeoisie, and villeins. Two of these,—nobles and villeins—were kept as distinct as caste ever kept classes in India, though of course with some differences

of detail. All titled persons, knights, and landed proprietors, belonged to the nobility. The clergy were recruited from nobility and bourgeoisie—rarely from the villein class. The bourgeoisie were free men, without land, and usually with some trade or profession; and were despised by the nobles, as men who had lifted themselves above their station, and presumed to vie with their betters. The villeins were always serfs, saleable with the land on which they lived, bound to the service of its owner, disposable at his pleasure, and esteemed by him very little superior to cattle. Education was restricted to clergy and noble women, with a few exceptions among the male nobility; but as a rule, a lay gentleman who could read a book, or write anything beyond his signature, was rarely to be seen.

No kind of title was bestowed in addressing any but nobles and clergy. The bourgeois was merely Richard Haberdasher, John the Clerk, or William by the Brook—(whence come Clark and Brook as surnames)—the villein was barely Hodge or Robin, without any further designation unless necessary, when the master's name was added. Such a term as Ralph Walter-Servant (namely, Ralph, servant of Walter) is not uncommon on mediæval rolls.

The clergy, as is still the case in Romish countries, were addressed as Father; and those who had not graduated at the Universities were termed Sir, with the surname—"Sir Green," or "Sir Dickson." It is doubtful, however, whether this last item stretches so far back as the twelfth century. "Dan," the epithet of Chaucer, certainly does not.

The names bestowed on the nobles consisted of three for the men, and two for the women. (French, it must be remembered, was the language of England as well as of France at this time. Only villeins spoke English.) The lowest epithet was "Sieur" (gentleman), which was applied to untitled landed proprietors. The next, "Sire" or "Messire" (Sir) was the title of the knights; and the King was addressed as Sire only because he was the chief knight in the realm. The highest, "Seigneur" (Lord) was applied to royalty, peers, and all nobles in authority, especially those possessing territorial power. The ladies, married and single, were addressed as "Dame" and "Damoiselle." The English version of the last title, damsel, was used of the young nobility of both sexes.

Among themselves, nobles addressed their relatives by the title of relationship, with the epithet "bel" prefixed—which, when English began to be spoken by the higher classes, was translated "fair." "Fair Father," "Fair Brother," sound very odd to modern ears: but for centuries they were the usual appellations in a noble family, both in England and in France. They were not, however, used between husband and wife, who always ceremoniously termed each other Monseigneur and Madame.

It was only natural—and is what we ourselves do to this day—that our ancestors should address God in prayer by those terms which in their eyes were the

highest titles of honour. In this light, though "Majesty" is peculiar to Spain, yet "Seigneur," "Messire," and "Bel Père," obtained currency in most civilised countries. The first we have retained: and though we have degraded "Lord" into the title of our lesser nobility, we still use it as the special epithet of Deity. It is only custom which has made the other names sound strange to our ears. We no longer prefix "fair" to "Father" when we address the human relative; and it has also become unusual to transfer it to the divine Father. "Sir God" would shock us. But in our ancestors' eyes it was the most reverent and honourable of all titles, which was the reason why they chose it. Even so late as the fifteenth century, the Maid of Orleans never spoke of God by any other term than "Messire."

THE END

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