

For the Faith eBook

For the Faith

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Contents

For the Faith eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	8
Page 1.....	9
Page 2.....	11
Page 3.....	12
Page 4.....	13
Page 5.....	14
Page 6.....	16
Page 7.....	17
Page 8.....	19
Page 9.....	21
Page 10.....	23
Page 11.....	25
Page 12.....	27
Page 13.....	29
Page 14.....	31
Page 15.....	32
Page 16.....	34
Page 17.....	36
Page 18.....	37
Page 19.....	39
Page 20.....	41
Page 21.....	42
Page 22.....	44



[Page 23..... 46](#)

[Page 24..... 48](#)

[Page 25..... 49](#)

[Page 26..... 51](#)

[Page 27..... 52](#)

[Page 28..... 54](#)

[Page 29..... 56](#)

[Page 30..... 58](#)

[Page 31..... 60](#)

[Page 32..... 62](#)

[Page 33..... 63](#)

[Page 34..... 64](#)

[Page 35..... 66](#)

[Page 36..... 68](#)

[Page 37..... 70](#)

[Page 38..... 72](#)

[Page 39..... 74](#)

[Page 40..... 75](#)

[Page 41..... 77](#)

[Page 42..... 78](#)

[Page 43..... 80](#)

[Page 44..... 81](#)

[Page 45..... 82](#)

[Page 46..... 84](#)

[Page 47..... 86](#)

[Page 48..... 88](#)



[Page 49..... 90](#)

[Page 50..... 92](#)

[Page 51..... 94](#)

[Page 52..... 96](#)

[Page 53..... 98](#)

[Page 54..... 100](#)

[Page 55..... 101](#)

[Page 56..... 102](#)

[Page 57..... 104](#)

[Page 58..... 106](#)

[Page 59..... 107](#)

[Page 60..... 108](#)

[Page 61..... 110](#)

[Page 62..... 112](#)

[Page 63..... 113](#)

[Page 64..... 115](#)

[Page 65..... 117](#)

[Page 66..... 119](#)

[Page 67..... 121](#)

[Page 68..... 123](#)

[Page 69..... 125](#)

[Page 70..... 126](#)

[Page 71..... 128](#)

[Page 72..... 130](#)

[Page 73..... 131](#)

[Page 74..... 133](#)



[Page 75..... 135](#)

[Page 76..... 137](#)

[Page 77..... 139](#)

[Page 78..... 140](#)

[Page 79..... 141](#)

[Page 80..... 143](#)

[Page 81..... 144](#)

[Page 82..... 146](#)

[Page 83..... 148](#)

[Page 84..... 150](#)

[Page 85..... 152](#)

[Page 86..... 154](#)

[Page 87..... 156](#)

[Page 88..... 157](#)

[Page 89..... 158](#)

[Page 90..... 160](#)

[Page 91..... 162](#)

[Page 92..... 163](#)

[Page 93..... 165](#)

[Page 94..... 167](#)

[Page 95..... 168](#)

[Page 96..... 169](#)

[Page 97..... 171](#)

[Page 98..... 173](#)

[Page 99..... 175](#)

[Page 100..... 177](#)



[Page 101..... 178](#)

[Page 102..... 179](#)

[Page 103..... 181](#)

[Page 104..... 183](#)

[Page 105..... 184](#)

[Page 106..... 185](#)

[Page 107..... 187](#)

[Page 108..... 189](#)

[Page 109..... 191](#)

[Page 110..... 193](#)

[Page 111..... 194](#)

[Page 112..... 195](#)

[Page 113..... 197](#)

[Page 114..... 199](#)

[Page 115..... 201](#)

[Page 116..... 203](#)

[Page 117..... 205](#)

[Page 118..... 207](#)

[Page 119..... 209](#)

[Page 120..... 211](#)

[Page 121..... 213](#)

[Page 122..... 215](#)

[Page 123..... 217](#)

[Page 124..... 219](#)

[Page 125..... 221](#)

[Page 126..... 223](#)



[Page 127..... 225](#)
[Page 128..... 227](#)
[Page 129..... 229](#)
[Page 130..... 231](#)
[Page 131..... 233](#)
[Page 132..... 235](#)
[Page 133..... 237](#)
[Page 134..... 239](#)
[Page 135..... 241](#)
[Page 136..... 243](#)
[Page 137..... 245](#)
[Page 138..... 247](#)
[Page 139..... 248](#)
[Page 140..... 249](#)
[Page 141..... 251](#)
[Page 142..... 252](#)
[Page 143..... 254](#)



Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
Note		1
Chapter I: The House by the Bridge		1
Chapter II: "Christian Brothers"		9
Chapter III: A Neophyte		16
Chapter IV: "Merrie May Day"		23
Chapter V: Sweet Summertime		31
Chapter VI: For Love and the Faith		38
Chapter VII: In Peril		46
Chapter VIII: The Fugitive		53
Chapter IX: A Steadfast Spirit		61
Chapter X: A Startling Apparition		69
Chapter XI: Evil Tidings		76
Chapter XII: "Brought Before Governors"		84
Chapter XIII: In Prison		92
Chapter XIV: The Power Of Persuasion		99
Chapter XV: The Fire At Carfax		107
Chapter XVI: "Reconciled"		115
Chapter XVII: The Clemency Of The Cardinal		122
Chapter XVIII: The Release		131
Notes		137
		137
		138
Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg-tm		142
		142

Page 1

Note

The story of these young pioneers of reformation in Oxford has been told by many historians. But there are slight discrepancies in the various accounts, and it is not quite clear who were the small minority who refused the offered reconciliation, and stood firm to the last. But there is no doubt that John Clarke, Henry Sumner, and one other, whose name varies in the different accounts, died from the effects of harsh imprisonment, unabsolved, and unreconciled to the offended church, and that Clarke would probably have perished at the stake had death not taken him from the hands of his persecutors.

There is equally no doubt that Dalaber, Ferrar, Garret, and many others “recanted,” as it was called, and took part in the burning of books at Carfax. But these men must not be too hastily condemned as cowards and renegades. Garret, Ferrar, and several others died for their faith in subsequent persecutions, whilst others rose to eminence in the church, which was soon to be reformed and purified of many of the errors against which these young men had protested. It is probable, therefore, that they were persuaded by gentle arguments to this act of submission. They were not in revolt against their faith or the church, but only eager for greater liberty of thought and judgment. Kindly persuasion and skilful argument would have great effect, and the sense of isolation and loss incurred by sentence of excommunication was such as to cause acute suffering to the devout. There is no doubt that Wolsey won over Thomas Garret by kindness, and not by threats or penalties; and it is to his honour, and to that of the authorities of Oxford, that, after the first panic, they were wishful to treat the culprits with gentleness, save those few who remained obstinate. And even these were later on given back to their friends, although, as it turned out; it was only to die.

Chapter I: The House by the Bridge

“Holy Church has never forbidden it,” said John Clarke, with a very intent look upon his thoughtful, scholar’s face.

A young man who stood with his elbow on the mantelshelf, his eye fixed eagerly on the speaker’s face, here broke in with a quick impetuosity of manner, which seemed in keeping with his restless, mobile features, his flashing dark eyes, and the nervous motion of his hands, which were never still long together.

“How do you mean? Never forbidden it! Why, then, is all this coil which has set London aflame and lighted the fires of Paul’s Yard for the destruction of those very books?”

“I did not say that men had never forbidden the reading of the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue by the unlettered. I said that Holy Church herself had never issued such a mandate.”

“Not by her Popes?” questioned the younger man hastily.

Page 2

“A papal bull is not the voice of the Holy Catholic Church,” spoke Clarke, slowly and earnestly. “A Pope is not an apostle; though, as a bishop, and a Bishop of Rome, he must be listened to with all reverence. Apostles are not of man or by man, but sent direct by God. Popes elected by cardinals (and too often amid flagrant abuses) cannot truly be said to hold apostolic office direct from the Lord. No, I cannot see that point as others do. But let that pass. What I do maintain, and will hold to with certainty, is that in this land the Catholic Church has never forbidden men to read the Scriptures for themselves in any tongue that pleases them. I have searched statutes and records without end, and held disputations with many learned men, and never have I been proven to be in the wrong.”

“I trow you are right there, John Clarke,” spoke a deep voice from out the shadows of the room at the far end, away from the long, mullioned window. “I have ever maintained that our Mother the Holy Church is a far more merciful and gentle and tolerant mother than those who seek to uphold her authority, and who use her name as a cloak for much maliciousness and much ignorance.”

Clarke turned swiftly upon the speaker, whose white head could be plainly distinguished in the shadows of the panelled room. The features, too, being finely cut, and of a clear, pallid tint, stood out against the dark leather of the chair in which the speaker sat. He was habited, although in his own house, in the academic gown to which his long residence in Oxford had accustomed him. But it was as a Doctor of the Faculty of Medicine that he had distinguished himself; and although of late years he had done little in practising amongst the sick, and spent his time mainly in the study of his beloved Greek authors, yet his skill as a physician was held in high repute, and there were many among the heads of colleges who, when illness threatened them, invariably besought the help of Dr. Langton in preference to that of any other leech in the place. Moreover, there were many poor scholars and students, as well as indigent townfolk, who had good cause to bless his name; whilst the faces of his two beautiful daughters were well known in many a crowded lane and alley of the city, and they often went by the sobriquet of “The two saints of Oxford.”

This was in part, perhaps, due to their names. They were twin girls, the only children of Dr. Langton, whose wife had died within a year of their birth. He had called the one Frideswyde, after the patron saint of Oxford, at whose shrine so many reputed miracles had been wrought; and the other he named Magdalen, possibly because he had been married in the church of St. Mary Magdalen, just without the North Gate.

Page 3

To their friends the twin sisters were known as Freda and Magda, and they lived with their father in a quaint riverside house by Miltham Bridge, where it crossed the Cherwell. This house was a fragment of some ecclesiastical building now no longer in existence, and although not extensive, was ample enough for the needs of a small household, whilst the old garden and fish ponds, the nut walk and sunny green lawn with its ancient sundial, were a constant delight to the two girls, who were proud of the flowers they could grow through the summer months, and were wont to declare that their roses and lilies were the finest that could be seen in all the neighbourhood of Oxford.

The room in which the little company was gathered together this clear, bright April evening was the fragment of the old refectory, and its groined and vaulted roof was beautifully traced, whilst the long, mullioned window, on the wide cushioned seat on which the sisters sat with arms entwined, listening breathlessly to the talk of their elders, looked southward and westward over green meadowlands and gleaming water channels to the low hills and woodlands beyond.

Oxford in the sixteenth century was a notoriously unhealthy place, swept by constant pestilences, which militated greatly against its growth as a university; but no one could deny the peculiar charm of its situation during the summer months, set in a zone of verdure, amid waterways fringed with alder and willow, and gemmed by water plants and masses of fritillary.

Besides the two sisters, their learned father, and the two young men in the garb of students who had already spoken, there was a third youth present, who looked slightly younger than the dark faced, impetuous Anthony Dalaber, and he sat on the window seat beside the daughters of the house, with the look of one who has the right to claim intimacy. As a matter of fact, Hugh Fitzjames was the cousin of these girls, and for many years had been a member of Dr. Langton's household. Now he was living at St. Alban Hall, and Dalaber was his most intimate friend and comrade, sharing the same double chamber with him. It was this intimacy which had first brought Anthony Dalaber to the Bridge House; and having once come, he came again and yet again, till he was regarded in the light of a friend and comrade.

There was a very strong tie asserting itself amongst certain men of varying ages and academic rank at Oxford at this time. Certain publications of Martin Luther had found their way into the country, despite the efforts of those in authority to check their introduction and circulation. And with these books came also portions of the Scriptures translated into English, which were as eagerly bought and perused by vast numbers of persons.

Page 4

Martin Luther was no timid writer. He denounced the corruptions he had noted in the existing ordinances of the church with no uncertain note. He exposed the abuses of pardons, pilgrimages, and indulgences in language so scathing that it set on fire the hearts of his readers. It seemed to show beyond dispute that in the prevailing corruption, which had gradually sapped so much of the true life and light from the Church Catholic, money was the ruling power. Money could purchase masses to win souls from purgatory; money could buy indulgences for sins committed; money could even place unfit men of loose life in high ecclesiastical places. Money was what the great ones of the church sought—money, not holiness, not righteousness, not purity.

This was the teaching of Martin Luther; and many of those who read had no means of knowing wherein he went too far, wherein he did injustice to the leaven of righteousness still at work in the midst of so much corruption, or to the holy lives of hundreds and thousands of those he unsparingly condemned, who deplored the corruption which prevailed only less earnestly than he did himself. It was small wonder, then, that those in authority in this and other lands sought by every means in their power to put down the circulation of books which might have such mischievous results. And as one of Martin Luther's main arguments was that if men only read and studied the Scriptures for themselves in their own mother tongue, whatever that tongue might be, they would have power to judge for themselves how far the practice of the church differed from apostolic precept and from the teachings of Christ, it was thought equally advisable to keep out of the hands of the people the translated Scriptures, which might produce such heterodox changes in their minds; and all efforts were made in many quarters to stamp out the spreading flames of heresy in the land.

Above all things, it was hoped that the leaven of these new and dangerous opinions would not penetrate to the twin seats of learning, the sister universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

Cardinal Wolsey had of late years been busy and enthusiastic over his munificent gift of a new and larger college to Oxford than any it had possessed before. To be sure, he did not find all the funds for it out of his private purse. He swept away the small priory of St. Frideswyde, finding homes for the prior and few monks, and confiscating the revenues to his scheme; and other small religious communities were treated in like manner, in order to contribute to the expenses of the great undertaking. Now a fair building stood upon the ancient site of the priory; and two years before, the first canons of Cardinal College (as Christ Church used to be called) were brought thither, and established in their new and most commodious quarters. And amongst the first of these so-called Canons or Senior Fellows of the Foundation was Master John Clarke, a Master of Arts at Cambridge,

Page 5

who was also a student of divinity, and qualifying for the priesthood. Wolsey had made a selection of eight Cambridge students, of good repute for both learning and good conduct, and had brought them to Oxford to number amongst his senior fellows or canons; and so it had come about that Clarke and several intimate associates of his had been translated from Cambridge to Oxford, and were receiving the allowance and benefits which accrued to all who were elected to the fellowships of Cardinal College.

But though Wolsey had made all due inquiries as to the scholarship and purity of life and conduct of those graduates selected for the honour done them, he had shown himself somewhat careless perhaps in the matter of their orthodoxy, or else he had taken it too much for granted. For so it was that of the eight Cambridge men thus removed to Oxford, six were distinctly “tainted” by the new opinions so fast gaining ground in the country, and though still deeply attached to the Holy Catholic Church, were beginning to revolt against many of the abuses of the Papacy which had grown up within that church, and were doing much to weaken her authority and bring her into disrepute with thinking laymen—if not, indeed, with her own more independent-minded priests.

John Clarke was a leading spirit amongst his fellows at Cardinal College, as he had been at Cambridge amongst the graduates there. It was not that he sought popularity, or made efforts to sway the minds of those about him, but there was something in the personality of the man which seemed magnetic in its properties; and as a Regent Master in Arts, his lectures had attracted large numbers of students, and whenever he had disputed in the schools, even as quite a young man, there had always been an eager crowd to listen to him.

Last summer an unwonted outbreak of sickness in Oxford had driven many students away from the city to adjacent localities, where they had pursued their studies as best they might; and at Poghley, where some scholars had been staying, John Clarke had both preached and held lectures which attracted much attention, and aroused considerable excitement and speculation.

Dr. Langton had taken his two daughters to Poghley to be out of the area of infection, and there the family had bettered their previous slight acquaintance with Clarke and some of his friends. They had Anthony Dalaber and Hugh Fitzjames in the same house where they were lodging; and Clarke would come and go at will, therein growing in intimacy with the learned physician, who delighted in the deep scholarship and the original habit of thought which distinguished the young man.

“If he live,” he once said to his daughters, after a long evening, in which the two had sat discoursing of men and books and the topics of the day—“if he live, John Clarke will make a mark in the university, if not in the world. I have seldom met a finer intellect,



seldom a man of such singleness of mind and purity of spirit. Small wonder that students flock to his lectures and desire to be taught of him. Heaven protect him from the perils which too often threaten those who think too much for themselves, and who overleap the barriers by which some would fence our souls about. There are dangers as well as prizes for those about whom the world speaks aloud.”

Page 6

Now the students had returned to Oxford, the sickness had abated, and Dr. Langton had brought his daughters back to their beloved home. But the visits of John Clarke still continued to be frequent. It was but a short walk through the meadows from Cardinal College to the Bridge House. On many a pleasant evening, his work being done, the young master would sally forth to see his friends; and one pair of soft eyes had learned to glow and sparkle at sight of him, as his tall, slight figure in its dark gown was to be seen approaching. Magdalen Langton, at least, never wearied of any discussion which might take place in her presence, if John Clarke were one of the disputants.

And, indeed, the beautiful sisters were themselves able to follow, if not to take part in, most of the learned disquisitions which took place at their home. Their father had educated them with the greatest care, consoling himself for the early loss of his wife and the lack of sons by superintending the education of his twin daughters, and instructing them not only in such elementary matters as reading and writing (often thought more than sufficient for a woman's whole stock in trade of learning), but in the higher branches of knowledge—in grammar, mathematics, and astronomy, as well as in the Latin and French languages, and in that favourite study of his, the Greek language, which had fallen so long into disrepute in Oxford, and had only been revived with some difficulty and no small opposition a few years previously.

But just latterly the talk at the Bridge House had concerned itself less with learned matters of Greek and Roman lore, or the problems of the heavenly bodies, than with those more personal and burning questions of the day, which had set so many thinking men to work to inquire of their own consciences how far they could approve the action of church and state in refusing to allow men to think and read for themselves, where their own salvation (as many argued) was at stake.

It was not the first time that a little group of earnest thinkers had been gathered together at Dr. Langton's house. The physician was a person held in high esteem in Oxford. He took no open part now in her counsels, he gave no lectures; he lived the life of a recluse, highly esteemed and respected. He would have been a bold man who would have spoken ill of him or his household, and therefore it seemed to him that he could very well afford to take the risk of receiving young men here, who desired to speak freely amongst themselves and one another in places not so liable to be dominated by listening ears as the rooms of the colleges and halls whence they came.



Page 7

Dr. Langton himself, being a man of liberal views and sound piety, would very gladly have welcomed some reforms within the church, which he, in common with all the early Reformers, loved and venerated far more than modern-day Protestants fully understand. They could not bear the thought that their Holy Mother was to be despoiled, and the Body of Christ rent in pieces amongst them. No; their earnest and ardent wish was that this purging of abuses, this much-needed reformation, should come from within, should be carried out by her own priests, headed up, if possible, by the Pope himself. Such was the dream of many and many a devout and earnest man at this time; and John Clarke's voice always softened with a tender reverence as he spoke of the Holy Catholic Church.

So now his eyes lighted with a quick, responsive fire, as he turned them upon his host.

"That is just what I am ever striving to maintain—that it is not the church which is in fault, but those who use her name to enforce edicts which she knows nothing of. 'Search the scriptures, for in them ye have life,' spoke our Lord. 'Blessed is he that readeth the words of the prophecy of this book,' wrote St. John in the latter days. All men know that the Word of God is a lamp to the feet and a light to the path. How shall we walk without that light to guide us?"

"The church gives us the light," spoke Hugh Fitzjames softly.

Clarke turned upon him with a brilliant smile.

"She does, she does. She provides in her services that we shall be enlightened by that light, that we shall be instructed and fed. We have little or nothing to complain of in that respect. But there are others—hundreds and thousands—who cannot share our privileges, who do not understand the words they hear when they are able to come to public worship. What is to be done for such? Are their needs sufficiently considered? Who feeds those sheep and lambs who have gone astray, or who are not able to approach to the shepherd daily to be fed?"

"Many of such could not read the Scriptures, even were they placed in their hands," remarked Fitzjames.

"True; and many might read them with blinded eyes, and interpret them in ignorant fashion, and so the truth might become perverted. Those are dangers which the church has seen, and has striven against. I will not say that the danger may not be great. Holy things are sometimes defiled by becoming too common. But has the peril become so great that men are forced to use such methods as those which London is shortly to witness?"

There was a glow in Clarke's eyes which the gathering gloom could not hide. Magdalen seemed about to speak, but Dalaber was before her.

“They say that the Tyndale translations are full of glaring errors, and errors which feed the heresies of the Lollards, and are directed against the Holy Church.”

Page 8

“That charge is not wholly without foundation,” answered Clarke at once, who as a scholar of the Greek language was well qualified to give an opinion on that point. “And deeply do I grieve that such things should be, for the errors cannot all have been through accident or ignorance, but must have been inserted with a purpose; and I hold that no man is guiltless who dares to tamper with the Word of God, even though he think he may be doing God service thereby. The Holy Spirit who inspired the sacred writers may be trusted so to direct men’s hearts and spirits that they may read aright what He has written; and it is folly and presumption to think that man may improve upon the Word of God.”

“But there are errors in all versions of the Scriptures, are there not—in all translations from the original tongue?”

Magdalen was now the speaker, and she looked earnestly at Clarke, as though his words were words of the deepest wisdom, from which there was no appeal.

“Errors in all—yes; but our Latin version is marvellously true to the original, and when Wycliffe translated into English he was far more correct than Tyndale has been. But it is the Tyndale Testaments which have had so wide a sale of late in this country, and which have set London in commotion—these and the writings of Martin Luther, which the men from the Stillyard have brought up the river in great quantities. But be the errors never so great, I call it a shameful and a sinful thing, one that the Holy Church of olden days would never have sanctioned—that the Word of God should be publicly burnt, as an unholy and polluted thing, in presence of the highest ecclesiastics of the land. In truth, I hold it a crime and a sin. I would that such a scene might even now be averted.”

“I should well like to see it!” spoke Dalaber, with that eager impetuosity which characterized his movements. “I hate the thing myself, yet I would fain see it, too. It would be something to remember, something to speak of in future days, when, perchance, the folly of it will be made manifest.

“Clarke, let us to London tomorrow! Easter is nigh at hand, and your lectures have ceased for the present. Come with me, and let us see this sight, and bring back word to our friends here how they regard this matter in London. What do you say?”

Clarke’s face was grave and thoughtful.

“I have some thoughts of visiting London myself during the next week, but I had not thought to go to see the burning of books at Paul’s Cross.”

“But that is what I wish to see!” cried Dalaber. “So, whether you accompany me thither or not, at least let us travel to London together, and quickly. It will be a thing to remember in days to come; for verily I believe that the church will awaken soon, and like a giant refreshed with wine will show what is in her, and will gather her children about



her as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and will feed them, and care for them, and be as she has been before to them, and that we shall see an end of the darkness and indifference which has fallen like a pall upon this land.”



Page 9

Clarke rose with a smile, for the twilight was falling, and he spoke his farewells to one after another of the doctor's family.

Magdalen's eyes looked longest into his, as his dwelt with a dreamy softness upon her face.

"Are you really going to London? Will it be safe?"

"As safe as Oxford, sweet mistress. I apprehend no peril either there or here. But at least I am a stranger there, whilst here any man who asks may know the thing I believe. I am not afraid or ashamed to speak the truth I hold."

Clarke and Dalaber went out together, and Magdalen turned anxiously upon her father.

"What did he mean?"

Dr. Langton smiled, but he also sighed a little.

"Do not be fearful, my children; we know of no peril in the present. But we may not hide our faces from the fact that in past days this peril has threatened those who dare to speak and think the thing they hold to be truth, when that opinion is not shared by those in high places. Yet let us be thankful in that, for the present time, no peril threatens either John Clarke and his friends or Anthony Dalaber, their pupil."

Chapter II: "Christian Brothers"

"Freda, I am going to London with Master Clarke. We start at noon today. We travel by road and river, and hope to accomplish our journey in three days. You will wish me Godspeed ere I go?"

Freda, her hands full of golden king cups, the sunshine of the morning lighting her fair face and deep, dark eyes, turned at the sound of the voice beside her, and met the burning glance of Anthony Dalaber.

"You go to see the burning of the books!" she said, speaking under her breath. "O Anthony, how canst thou?—the Word of God!"

"Better they should burn the insentient books than the men who preach the living Word!" spoke Anthony, suddenly putting out his hands and clasping hers. "Freda, there have been men burnt alive before this for speaking such words as we in Oxford whisper amongst ourselves. If such a fate should befall some of us here—should befall me—wouldst thou grieve for me?"

Her eyes dilated as she gazed at him.



“What are you saying?” she asked slowly. “Is there peril in this journey? Is there peril menacing you here in Oxford?”

“There is ever peril where men dare to think for themselves and to read forbidden books.”

“Master Clarke says they are not forbidden of God or of His Holy Church.”

“That may be so; but they are forbidden by men who speak in the name and power of the church,” answered Anthony, “and with them lies the issue of life and death for so many. Freda, what would you do in my place? Would you forsake these paths which lead to peril, or would you pursue them fearlessly to the end—even, if need be, unto death?”

A sudden, intense light leaped into her eyes. She put forth her hand, which she had withdrawn gently from his ardent clasp, and laid it lightly upon his shoulder.



Page 10

“It is not what I would do, what I would say, Anthony. The charge is given by the Spirit of God: ‘Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.’”

He took her hand and kissed it passionately.

“That crown will I win, my Freda,” he cried, “for I will be faithful unto death!”

There was a curious mingling of tenderness and admiration in the glance she bent upon him. He was a goodly youth to look at, tall and strongly knit in figure, upright as a young spruce fir, with a keen, dark-skinned face, square in outline and with a peculiar mobility of expression. The eyes were black and sparkling, and the thick, short, curling hair was sombre as the raven’s wing. There was no lack of intellect in the face, but the chief characteristic was its eager intensity of ever-changing expression.

The girl facing him was as straight and almost as tall as he, but slender and graceful as a young deer. Her hood had fallen back from her chestnut locks, which glistened in the sunshine like burnished copper. Her eyes were of a curious tawny tint, not unlike the colour of her hair, and her complexion was delicately fair, just tinged with rose colour at the cheeks, but of a creamy pallor elsewhere. Her features were delicate and regular, and she, too, was remarkable for the look of intellect in the broad brow and deep, steadfast eyes.

Their expression at this moment, as they were fixed upon Dalaber, was one which thrilled him to his heart’s core.

He had been filled with a passion of self renunciation inspired by her words. But as he gazed into her eyes, something more personal, more human, sprang up within him. He put his lips once more to the hand he held, and his voice shook as he said:

“Freda, I love thee! I love only thee!”

She did not answer. She did not withdraw her hand. Perhaps she had known this thing before Dalaber spoke the words. She stood before him, looking very earnestly and tenderly into his eyes. It was scarcely the look of a young maiden who is being wooed by the man she loves; and yet there was love in that unfaltering glance, and his heart leapt up as he saw it.

“I ask nothing yet, Freda!” he cried—“at least, I ask only the right to love thee! Let me continue to be thy friend, thy companion, as before. Let me see thee and speak with thee as of old. Be thou my star and my guardian angel. I ask no more. I am but a poor student yet, but I will be more one day. Others have said so beside myself. I will rise to fame and fortune. And thou—if thou dost love me, even a little—thou wilt wait, and see what I can do and dare for thy sweet sake!”

She smiled her full, gracious smile at him, and again laid a hand upon his shoulder.

“Be ever true to thine own noblest self, Anthony Dalaber,” she answered, in her rich, musical tones—“be true to thy conscience and to thy friends. Be steadfast and true; and that not for my sake, but for His in whose holy name we are called, and to whose service we are bound. Be faithful, be true; and whether for life or for death, thy reward will be assured.”

Page 11

He gazed at her with a glow of rapture in his eyes.

“The reward of thy love?” he whispered breathlessly.

“That may well be,” she answered; “but I was not thinking of that. Fix thine eyes rather on that crown of life which shall be given unto those who overcome.”

“I will think of both,” he answered, in an access of enthusiasm, “for God is our Father; He loves us. I fear not to take all good at His hand. Love to Him—love to thee—faithfulness to both. What more can heart of man desire than such an object to strive after?”

His earnestness could not be mistaken. She caught the reflex of his passionate devotion, and thrilled a little beneath his touch. He felt it in a moment, and caught her hands again.

“Give me a word of hope!” he cried. “Ah, my beloved, wilt thou not say that some day thou wilt love me?”

Freda was not one who would dally and trifle with her heart.

“In sooth, methinks I love thee now, Anthony. Nay, hear me a moment longer. I love thee with a strong and sisterly love; but I would know mine own heart better ere I promise more. We will be content with this knowledge for the nonce. I shall watch thee, Anthony; I shall hear of thee; I shall know what thou hast power to do and dare. But now let us say farewell, for I must carry my flowers within doors; and thou—it is time thou wert away. Thou hast a long journey to prepare for.”

And so, with one kiss, gravely given and taken, the lovers parted, and Anthony went on his way as one who treads on air.

Some three days later, with eager eyes and bated breath, Anthony Dalaber was following his friend John Clarke up the landing stairs of a certain wharf in the city of London, and gazing earnestly about him at the narrow, dark street in which he found himself, where the shades of night seemed already to have fallen.

He knew whither they were bound—to the house of a priest, Thomas Garret by name, well known to Clarke, and known by name to Dalaber, too. He was one of the most active of the little band now engaged in the perilous task of receiving and distributing the translated Scriptures and the pamphlets issued by Martin Luther and other reformers. He was an ex-fellow of Magdalen College, now a curate of Allhallows, near Cheapside. Dalaber had often had a wish to see this man, having heard of him in many quarters.

And now they stood knocking at the door of his house, which opened only a few hundred paces from the riverside.



They had to wait some little time; but Clarke was not impatient, though he gave a peculiar knock more than once upon the door. Presently it was opened a very little way, and a voice asked:

“Who are you, and what is your errand?”

“Crede et manducasti [i],” spoke Clarke, in a low voice; and at once the door was opened wider.

He stepped within, and Dalaber followed him. They found themselves in a very narrow entry hall, and could only see in the gloom that a serving man stood before them.

Page 12

“Tell your master that John Clarke from Oxford has come to lodge with him for a few nights, if he can give him house room.”

The man vanished, but almost immediately reappeared and beckoned to them to follow. He took them down some steps, lighting the way by a lantern; and after they had descended some score they reached a door, which he pushed open, revealing a roomy, cellar-like vault, in which some half-dozen men were busily employed; but so scanty was the illumination that Dalaber could not for the moment see upon what task they were bent.

One figure detached itself from the rest and came forward. Dalaber found himself gazing at a small, wiry-looking man in the frock of a priest, whose head was slightly bald in addition to the tonsure, and whose face was thin and lined, as though with vigils and fasting and prayer. It was the face of an ascetic—thin featured and thin lipped, pale almost to cadaverousness, but lighted as though with a fire from within.

The extraordinary power of the shining eyes riveted Dalaber’s gaze from the first moment. Their glance was turned full upon him after the priest had given greeting to Clarke, and the thin, resonant voice asked quickly:

“Whom have you brought? Is he to be trusted?”

“To the death!” answered Dalaber, speaking for himself. “Try me, and you shall see.”

“It is my young friend, Anthony Dalaber,” said Clarke, his hand upon the youth’s shoulder. “He is very earnest in the study of the Scriptures and in the desire for a better state of things within the church. Methinks he is stanch and true, else would I not have brought him. As we journeyed hither I told him of the work of the Association of Christian Brothers, and he would fain share their toil and peril.”

“Is that so?” asked the priest, again shooting a fiery glance towards the young student. “Canst thou drink of the cup we may be called upon to drink, and share the fiery baptism with which we may be baptized withal?”

And Dalaber, his quick enthusiasm kindling to the spark which seemed to leap towards him from the other, answered without a moment’s pause of hesitation, “I can.”

Then Garret stretched forth his hand and took that of Dalaber in the clasp of brotherhood, and Anthony felt the magnetic thrill tingling through his whole frame.

“God be with you, my son, and keep you steadfast,” said he; and the other men, who had left their tasks and come forward to greet Clarke and his companion, murmured a deep “amen.”



Then all turned to the work in hand; and Dalaber saw that they were engaged in hiding beneath the flagstones of the cellar, which had carefully been removed for the purpose, a number of bales and packets, whose contents could easily be guessed at. The earth from beneath the stones had been hollowed out so as to receive these packets in a number of deep cavities; and when the flags were carefully replaced, and a little dirt and dust carefully sifted over the floor, it would require a practised eye to discern the hiding place. And hitherto it had passed undetected.

Page 13

“We are hiding a number of books belonging to various brethren and confederates,” spoke Garret, as the task went on. “By a providential warning our brother, Dr. Barnes, received timely notice of visitation at his house, and the books were hurriedly carried hither in the dead of night. You have heard, perhaps, of his arrest?”

“No,” answered Clarke; “we have but just arrived, and the last fifteen miles we came by water in a wherry. The man knew naught of the talk of the town, save that a great burning of books is to take place on the morrow at Paul’s Cross.”

“Ay,” spoke Garret, with a grim compression of the lips, “a mighty burning of forbidden books will take place there. But mark, my friends; had those books yonder been found in Dr. Barnes’s house, not books alone but the man himself would have been burnt upon the morrow. The cardinal plainly told him so; and as it is, he has signed a paper which they call a recantation of heresy. Let us not judge him harshly. His friends pleaded, and his foes threatened, and the flesh shrinks from the fiery trial. He will read this confession or recantation tomorrow at St. Paul’s, and help to fling the precious books upon the devouring flames.

“Ah me! Let us not judge him! Judge nothing before the time, till the Lord come. Oh, would that Ho would come Himself, to bring to an end this dark night of persecution and terror, and take the kingdom and the power and reign!”

And again the voices of the brethren answered, “Amen!”

“Are there any others who take part in this strange pageant on the morrow?” asked Clarke, after a brief pause.

“Yes; five honest fellows from the Stillyard, who have been detected in bringing books up the river and landing them. They are condemned to appear tomorrow, and to assist in the holocaust with their own hands. Being humbler men, they are dealt with more lightly; and men all agree in this, that the cardinal would rather persuade men to escape, and make the way easy for them to abjure what he calls their errors, than drag them to the stake. But he will not shrink from that last step, if he think the welfare of the church demands it; and there are others who bear a yet more cruel hatred towards all who would be free from the shackles of falsehood and superstition. And much power belongs to them. God alone knows what is coming upon this realm.”

“But God does know; let that be enough!” spoke Clarke, with the quick lighting of his clear blue eyes which gave him such power over his hearers.

He and Garret were men of markedly contrasted types—the one all fire, restlessness, energy; the other calm, contemplative, intensely spiritual. Both were alike filled with a deep faith, a deep zeal; one the man of action, the other the man of meditation and



devotion—yet deeply attached one to the other, as could be seen by the way they looked and spoke.

“Ay, verily, let that be enough; let us remember that the day must come that He who will come shall come, and shall not tarry. Let Him judge; let Him make inquisition for blood. Let our care be that we who are called and vowed to His service are found not called alone, but chosen and found faithful.”

Page 14

The brethren, having finished their work, and replaced the flagstones, spoke farewell, and departed one by one; but Clarke and Dalaber remained with their host, and one man besides, whose face was known to Anthony, and who also came from Oxford.

He was another of the cardinal's canons who had come from Cambridge with Clarke, and his name was Henry Sumner. Evidently he too was of the band of Christian Brothers; and in the long and earnest talk which lasted far into the night, and to which Dalaber listened with the keenest interest, he bore a share, although the chief speaker was Garret, upon whose lips Dalaber hung with wrapt attention, whilst Clarke's words fell softly like distilled dew, calming the heart, and uplifting the spirit into heavenly regions of light and peace.

Anthony Dalaber was the only one in that house who desired to behold the spectacle upon the morrow. Garret's brow was dark, and he spoke of passing the hours in fasting and prayer. Clarke had friends he wished to visit in the city; but Dalaber's curiosity burnt within him, and none dissuaded him from his plan. Indeed, it was thought a pious act by the authorities to witness such a scene, and might have been in one way advantageous to the young Oxford graduate to be seen at such an exhibition, if any chanced to observe him there. Not that Dalaber thought of this himself, but the elder men did; and though they would not have sought to win favour by such an act themselves, they were not sorry for a young confederate to take advantage of the possibility of notice from those in authority. It was wonderful how Argus-eyed and how long of arm were the emissaries of the orthodox party in the church in those times.

It seemed to Anthony himself as though all London were astir, and moving towards old St. Paul's, as he threaded the narrow streets towards the stately edifice. Although it wanted half an hour or more to the time when the ceremony should commence—eight o'clock in the morning the open place around the cathedral was packed when Dalaber reached it, and only by the good nature of a citizen, who took him into his house and let him view the scene from a window, was he able to see what passed.

A high platform was erected by the great western doors of "Paul's Walk" (some authorities say just within, and some just without the building), where the cardinal's throne, draped with purple, had been set, as well as seats for a great concourse of ecclesiastics beside. Opposite this platform was another and far humbler erection, evidently for the penitents; whilst over the north door, the Rood of the Northern, as it was called, a great gilt crucifix had been set up; and within the rails surrounding it burnt a fire, round which fagots were set, and great baskets containing the forbidden books, which were presently to be solemnly burnt.



Page 15

As the great clock boomed out the hour of eight, two processions simultaneously approached the platform. One swept out through the cathedral doors in all the pomp of power and majesty, the cardinal in scarlet robes, blazing with gems and gold, attended by innumerable dignitaries—abbots and priors, bishops, deans, doctors, and lesser clergy, shining in damask and satin, a right goodly company. For a while all eyes were so fixed upon this glittering array that there was scarce time to note the humble six, in their penitential robes, bare-footed, and carrying tapers, who appeared, attended by their jailers from the Fleet Prison, and were set upon the opposite platform, full in view of all.

It was not Cardinal Wolsey, but Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, who delivered to them a fiery oration, descanting to them on the enormity of their offences, and calling upon them to abjure their hateful heresy. His ringing voice carried all over the open space, though Anthony Dalaber could only catch an occasional phrase here and there, which perhaps was as well. But the reply, if reply there were, from the penitents was quite inaudible, though Dr. Barnes was believed to have spoken a solemn recantation in the name of the six, and to declare that they only met the due reward of their sins.

Then came the final ceremony, the pacing round and round the fire, the casting into the flames, first the fagots, and then the books put ready for the burning. The people held their breath whilst this was being done; but had observant eyes been fixed upon many of the faces of the crowd, they would have seen looks of fierce hatred directed towards the spot where the powerful cardinal sat aloft, whilst eager hands seemed oftentimes to be stretched out as though to clutch at the precious books, now being ruthlessly consigned to the flames.

At last Anthony Dalaber could stand it no longer. Hastily thanking the honest citizen for the “goodly show” he had permitted him to witness, he slipped down into the street, and pushed his way through the throng anywhere, out of sight of the odious pageant of intolerance and bigotry which he had been witnessing.

“Had it been Luther’s books only, I could have stood it. He is a man, and though a champion for truth, he may err, he does err. And he speaks wild words which he contradicts himself. But the Word of God! Oh, that is too much! To take it out of the hands of the poor and needy, who hunger to be fed, and to cast it to be burnt like the dung of the earth! Surely God will look down! Surely He will punish! Oh, if I had wanted argument and reason for the step I will take in the future, yonder spectacle would have been enough!”

For many hours he wandered through the streets and lanes of the city, so intent on his own thoughts that he scarce noted the buildings and fine sights he passed by. But his feet brought him back to the spot of the morning’s pageant, and towards evening he found himself looking upon the ashes of what had been the books brought with so much

risk by the Hanse merchants and the Stillyard men, and so eagerly desired by the poorer people of the city.



Page 16

All the platforms had been removed. The crucifix no longer glittered overhead, the doors of the cathedral were shut, and none of the pomp of the morning could be seen here now. But several humble persons were raking amid the ashes where the books had been burnt, as though to see whether some poor fragments might not have been left unconsumed; and when they failed to find even this—for others had been before them, and the task of burning had probably been well accomplished—they would put a handful of ashes into some small receptacle, and slip it cautiously into pocket or pouch.

One man, seeing Dalaber's gaze fixed upon him, went up to him almost defiantly and said:

"Are you spying upon us poor citizens, to whom is denied aught but the ashes of the bread of life?"

Dalaber looked him full in the face, and spoke the words he had heard from Clarke's lips the previous evening:

"Crede et manducasti."

Instantly the man's face changed. A light sprang into his eyes. He looked round him cautiously, and said in a whisper:

"You are one of us!"

There was scarce a moment's pause before Dalaber replied:

"I am one of you—in heart and purpose, at least, if not in actual fact."

He paced home through the streets in a tempest of conflicting emotions. But his mind was made up. Come what might—peril, suffering, or death—he had put his hand to the plough. He would not look back.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."

He seemed to walk to the accompaniment of these words; and when he reached Garret's house he went straight to the master, told his story, and knelt suddenly down before him.

"Bless me, even me also, O my father!" he exclaimed, in a burst of emotion to which his temperament made him subject, "for I would now be admitted as member of the Association of Christian Brothers."



Chapter III: A Neophyte

“And the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and he loved him as his own soul.”

These words often came into the mind of the priest, Thomas Garret, during the three days which Anthony Dalaber spent at his house, hard by the rushing river, in the city of London.

There were ten years in age between them. Dalaber was a youth who had seen little of life beyond what he had learned in Oxford, whereas Garret had already passed through strange and perilous experiences. The one had so far lived amongst books, and with youthful companions of his own standing; the other had been a pioneer in one of the most dangerous movements of the day, and had seen what such courses might well lead him to. Storm and stress had been the portion of the one, a pleasant life of study and pleasure that of the other. It was only during the past six months that association with Clarke and some others of his way of thinking had aroused in Dalaber's mind a sense of restless discontent with existing ordinances, and a longing after purer, clearer light, together with a distaste and oftentimes a disgust at what he saw of corruption and simony amongst those who should have been the salt of the earth.



Page 17

Had it not been for the talks he had heard of late, in Dr. Langton's house, he might have passed through his divinity studies at Oxford as his brother had done before him, content to drift with the stream, ignorant of the undercurrents which were already disturbing its apparently tranquil surface, and ready in due course to be consecrated to his office, and to take some benefice if he could get it, and live and die as the average priest of those times did, without troubling himself over the vexed questions of papal encroachment and traffic in pardons and indulgences which were setting Germany in a flame.

But he had been first aroused by seeing the light in Freda's eyes as these questions had been discussed in the hearing of her and her sister. From the first moment of his presentation to Dr. Langton's family Dalaber had been strongly attracted by the beautiful sisters, and especially by Freda, whose quick, responsive eagerness and keen insight and discrimination made a deep impression upon him. The soundness of her learning amazed him at the outset; for her father would turn to her to verify some reference from his costly manuscripts or learned tomes, and he soon saw that Latin and Greek were to her as her mother tongue.

When she did join in the conversation respecting the interpretation or translation of the Holy Scriptures, he had quickly noted that her scholarship was far deeper than his own. He had been moved to a vivid admiration at first, and then to something that was more than admiration. And the birth and growth of his spiritual life he traced directly to those impulses which had been aroused within him as he had heard Freda Langton speak and argue and ask questions.

That was how it had started; but it was Clarke's teaching and preaching which had completed the change in him from the careless to the earnest student of theology. Clarke's spirituality and purity of life, his singleness of aim, his earnest striving after a standard of holiness seldom to be found even amongst those who professed to practise the higher life, aroused the deep admiration of the impulsive and warm-hearted Dalaber. He sought his rooms, he loved to hear his discourses, he called himself his pupil and his son, and was the most regular and enthusiastic attender of his lectures and disputations.

And now he had taken a new and forward step. Suddenly he seemed to have been launched upon a tide with which hitherto he had only dallied and played. He was pushing out his bark into deeper waters, and already felt as though the cables binding him to the shores of safety and ease were completely parted.

It was in part due to the magnetic personality of Garret that this thing had come to pass. When Dalaber left Oxford it was with no idea that it would be a crisis in his life. He wished, out of curiosity, to be present at the strange ceremony to be enacted in St. Paul's Churchyard; and the knowledge that Clarke was going to London for a week on some private business gave the finishing touch to his resolution.

Page 18

But it was not until he sat with Thomas Garret in his dark lodgings, hearing the rush of the river beneath him, looking into the fiery eyes of the priest, and hearing the fiery words which fell from his lips, that Dalaber thoroughly understood to what he had pledged himself when first he had uttered the fateful words, "I will be a member of the Association of Christian Brothers."

True, Clarke had, on their way to town, spoken to him of a little community, pledged to seek to distribute the life-giving Word of God to those who were hungering for it, and to help each in his measure to let the light, now shrouded beneath a mass of observances which had lost their original meaning to the unlettered people, shine out in its primitive brilliance and purity; but Dalaber had only partially understood the significance of all this.

Clarke was the man of thought and devotion. His words uplifted the hearts of his hearers into heavenly places, and seemed to create a new and quickened spirituality within them. Garret was the man of action. He was the true son of Luther. He loved to attack, to upheave, to overthrow. Where Clarke spoke gently and lovingly of the church, as their holy mother, whom they must love and cherish, and seek to plead with as sons, that she might cleanse herself from the defilement into which she had fallen, Garret attacked her as the harlot, the false bride, the scarlet woman seated upon the scarlet beast, and called down upon her and it alike the vials of the wrath of Almighty God.

And the soul of Dalaber was stirred within him as he listened to story after story, all illustrative of the corruption which had crept within the fold of the church, and which was making even holy things abhorrent to the hearts of men. He listened, and his heart was hot as he heard; he caught the fire of Garret's enthusiasm, and would then and there have cast adrift from his former life, thrown over Oxford and his studies there—and flung himself heart and soul into the movement now at work in the great, throbbing city, where, for the first time, he found himself.

But when he spoke words such as these Garret smiled and shook his head, though his eyes lighted with pleasure.

"Nay, my son; be not so hot and hasty. Seest thou not that in this place our work for the time being is well-nigh stopped?"

"Not for long," he added quickly, whilst the spark flew from his eyes—"not for long, mind you, ye proud prelates and cardinal. The fire you have lighted shall blaze in a fashion ye think not of. The Word of God is a consuming fire. The sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, pierces the heart and reins of man; and that sword hath been wrested from the scabbard in which it has rusted so long, and the shining of its fiery blade shall soon be seen of all men.



“No,” added the priest, after a moment’s pause to recover himself and take up the thread of his discourse; “what was done at Paul’s Cross yesterday was but a check upon our work. The last convoy of books has been burnt—all, save the few which we were able to save and to bide beneath the cellar floor. The people have been cowed for a moment, but it will not last. As soon seek to quench a fire by pouring wax and oil upon it!”

Page 19

“You will get more books, then? The work will not cease?”

“It will not cease. More books will come. Our brave Stillyard men will not long be daunted. But we must act with care. For a time we must remain quiet. We may not be reckless with the holy books, which cost much in money and in blood—or may do, if we are rash or careless. But nothing now can stop their entrance into a land where men begin to desire earnestly to read them for themselves. Not all, mind you. It is strange how careless and apathetic are the gentry of the land—they that one would have thought to be most eager, most forward. They stand aloof; and the richer of the trades’ guilds will have little to say to us. But amongst the poor and unlettered do we find the light working; and in them are our chiefest allies, our most earnest disciples.”

“Yet we have many at Oxford, learned men and scholars, who would gladly welcome changes and reforms in the church; and there are many amongst the students eager after knowledge, and who long to peruse the writings of Luther and Melancthon, and see these new versions of the Scriptures.”

“Ay, I know it. I was of Oxford myself. It is but a few years that I left my lodging in Magdalen College. I love the place yet. The leaven was working then. I know that it has worked more and more. Our good friends Clarke and Sumner have told as much. Is not your presence here a proof of it? Oh, there will be a work—a mighty work—to do in Oxford yet; and you shall be one of those who shall be foremost in it.”

“I?” cried Dalaber, and his eyes glowed with the intensity of his enthusiasm. “Would that I could think it!”

“It shall be so,” answered Garret. “I read it in your face, I hear it in your voice. The thought of peril and disgrace would not daunt you. You would be faithful—even unto death. Is it not so?”

“I would!—I will!” cried Dalaber, stretching out his hand and grasping that of Garret. “Only tell me wherein I can serve, and I will not fail you.”

“I cannot tell you yet, save in general terms; but the day will come when you shall know. Oxford must have books. There will soon be no doubt as to that. And when we have books to scatter and distribute there, we want trusty men to receive and hide them, and sell or give them with secrecy and dispatch. It is a task of no small peril. Thou must understand that well, my son. It may bring thee into sore straits—even to a fiery death. Thou must count the cost ere thou dost pass thy word.”

“I care nothing for the cost!” cried Dalaber, throwing back his head. “What other men have done and dared I will do and dare. I will be faithful—faithful unto death.”



“I shall remember,” answered Garret, with a smile upon his thin ascetic face—“I shall remember; and the day will come—a day not far distant, as I hope—when I shall come to thee and remind thee of this promise.”

Page 20

“I shall not have forgotten,” spoke Dalaber, holding out his hand; “whenever the Brotherhood calls upon me it will find me ready.”

There was silence for a while, and then Dalaber looked up and asked:

“What of Clarke, and Sumner, and others there? Will they not help also in the good work?”

“Yes; but in a different fashion,” answered Garret. “It is not given to all to serve alike. Those men who dwell within college walls, overlooked by dean and warden, waited on by servants in college livery, bound by certain oaths, and hemmed about by many restrictions, cannot act as those can do who, like yourself, are members of the university, but dwellers in small halls, and under no such restraints. Clarke has done great service, and will do more, by his teachings and preachings, which prepare the hearts of men to receive the good seed, and awaken yearnings after a deeper, purer, spiritual life than that which we see around us in those who should be the bright and shining lights of the day. That is their work, and right well do they perform their tasks. But to such as you belongs the other and arduous labour of receiving and distributing the forbidden books. When the time comes, wilt thou, Anthony Dalaber, be ready?”

“I will,” spoke the youth in earnest tones; and it was plain that he spoke in all sincerity.

The position of students living in colleges and living in halls, as they were called, was, as Garret had said, altogether different. Graduates and undergraduates of the colleges which had sprung up were fenced about with rules and restrictions which have been modified rather than changed with the flight of time. But the hall of olden Oxford was merely a sort of lodging house, generally kept by a graduate or master, but not subject to any of the rules which were binding upon those students who entered upon one of the foundations. Indeed, the growth of colleges had been due in great part to the desire on the part of far-seeing men and friends of order as well as learning to curb the absolute and undesirable freedom of the mass of students brought together at Oxford and Cambridge, and in the middle ages living almost without discipline or control, often indulging in open riots or acts of wholesale insubordination.

Anthony Dalaber was not at present a member of any college, nor even of one of the religious houses where students could lodge, and where they lived beneath a sort of lesser control. He and Hugh Fitzjames, both of them youths of limited means, shared a lodging in a house called St. Alban Hall, and were free to come and go as they pleased, none asking them wherefore or whither. He saw at once that what would not be possible to a canon of Cardinal College would be feasible enough to him and his friend, if Fitzjames should sympathize with him in the matter. And, so far, he believed his friend was with him, though without, perhaps, the same eager enthusiasm.



Page 21

When the visit to Garret came to an end, and Anthony Dalaber said farewell to him at the water side, where a barge was to convey them some distance up the river, the priest held his hands long and earnestly, looking into his eyes with affectionate intensity, and at the last he kissed him upon both cheeks and said: "God be with thee, my young brother! May He keep thee firm and steadfast to the last, whatever may befall!"

"I am very sure He will," answered Dalaber fervently. "I am yours, and for the good cause, for life or death."

They parted then, and the voyage began; but little was spoken by the travellers so long as they remained in the barge. Clarke seemed to be thinking deeply, his eyes fixed earnestly upon Dalaber's face from time to time; whilst the latter sat gazing behind him at the city, sinking slowly away out of his sight, his eyes filled with the light of a great and zealous purpose.

They left the water side in the afternoon, and walked towards a certain village, and Clarke, turning towards his companion, said:

"I have promised to preach this evening in a certain house yonder. I trow there will be no peril to me or to those who hear me. But of that no man can be certain. What wilt thou do? Come with me, or walk onwards and let us meet on the morrow?"

Dalaber hesitated no single moment; Clarke's preaching was one of his keenest delights. And upon this evening he was moved beyond his wont as the young master spoke from his heart to his listeners, not striving to arouse their passions against tyranny or bigotry, but rather seeking to urge them to patience, to that brotherly love which endures all things and hopes all things, and turns to the Almighty Father in never-ceasing faith and joy, imploring His help to open the eyes of the blind, soften the hearts that are puffed up, and cleanse the church, which must be made pure and holy as the bride of Christ, for that heavenly marriage supper for which her spouse is waiting.

Nothing was spoken which the orthodox could well complain of; yet every listener knew that such a discourse would not have been preached by any man not "tainted" with what was then called heresy. But the hearts of the hearers burnt within them as they listened; and when, after some further time spent in discussion and prayer, the preacher and his companion found themselves alone for the night in a comfortable bed chamber, Dalaber threw himself upon Clarke's neck in an outburst of fervid enthusiasm.

"Oh, let me be ever your son and scholar," he cried, "for with you are the words of life and light!"

Then the elder man looked at him with a great tenderness in his eyes, but his voice was full of gravity and warning.



“Dalaber,” he said, “you desire you know not what. And I fear sometimes that you seek to take upon yourself more than you wot of—more than you are able. My preaching is sweet unto you now, for that no persecution is laid upon you. But the time will come—of that I am well assured, and that period peradventure shortly—when, if ye continue to live godly therein, God will lay upon you the cross of persecution, to try whether you, as pure gold, can abide the fire.”



Page 22

"I know it! I am ready!" cried Dalaber, with the characteristic backward motion of his head. His face was like the face of a young eagle. He was quivering from head to foot.

Clarke looked at him again with his fatherly smile, but there was trouble also in his eyes.

"Be not over confident, my son; and seek not to take upon you more than you are able to bear."

Dalaber understood instantly to what Clarke was alluding.

"I trust I have not done so. But men will be wanted. I am a Christian Brother. I must not shrink. My word is passed. Not to you, my master, alone, but to Master Garret also."

"To whom I did make you known," spoke Clarke, with a very slight sigh. "My son, I would not speak one word to discourage your godly zeal; but bethink you what this may mean. You shall (it may be) be judged and called a heretic; you shall be abhorred of the world; your own friends and kinsfolk shall forsake you; you shall be cast into prison, and none shall dare to help you; you shall be accused before bishops, to your reproach and shame, to the great sorrow of all your friends and kindred. Then will ye wish ye had never known this doctrine; then (it may be) ye will curse Clarke, and wish you had never known him, because he hath brought you into all these troubles."

But Dalaber could bear that word no longer; he flung himself at the feet of his master, and the tears broke from his eyes.

"Nay, nay, speak not so, I beseech you; you cut me to the heart! I boast not of myself as being wiser or braver or more steadfast than other men; I only pray of you to try me. Send me not away. Let me be pupil, and scholar, and son. I cannot turn back, even if I would. My heart is in the good work. Let me follow in the path I have chosen. I have put my hand to the plough; how can I turn back?"

Clarke looked down upon the youth with a world of tender love in his eyes, and raising him up in his arms he kissed him, the tears standing on his own cheeks.

"The Lord God Almighty give you grace and steadfastness now and ever," he said in a deep voice, full of feeling, "and from henceforth and ever take me for your father in Christ, and I will take you for my son!"

So the compact was sealed between the two; and when on the morrow they took their way towards Oxford, the heart of Anthony Dalaber was joyful within him, for he felt as though he had set his foot upon the narrow path which leads to life everlasting, and he reeked little of the thorns and briers which might beset the way, confident that he would be given grace to overcome.



He was happier still when he was able to obtain the exclusive companionship of Freda Langton in the sunny garden of the Bridge House, and pour into her willing ears all the story of his visit and its wonderful consequences. To Anthony Dalaber some sympathetic confidante was almost a necessity of existence; and who so well able to understand him as the girl he loved with every fibre of his being, and who had almost promised him an answering love? There was no peril to her in knowing these things. The day for making rigorous inquisition in all directions had not yet come, and there was no danger to himself in entrusting his safety to one as true and staunch as this maiden.



Page 23

Freda's sympathies from the outset had been with those independent thinkers, who were in increasing peril of being branded as heretics; and she listened with absorbing interest to the story of the hidden books, the little band of Christian Brothers, the work going on beneath their auspices, and the check temporarily put upon it by the holocaust of books which Dalaber had witnessed at St. Paul's.

"And you saw it—you saw them burn the books! You saw the great cardinal sitting on his throne and watching! O Anthony, tell me, what was he like?"

"His face I could not well see, I was too far away; but he walked with stately mien, and his following was like that of royalty itself. Such kingly pomp I have never witnessed before."

"And our Lord came meek and lowly, riding upon an ass, and had not where to lay His head," breathed Freda softly. "Ah, oftentimes do I wonder what He must think of all this, looking down from heaven, where He sits expecting, till His enemies be made His footstool. I wonder what yonder pageant looked like to Him—a prelate coming in His place (as doubtless the cardinal would think) to judge those whose crime has been the spreading abroad of the living Word, and now watching the burning of countless books which contain that living Word, and which might have brought joy and gladness to so many. When I think of these things I could weep for these proud men, who never weep for themselves. I can better understand the words of Master Clarke when he says, 'Plead with your mother—plead with her.'"

"We will plead. We have pleaded already; we will plead again and yet again!" cried Dalaber, with a flash in his dark eyes. "But methinks a time will come when the day of pleading will be past, and the day of reckoning will come; and she will have to learn that her children will not always suffer her impurities and abominations, but that they will rise up and cleanse the sanctuary from the filthiness wherewith it is defiled."

"Yet let them not cease to love her," spoke Freda gently, "for, as Master Clarke truly says, we are all one body—the Body of Christ; and if we have to war one with another, and rend that body for its own healing, we must yet remember that we are all members one of another even in our strife."

"It is a hard saying," spoke Dalaber, "yet I believe it is the truth. God send us more men like John Clarke, to show us the way through this tangle of perplexities!"

Chapter IV: "Merrie May Day"

"You will come and hear us sing our 'merrie catches' from the tower, sweet ladies. They should sound sweetly this year, more sweetly than ever, for we have improved in our methods, and our boys have been better taught since Master Radley of Cardinal

College has given us his help; and he will come and sing with us, and he hath a voice like a silver bell.”



Page 24

The speaker was Arthur Cole, a student of Magdalen College, who was now a frequent visitor at the Bridge House. He was a young man of good family and prospects, nearly related to one of the proctors of the university. He had a good presence, an elegant figure, and was master of many favourite sports and pastimes. He kept horses and dogs and falcons, and had several servants lodging in the town to look after these creatures, and to attend him when he sallied forth in search of sport. Moreover, he had recently introduced into Oxford the Italian game of "calcio" (of which more anon), and was one of the most popular and important men of his college. He was always dressed with great care and elegance, although he was no fop; and he was so handsome and so merry withal that all who knew him regarded him with favour, and his friendship was regarded as a sort of passport to the best circle of university life.

Freda and Magdalen answered his appeal with smiling glances. They were holding one of their little mimic courts in the garden by the river. Their father had been reading and discoursing with sundry students, who came to him for instruction more individual and particular than could be given in the schools in the earlier part of the day; and the young men before leaving always sought to gain speech with the two fair sisters, who were generally at this hour to be found in the garden.

Arthur Cole, Anthony Dalaber, and Hugh Fitzjames, their cousin, had lingered to the last, and now were talking of the joustings and merry makings of the approaching May Day, which was ushered in by the melodious concert from the summit of Magdalen College tower.

In olden days this was not a sacred selection of hymns, but madrigals, roundelays, and "merrie catches," as the old chroniclers term them, sung by the boys maintained for the musical part of the daily service, and by such singing men or musically inclined students as were willing and able to help. Anthony Dalaber, who possessed an excellent voice, which he often employed in the service of Cardinal College Chapel, had been invited to assist this year; and a new singing man from that college, Stephen Radley by name, was considered a great acquisition.

This man had not long been in Oxford, and had been sent by the cardinal himself on account of his remarkable voice. He did not live in the college itself, but in a lodging near at hand, and equally near to Magdalen College. Arthur Cole, foremost to discover talent and appreciate it, and attracted by the fine presence and muscular development of the singer, had struck up a friendship with him, and Dalaber had followed his example in this.

"Radley will lead off the madrigal to springtide and love," he cried, "which erstwhile has been spoiled for lack of a voice that can be heard alone from such a height. I trow it will ring through the soft air like a silver trumpet. You will be there to hear?" and his eyes dwelt upon the face of Freda, whilst those of Arthur rested more particularly upon that of Magdalen.



Page 25

“Ah, yes, we shall certainly be there,” they both answered; and Freda added gaily, “Albeit ye begin the day somewhat early. But why should we not be up with the sun on Merrie May Day?”

“Why not, indeed?” questioned Arthur eagerly, “for the day will scarce be long enough for all there is to do. You will come to the sports in the meadows later, fair maidens? And I have a favour to ask of you twain. May I be bold enough to proffer it now?”

They looked at him with smiling, questioning eyes.

“A favour, fair sir?”

“Yes, truly; for I would ask of you to be witness to our contest of calcio in yonder green meadow, and to present to the victors the garlands of laurel and flowers which are to be their reward who shall come off triumphant in the strife. No contest is so keenly contested as that which is watched by the bright eyes of fair ladies, and I would ask that ye be the queens of the strife, and reward the victorious company with your own fair hands.”

The girls assented gladly and gaily. They had heard much of this newly-introduced game, and were curious to witness it. The more ancient sports of quintain, on land and water, morris dancing, quarterstaff, archery, and such like, were all familiar enough. But calcio was something of a novelty; and to be chosen as the queens of the contest was no small pleasure, and their eyes beamed with gratification and delight.

Arthur Cole was equally pleased at having won their consent, and told them how that a fine pavilion would be erected in the meadow, where they and their friends could survey the scene at ease, protected alike from the heat of the sun, or from falling showers, should any betide. It was plain that this spectacle was to be on a decidedly magnificent scale. Arthur Cole was said to have expended much money upon the rich dresses of the players; now he spoke of a pavilion for the selected bystanders. It promised to be quite a fresh excitement for the university.

Dalaber and Cole went away together slightly later, and Hugh Fitzjames remained to supper with his kinsfolks.

“Anthony has taken a mighty liking for yonder fine gentleman of late,” remarked the youth. “They are ever together now. Well, he might do worse for a friend. Master Cole is one of the richest students in Oxford.”

“That is not what attracts Anthony, though,” spoke Freda. “I think it has been this new game, into which Anthony has thrown himself with such zest. Perhaps it is good for him to have other things than his books to think of. A short while back he was ever poring over the written page and burning the midnight oil. You said so yourself, Hugh.”



“Yes, verily; and I have no quarrel with him for it. I think he is safer playing calcio with Cole than for ever studying the books he gets from Clarke and his friends, as he has been doing of late.”

“Safer?” questioned Freda quickly; “how safer, Hugh?”



Page 26

“Oh, well, you must know what Anthony is like by this time. He can never take aught quietly as other men. There are scores here in Oxford—I am one of them myself—who believe in liberty to think and read what we will, and to judge for ourselves between man and man, even when Holy Church herself is in the question. God can be ill served in the church as well as the monarch on his throne. We are not counted rebels and traitors because we condemn a minister of state; why, then, are we to be counted heretics and the scum of the earth because we see the evils and corruption in the lives of cardinals and clergy?”

“But to return to Dalaber. He is never content with just quiet thinking and study; he is all in a flame, and must cry aloud from the housetops, if it were not that he is restrained by others. He came from London in a perfect ferment. I trembled to think what he would do next. But as luck would have it, Cole got hold of him to take a vacant place in his own band for calcio, and since then he has been using his muscles rather than his brain, and an excellent good thing, too. He is just the man to get into trouble with the authorities, albeit he may not hold half the ‘heresies’ of others who escape.”

“It is his way to throw himself heart and soul into everything he undertakes,” spoke Freda, with a certain quiet satisfaction and approval. “I think he never stops to count the cost, but tries to see the right path, and to pursue it to the end.”

“Yes, but he might sometimes show a little more discretion with his zeal,” answered Hugh, with a half laugh. “I have a great liking for Anthony myself. No man could share his chamber and lack that. He is the best of comrades, and he has fine qualities and plenty of courage. But there are times when I fear he will be his own undoing. When he disputes in the schools he will often tread perilously near some ‘pestilent heresy,’ as the masters would deem it, or show by some of his arguments that he has a dangerous knowledge of forbidden books. Just now things are quiet in Oxford, and not much notice is taken. But who knows how long the calm may last? London has been set in a commotion of late, and is it likely that Oxford will escape, with the cardinal’s eyes fixed upon his college here?”

“At least let us hope and pray that we may be spared persecution,” spoke Magdalen gravely. “Yet truly I believe that were such misfortune to befall us, Anthony Dalaber would be one of those who would stand the test of his faith with constancy and courage.”

“He would, up to a certain point, I doubt not,” answered Hugh. “He would go to the stake, I believe, without flinching, were he taken and sent there straight. But if put in prison, and kept there long, separated from his friends and teachers, and subjected to argument and persuasion and specious promises, well, I know not how he would stand that trial. Kindness and flattery might win him over, where threats and cruelty failed.”



Page 27

Freda's face was gravely intent. She was conscious of a growing interest in and affection for Anthony Dalaber since his own fervent declaration of love towards herself. She had given him no definite promise, but she felt that henceforth their lives must of necessity be more or less linked together. She could not be indifferent to aught that concerned him; the stability of his faith and of his character must mean very much to her in the future.

But for the moment it was difficult to think of these things. Joyous springtide was on the world; May Day, with all its gay doings, was close at hand; and graver thoughts or anxious fears alike seemed out of place.

The girls were up with the lark on May Day morning, donning their holiday robes of white taffeta and spotless lawn, cunningly embroidered by their own skilful fingers, Freda's in silver and Magdalen's in gold thread. They each had girdles of silver and gold cord respectively, and snowy headgear embroidered in like fashion. They looked as fresh and as lovely as the morning itself, and their father's eyes shone with loving pride as they presented themselves before him.

"We grow young again in our children," he said, as they sallied forth just as the east was growing rosy with the harbinger of dawn.

The dew lay thick upon the grass, whitening it with a glittering mantle; but the paths were dry and firm, and the girls held up their dainty draperies and tripped along so lightly that their white leather embroidered shoes gathered no soil by the way. Then, just as the clock of Cardinal College boomed out the hour, a chorus of sweet, clear voices up high in the air broke into merry song, just as the first early sunbeam struck across the sky, and lighted up the group of singers half hidden behind the low battlements.

The meadows below were thronged with gownsmen from the various colleges, as well as by crowds of townsfolk, all in holiday attire, who had streamed out of the gates to hear the singing. Later in the day there might probably be brawling and disputes betwixt the two parties—"town and gown," as they were later dubbed. But the early morning hour seemed to impose peace upon all spirits, and there was no hooting or brawling or rioting of any kind; but a decorous silence was observed, all faces being lifted upwards, as the sweet strains came floating from above, seeming to welcome the dawning day and the joyous season of sunshine and love.

"That must surely be Stephen Radley," spoke Freda in a whisper, as one voice, more rich and mellow than the others, seemed to detach itself and float upwards in a flood of melody. All eyes were fixed aloft, all ears strained to catch the sounds. The power and extraordinary sweetness of the voice held the multitude spellbound.



“The cardinal’s new singing man!” was the whisper passed from mouth to mouth; and when at length the singers emerged from the little door at the base of the tower, there were many who crowded round Radley to compliment him upon his wonderful performance.

Page 28

It was quite a long time before the sisters caught sight of him, and then he was walking arm-in-arm with Master Clarke, who, catching sight of the little group, brought him straight up to them and presented him.

Radley was dressed in academic garb, like all the members of the university. He looked about five-and-twenty years old, was a tall and finely proportioned man, deep chested and muscular, with a gravely deferential manner that was pleasing and modest.

Arthur Cole and Anthony Dalaber came hastening up to join the group, and presently it broke up somewhat, and thus Magdalen found herself walking towards home with Clarke, whilst the others followed as they chose, having been asked by Dr. Langton to partake of a cold collation at his house, which had been carefully spread overnight by the hands of the girls themselves.

“He has a wonderful voice,” said Magdalen, with a slight backward glance over her shoulder towards Radley; “who is he, and whence does he come?”

“He sang as a boy in one of those grammar schools which the cardinal is now interesting himself so much to promote. But when he lost his boy’s voice he was not able to remain at the school, and has since been a servant in several great houses. He obtained a position in the cardinal’s house last year, and it was there that the great man heard him singing over his work, and had him brought before him. Finding that he had some learning, and was eager for more, he decided to appoint him as singing man at his own college here, and to let him continue his studies as well. I trow that he would have willingly made him one of the petty canons, but Radley declined that honour. He has no call to the priesthood, he says; and in truth he has heard much in London of the Association of Christian Brothers, and has read many of the forbidden books.

“Indeed, I think I may call him one of them. I am not afraid to tell you this, Mistress Magdalen, for I know your heart is full of sympathy for us, who are seekers after purer truth than we can always find amongst those who are set to dispense it to us.”

The girl’s eyes were full of sympathy and earnest interest.

“Indeed, I would fain see all men longing after light and truth. God is Light, and God is Truth; His Son came as the Light of the world. He must desire all men to seek the Light. And if His church does not shine with it as it should, men must needs try to add to her light, each in his own measure.”

Magdalen looked with the greater interest at Radley after having heard what John Clarke spoke of him. He sat beside Dalaber at table, and the two seemed on intimate terms.



Arthur Cole was beside her, and took up much of her attention. His admiration was almost openly expressed, and the girl sometimes blushed at his gallant compliments. She liked the gay-hearted young man, but she was not so much attracted towards him as towards Clarke and those more thoughtful spirits. Still, she was not proof against the fascination of his courtly address, and she listened with interest to his account of the game he had learned in Italy and had introduced to England, and which bears so close a resemblance to our modern game of football that it may well be regarded as its parent.

Page 29

This was the first regular match that had been played at Oxford, and considerable excitement prevailed as to what it would be like, and how the players would distinguish themselves.

The forenoon hours, however, were mainly given up to the usual pastimes of May Day. Children decked with garlands and flowers chose their queen, and crowned her amid the plaudits of the people. Morris dancers footed it upon the green, and miracle plays were enacted by wandering troops of mummers. There were booths set up, where a sort of fair was held, and sweetmeats and drink dispensed. An ox was being roasted whole in one place, where dinners were served at midday, and trials of strength and skill went on uninterruptedly in the wide meadows round the city, some being the property of the town, and others of the university.

On the whole, however, the spirit of concord prevailed, and there was less fighting and brawling than usual between the two parties; and when, after the short pause for the midday repast, the students and masters and all interested in the spectacle hastened to the spot where the game of calcio was to be played, great numbers of the townsfolk flocked there also, and were neither hustled nor jeered by the gowned concourse in the inner circle.

There was something distinctly sumptuous in the pavilion which had been raised for a certain number of spectators of the better class, and there was quite a buzz and acclamation as the two beautiful sisters were seen to ascend the few steps and take their places on the centre seats, which had something of the aspect of a throne. They were very well known in Oxford, not for their beauty alone, but for their gentleness and charity, being always ready to succour the sick and afflicted, and to visit with their own presence any stricken houses where trouble of any kind had entered. So that not only the gownsmen but the townsmen were ready to welcome them with cheers, and to acclaim them eagerly as the queens of the day.

And now the players came streaming out from another pavilion on the opposite side of the ground, and exclamations of wonder and admiration arose at the picturesque magnificence of their dress. Arthur Cole had had these garments fashioned in Italy and brought over, and very gorgeous did he and his companions look.

The lower limbs of the players were encased in woven silk tights, which were thick and strong and elastic. On their feet they wore soft tanned shoes, made all in one piece and fitting closely to the foot. They wore woven silk shirts of fine texture, and over these belted tunics of rich brocade or embroidered linen or any other costly and elastic material. Arthur Cole's own tunic (as captain of his side) was of cloth of gold; whilst that of Dalaber was of white and silver brocade, with silver lacings. The colours of the two sides were displayed in the calzone or silk tights, these being blue and white for Arthur's side, and red and white for Dalaber's. They wore knitted silk caps upon their heads, white and blue or red and blue according to their company, and long gauntlet gloves of

soft tanned skin, almost white in colour, and laced with the colour appropriate to the player.

Page 30

A murmur of admiration ran through the spectators as these tall, lithe, muscular youths stepped forth into the bright sunshine of the playing field; and soon all eyes were intently watching the evolutions of the game, which was very much like that of our modern football, though played with more grace and less of brute force and violence.

Not a great many of the spectators understood the details of the contest, but they cheered lustily when any side seemed to score an advantage. The rainbow-hued living mass seemed to sway and melt and break up into coloured spray, and join again and roll from side to side like a living creature; and its evolutions were followed with keenest interest by all spectators, and by cheering and shouts of warning or encouragement from those who understood the game, and knew which way the tide was turning.

At last the contest ended. Arthur Cole's side had come out victorious in the struggle; but so gallant a stand had been made by the other, that Anthony Dalaber was called up to receive a laurel crown in token of his prowess and skill.

He looked very handsome as he stood before Freda, whilst she lightly set the chaplet on his head, whence after a few moments he removed it and laid it at her feet.

"That is the place where I would fain lay all my honours and all my gains," he said in a low, passionate whisper, and she felt a wave of hot blood rising in her cheek at his words and at the ardent look in his eyes.

She could not doubt this man's love for her, and she wondered whether it would compel her own love in return. A short while back she had regarded him rather in the light of a comrade or brother; but now she felt that a change had come over their relations, and that he would not be satisfied with the sisterly affection of the past. Had she more to give him? She scarcely knew herself as yet; and still, as she revolved the matter in her mind, she felt more and more convinced that without Anthony Dalaber her life would be colourless and cold.

His eagerness brought an element into it which she could not well spare. He was becoming a sort of necessity to her. She thought of him almost constantly, yearned over him, desired above all things to see him rise to the level of greatness in any trial which might come upon him. If that were love, then surely she loved him.

The thought was not without a mingling of sweetness and pain. She put it from her for the time being; but when the day was over, and the sisters were alone together in their bed chamber, taking off their finery and brushing out their long tresses of hair, it was Magdalen's own words that brought the matter back, as she softly kissed her sister, whispering:

"How Anthony loves you, Freda!"



“I truly think he does, Magda,” answered she, taking her sister’s hands and leaning her brow against them. “In sooth he has told me so; but at the first I thought perhaps it was but a passing fancy—we have been so much together of late. Now I truly think that he does care. Magda, what shall I say to him? He will not be long in pressing for his answer.”



Page 31

“Does not your own heart tell you, Freda? Can we love and not know it? Tell me that, for I too would fain know. There are so many sorts of love. Can one always judge aright?”

“Dost thou feel that too, my Magda? Verily, I have thought that Master Cole—”

Magda put her hand upon her sister’s lips; her face was all one great blush.

“Nay, nay; that is but fantasy. He has a kindly word for all who please his eye. It may be one today and another tomorrow. He is a pleasant comrade; but—”

“But not the man of thy choice, sweet sister?”

“How can I tell yet? We have not known him long time. And I love better those who talk of higher things than games and songs and pastimes. But the men of books and earnest thought are devoted so oft to the church. And those who are left—one cannot tell. They are brave and winsome and gay; but more than that is wanted in a husband, Freda. Ah, it is hard for us maidens to know.”

And sitting with arms entwined, the sisters spoke freely and fully to each other of all the things that were in their hearts, and prayed that they might be guided aright in matters which pertained to the life they must look forward to living in the world.

Chapter V: Sweet Summertime

The months of May and June flew by as if on golden wings. The youths of Oxford, engrossed in study and in merry pastimes, seemed for a while to have cast away those graver thoughts which had been stirring them of late; or at least, if the current still ran, it seemed for the time being to run in silence. Perhaps the knowledge that the cardinal had set himself to the task of nipping in the bud the dangerous growth of incipient heresy alarmed some of the more timid spirits; whilst others sought for truth and light as it was to be found amongst their recognized preachers and teachers, and were often surprised at the depth of spirituality and earnestness which they found in men who were staunch to the core to the traditions of the church, and held in abhorrence the very name and thought of heresy.

Dr Langton’s daughters heard little of the doings of the “Christian Brethren” during these bright months. Anthony Dalaber was more engrossed in his own studies and in his prowess at calcio (which was the most fashionable game through that summer) than in the religious movement which had occupied his mind before.

It was not that he had changed his opinions, or in any way drawn back from his admiration for the men connected with this movement. When he spoke of it sometimes with Freda his eyes would glow with feeling, and all the old fervour and earnestness



would come back like a flood upon him; but there was nothing for the moment for him to do. The importation of forbidden books into the country had been temporarily checked by the vigilance of the cardinal and his servants. The king was breaking a lance in argument with Martin Luther, and men were watching the result with interest and curiosity. And there was a certain awakening of spiritual light within the church itself, and pure and enlightened spirits there were making their voices heard; so that many (like John Clarke himself) hoped and believed that the much-needed reformation and purification would come from within, by her own act, rather than by any warfare against her as from without.



Page 32

So, as these happy summer days flew by, the clouds of anxiety and apprehension seemed to disperse and roll away. The sisters were living in a world that was something new to them. Womanhood was awakening within them. They were learning something of its sweetness, of its power, as also of its perplexities and pain. There was no doubt whatever as to the fervency of Anthony Dalaber's love for Freda; whilst Arthur Cole paid such marked attention to Magdalen that she could not but believe him in earnest, albeit no word of love had so far escaped his lips.

With July came a change in the situation. One of the many pestilences so frequent in the country and so damaging to Oxford broke out in the neighbourhood of Carfax. It had some of the sweating-sickness symptoms, but was distinct from it in other respects. For a while it did not penetrate into the colleges, and the university authorities made strict rules for the undergraduates and students, hoping that the scourge would confine itself to the town and the families of the citizens. But it was impossible to keep the clerks from wandering through the streets or entering shops and taverns, and little by little cases of sickness appeared first in the halls and then in the colleges, till it was evident that the epidemic was to be a serious one.

From the first Clarke had busied himself in visiting and tending the sick. He quitted for the time being his rooms in Cardinal College, and lodged with Stephen Radley, who accompanied him on his errands of mercy. Clarke was one of those men to be found in great numbers in university communities who, whilst not yet in full priest's orders, was qualifying for the priesthood, wore the tonsure, and having passed his degree in arts, was preparing himself in the schools of theology for the career to which he was dedicated. All the canons of Cardinal College were supposed to follow this course of training.

But it was not only amongst the men that self sacrifice and devotion made itself manifest. Dr. Langton's two daughters were as forward as any in the desire to help and tend the sick, and perform such offices of pity and kindness as lay within their power. Their father did not oppose them, though he laid down certain rules, which they dutifully obeyed, by which he hoped to guard them from infection. For his part, he was always foremost in the fight with disease and contagion, and wherever the need was sorest, there was he to be found.

Thus it came about that John Clarke and Stephen Radley often found themselves face to face with the fair girls, who came and went like sisters of mercy amid the poor houses crowded together in the low-lying lands without the city walls; and Anthony Dalaber, flinging himself into the crusade with his accustomed energy, found himself in almost constant attendance upon them, carrying out their orders, assisting them in their labour of mercy, and growing more ardently in love with his chosen mistress every day of his life.



Page 33

But devoted workers did not always come through such an ordeal unscathed; and Dr. Langton and John Clarke sickened of the distemper almost at the same time. Neither was grievously ill; but both were forced to give up all work, and lie quietly in bed, suffering themselves to be tended by others.

Meantime there had been a very considerable exodus of students and masters from the city, and for the time being all lectures were suspended. There was small chance of any regular resumption of study till the cool crispness of autumn should check and stamp out the spread of this sickness.

It was at this juncture that Arthur Cole came forward with an offer which sounded very pleasantly in the ears of those to whom it was made. He came into the pleasant living room of the Bridge House upon the first evening when Dr. Langton had been suffered to leave his bed and lie for a while on the couch in this other and more cheerful apartment. Magdalen had her lute in her hands, and had been softly singing to him, when the sound of the opening door brought her soft, sweet song to a close.

They welcomed their visitor cordially. He had been absent from Oxford for a while, and they had not expected to see him.

"I have been away at Poghley," he explained, "whither I sent for Dalaber to join me these last days. Did he tell you aught of it?"

"He came to bid us a farewell, though he said it would be a brief one," answered Freda; "but he told us no more than that."

"I have come to tell the rest," answered Cole, with a smile. "They tell me you were at Poghley last summer, so perchance you saw then the old moated house which lies a few miles from the village? That house is mine, though I have seldom visited it, and never dwelt there till now. But it came into my mind that it would be a pleasant place wherein to pass these next weeks, during which time Oxford will be empty of her scholars and masters. But I love not solitude, and I have gathered together a few congenial spirits. Dalaber and Fitzjames are already there, making all ready, and Radley will start tomorrow, taking Master Clarke in his charge, since it is of all things needful for him to have a change of air to restore him to health. He will be our chaplain, and edify us by his discourses when he has recovered his health and strength. But more than this: we want some man of learning and greater age and standing to direct us in our studies; and it is my great hope that you and your daughters will come and be my guests for a few weeks—you, dear sir, to recover health in the purer air, and then, when your strength permits it, be the director of our studies; and these sweet ladies to enjoy the rest and ease which their recent devoted labours render necessary, and to escape from the noxious miasma now rising from these low lands round Oxford, which is likely to cause the sickness here to increase."



Page 34

The doctor's face lighted as Arthur proceeded to describe the situation of the house and the arrangements he had made for his guests. One wing would be set apart entirely for Dr. Langton and his daughters, who could bring any servant of their own if they desired it; he and his companions would occupy the other part of the building; and it was for the family themselves to decide whether they should be served with their meals in their own apartments, or join the rest at table.

No epidemic sickness had ever appeared in the locality. The house was situated on a rather high plain, though sheltered from the winds, and partly surrounded by its own moat. The air was fine and bracing. It would be likely to do good to those who had been exposed to the contagion of sickness, and had been taxing their strength in the good work of tending others.

It did not take much argument on Arthur's part to win the grateful consent of Dr. Langton, and the bright eyes of the girls showed how pleasant was the prospect to them. Their father, they were sure, would greatly benefit by the removal to a healthier locality; and though they would willingly have remained on, seeking, even without his guidance, to alleviate the sufferings of the stricken, yet they were both conscious that their energies were rather impaired by watching and anxiety, and that they might in such case be in danger of falling a prey to the sickness themselves.

A few days more and they found themselves established in their new quarters, delighted with everything about them. The old, timbered house was rambling and spacious, and the plenishings of their own apartments seemed sumptuous to them; for those were not days of great luxury in the matter of household furniture, and they had never before seen such hangings, such mirrors, such multitude of silver sconces for wax candles, such carpets and skins under foot, such multiplicity of table appointments, or even such store of books and manuscripts for their own and their father's delectation and entertainment.

Anthony Dalaber was there to welcome them, Arthur having the good taste to keep somewhat in the background; and he showed them everything with pride and delight, praising his friend, and foretelling the happiest of summer vacations and summer studies to be carried on within these walls.

"We have Clarke and Radley and Sumner and Fitzjames here in the house, and there are numbers of other clerks and students lodging in and about the village. When your father is strong enough to lecture and instruct us, he will have quite a gathering in the old raftered refectory below, which I will show you anon. Then there are gardens which will delight your hearts, and shady alleys where bowls can be played, or where we can pace to and fro in pleasant converse. Methinks it is worth all that hath gone before to find such a haven of peace and rest at last."



Anthony looked as though he needed rest, as indeed was the case; for he had toiled hard amongst the sick, and when Clarke fell ill, had devoted himself to him day and night, with Radley for his helper. But Radley had had a touch of the sickness himself, and had been unable to do much, so that the bulk of the nursing and the anxiety had fallen upon Dalaber.



Page 35

“But he is better now—Master Clarke, I mean?” spoke Magdalen, with anxious eyes.

“Verily yes; he is well-nigh himself again, only he hath the air of one who is worn down with illness. He looks bent and white and frail—he toiled so strenuously amongst the sick; and before that he was studying almost night and day.

“But come below into the garden where he is; he will speak for himself. I would that you should see the lilies there. They will rejoice your heart.”

It was a quaint old garden into which Anthony led them, full of the scent of herbs and spices, rosemary, thyme, and sweetbrier. The trim order of modern gardening was then unknown, and therefore not missed; close-shaven turf was only to be found in the bowling alleys, and lawns were not; but there was a wilderness beauty that was full of charm in such a place as this, and the sisters looked about them with eager eyes, rejoicing in the beauty before them, and inhaling the pure freshness of the air after the heavy and somewhat pestilential atmosphere in which they had lived.

Clarke was lying at ease on a bearskin against the turf wall of the bowling alley, a book beside him, which he was not then reading. His eyes lighted at sight of the sisters, and he would have risen, but that they forestalled him, and sat beside him on the soft skin, looking at him with friendly solicitude.

He would not talk of himself, but had a hundred things to tell them of the place to which they had come. He inquired how Dr. Langton had borne the journey, and hoped he might visit him later in the day; and as they talked, they were joined by their host himself. And presently he asked Magdalen to come with him and see his hives of bees, for she was somewhat of a naturalist, and was eager to study the habits and habitations of all living things.

“We are very grateful to you, fair sir,” she said, “for this act of kindness and hospitality to our dear father. I doubt not that he will recover health and strength with great speed here in this sweet place. It seems an abode of peace and harmony. I never saw a house so beautiful.”

“I am right glad it pleases you, sweet mistress,” answered Arthur, a very slight flush mounting to his cheek; “believe me, it is the great hope of my heart that this place shall become dear to you, and that you may find happiness therein.”

“I thank you, sir,” she answered, slightly turning her head away; “your kindness is great, and that not to us alone, but also to others. Our beloved Master Clarke hath the appearance of a man sorely sick, and in need of long rest and refreshment. This he will obtain here as he could not elsewhere. Those who regard his life as a precious one will thank you also for that.”



“Are you one of those, Mistress Magda?”

“Indeed, yes. We have known Master Clarke for some great while now, and methinks he is one of God’s saints upon earth—one of those who will assuredly walk with Him in white, one of those who will be faithful and will overcome.”



Page 36

Her face kindled, and Arthur, looking somewhat keenly at her, noted a depth of expression in her eyes which no words of his had ever prevailed to bring there.

“He is a notable man,” he answered slowly, “and one who may have a great future before him, if only he does not let it slip from him by some indiscretion at the beginning.”

“How mean you?” asked Magdalen, with quickly aroused interest.

“I mean that Master Clarke has been already noticed by the cardinal. He was taken from Cambridge because of his good report as to sobriety, learning, and godliness; and the cardinal will, without doubt, keep an eye upon him, and when he has taken his degrees in divinity, will promote him to some living or benefice that will make him rich for life. But let him have a care; that is what his friends would beg of him. Let him have a care that he be not corrupted by new-fangled disputings and questionings, which will benefit no man, and which are already disturbing the peace of the realm and the unity of the church. I would have him beware of these; touch not, taste not, handle not—that is my counsel to him. And if any have influence with him to warn or counsel I would that they should turn him away from such perilous paths, for if he tread them they may lead him to trouble and ruin.”

Magdalen made no direct reply, and Arthur, looking earnestly into her face, became aware of its absorbed expression, and asked:

“Does this trouble you, sweet lady? Are you, too, aware of the peril in which he and others may stand if they intermeddle too much in forbidden matters?”

“Yes, I think I know somewhat of it; but what troubles me is that these things should be forbidden. Why may not each man be free in his own soul to read the Scriptures, and to seek to draw help, and light, and comfort from them for himself?”

“Ah, dear lady, that is too big a question for my wits to grapple with. I leave these matters to men who are capable of judging. All I say is that the church holds enough for me, that I shall never learn half she has to teach, and that within her fold is safety. Outside pastures may be pleasant to the eye; but who knows what ravening wolves may not be lurking there in the disguise of harmless sheep? The devil himself can appear in the guise of an angel of light; therefore it behoves us to walk with all wariness, and to commit ourselves into the keeping of those whom God has set over us in His Holy Church.”

“Up to a certain point, yes,” answered Magdalen earnestly; “but there be times when—when—Ah, I cannot find words to say all I would. But methinks that, when such pure and stainless souls as that of Master Clarke are seeking for light and life, they cannot go far astray.”



Arthur hoped and trusted such was the case, and he was regular in his attendance whenever Clarke preached in the little chapel, or gave lectures in some room of the house, to which many flocked. Dalaber was never absent; all his old zeal and love kindled anew. Several of the guests in that house, including Radley and Fitzjames, often sat up far into the night reading the Scriptures in their own language, and seeming to find new meaning in the fresh rendering, which their familiarity with the original tongues enabled them rightly to estimate.



Page 37

Arthur Cole did not join these readings, though he did not interfere with them. Once he said to Magdalen, with a certain intonation of anxiety in his voice:

“I cannot see what they think they benefit thereby. Surely the tongue in which the Scriptures were written must be the best to study them in—for those who have learning to do so. Translators do their best, but errors must creep in. For the ignorant and unlettered we must translate, but why for such men as our friends here?”

“But the ignorant and unlettered are forbidden to read or buy the living Word?” said Magdalen quickly.

“Yes; because they would not understand, and would breed all sorts of pestilent heresies. The Scriptures are not of private interpretation. They must be taught by those appointed to that work. I grant you willingly that much is needed in the church—men able and willing for the task; but to put the Scriptures into the hands of every clown and hind and shopman who asks for a copy—no; there I say you do more hurt than good.”

“Our friends here do not that,” spoke Magdalen thoughtfully.

“No; if they did they would have to go elsewhere. I could not lend my house for such a purpose. As it is—”

He stopped short, and the girl looked quickly at him.

“As it is what?” she asked.

“Ah, well, it is naught. I only meant to say that, if the cardinal were aware of all that went on, even in his own college, he might find fault with much, and make inquisition in many places that would be perilous for many. But as things are I trow all is safe, if they will be content to go no farther.”

“You speak of the distribution of books to others?” asked Magdalen, who, through Dalaber, had some knowledge of the work of the Christian Brothers.

“Yes; that is a very perilous course to take, and I fear many are disposed towards it. There is a man—his name is Garret; he was once a scholar of my college—Magdalen; they say he is one of the chiefest promoters of this dangerous traffic. I hope and trust he will keep himself away from here—from Oxford. He is a dangerous man, in that he works much upon the minds and feelings of others. I trust and hope he will never appear in Oxford to carry on such work as he has done in London. He has escaped hitherto; but if he becomes more mischievous, no man may know how it will end.”

“But you would not betray him!” cried Magdalen suddenly.



He looked at her in some surprise, and she coloured under his gaze. She had not meant much by her words, but she saw that he fancied a purpose in them.

“Mistress Magdalen,” he asked suddenly, “what do you know of this man and his work?”

“Very little; only what Anthony Dalaber and Master Clarke have sometimes told us when these matters have been spoken of—no more than you have told me yourself.”

“But you have sympathy with him and his object?”



Page 38

“Perhaps I have. In sooth, I scarce know how I feel about such matters. I know there is peril. I love not disobedience, nor scorn those set over us; but yet I feel for those who desire more, and would fain drink of the water of life out of new cisterns. But what I meant was that it grieved me that any should hold such men in reprobation, or should betray them into the hands of their enemies, should they be in any peril.”

“It is what we are bidden to do sometimes,” spoke Arthur gravely.

“I know; but I could not do it. I should shrink from any man who could obey such a mandate as that.”

He looked at her long and earnestly, then he turned and took her hands in his, and stood facing her for a while in silence.

“And what would you do for the man who should, instead of betraying, warn, such conspirators of their peril, should he know that they stood in need of warning?”

She thrilled somewhat beneath his touch. There seemed a purpose in his words. The colour rose in her face.

“I should look upon him as a friend. I should call him noble. I should put my trust in him. Our Lord has promised His blessing to the merciful. Surely He would count that an act of mercy which should save those in peril from the hands of their foes.”

She spoke with great earnestness and with kindling eyes. His clasp upon her hands tightened.

“And what reward would you give to such a man?” he asked; but then, seeming, as it were, to feel shame for these words, he added hastily, “It is thus, sweet lady, with me. Mine uncle is the proctor in Oxford—proctor for the south. Through him I oftentimes glean news unknown to other students. If I should hear of any peril menacing those who hold these new opinions, for which you, I can see, have such tenderness, I will not fail to warn them of it. If I know, they shall know likewise. Will that satisfy you?”

“It will,” she answered, with a glance that thrilled him to his heart’s core. “I thank you from my soul.”

Chapter VI: For Love and the Faith

“Yes, Anthony, I love thee, and one day I will be thy wife!”

The words seemed to set themselves to joyous music in the ears of Anthony Dalaber as he hastened homeward through the miry and darkening streets towards his lodging in



St. Alban Hall. He trod on air. He regarded neither the drizzling rain overhead nor the mire and dirt of the unpaved streets.

He had come from Dr. Langton's house. He had heard Freda pronounce these words, which made her all his own. For some months he had been feeding on hope. He knew that she loved him up to a certain point. But until today she had never openly declared herself. Today he had ventured to plead his cause with a new fervour, and she had given him the answer his heart so craved.

"I love thee, Anthony; one day I will be thy wife!"



Page 39

He could have cried aloud in his joy and triumph.

“My wife, my wife, my wife! O blessed, blessed thought! For her sake I will achieve all, I will dare all, I will win all. I have talents—they have told me so; I will use them might and main to win myself fame and renown. I have friends; they will help me. Has not Cole spoken oftentimes of what he hoped to do for me in the matter of some appointment later on, when my studies shall be finished here? I have a modest fortune—not great wealth; but it will suffice for the foundation on which to build. Oh yes, fortune smiles sweetly and kindly upon me, and I will succeed for her sweet sake as well as for mine own.

“My Freda! my star! my pearl amongst women! How can it be that she loves me? Oh, it is a beautiful and gracious thing! And truly do I believe that it is our faith which has drawn us together; for do we not both believe in the right of free conscience for every man, and the liberty to read for himself, and in his own tongue, the words of the holy Book of Life? Do we not both long for the day when greed and corruption shall be banished from the church we both love, and she shall appear as a chaste virgin, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, meet for the royal Bridegroom who waits for her, that He may present her spotless before His Father’s throne?”

Dalaber was quoting unconsciously from an address recently delivered in Dr. Randall’s house by Clarke to a select audience, who loved to listen to his words of hope and devotion. Clarke’s spirit at such times would seem to soar into the heavenlies, and to uplift thither the hearts of all who heard him. He spoke not of strife and warfare; he railed not against the prevailing abuses, as did others; he ever spoke of the church as the Holy Mother, the beloved of the Lord, the spouse of Christ; and prayed to see her purified and cleansed of all the defilement which had gathered upon her during her pilgrimage in this world, after the departure of her Lord into the heavens, that she might be fit and ready for her espousals in the fulness of time, her eyes ever fixed upon her living Head in the heavens, not upon earthly potentates or even spiritual rulers on this earth, but ever waiting and watching for His coming, who would raise her in glory and immortality to sit at His right hand for evermore.

Anthony had heard this discourse, and had been fired by it, and had seen how Freda’s eyes kindled, and how her breath came and went in the passion of her spiritual exaltation. They were drawn ever closer and more closely together by their sympathy in these holy hopes and aspirations, and her heart had gradually become his, she hardly knew when or how.

But the troth plight had been given. Dalaber could have sung aloud in the gladness of his heart. She was his own, his very own; and what a life they would live together! No cloud should ever touch their happiness, or mar their perfect concord. They were one in body, soul, and spirit, and nothing could come between them since they had so united their lives in one.



Page 40

It was very dark as he turned at last into the familiar doorway, and mounted the dim staircase towards his own room—the lodging he and Hugh Fitzjames shared together. But just now Fitzjames was absent, paying one of his frequent visits to the Langtons. Dalaber had spoken to him there only a short while since, and he was therefore surprised to see a line of light gleaming out from under his door; for, since he was out, who else could be in possession of his room?

Opening the door hastily, he uttered a cry of surprise and welcome, and advanced with outstretched hands.

“Master Garret! You have come!”

The small, keen-faced priest with the eyes of fire came out of the circle of lamplight and took the extended hands.

“I have come, Anthony Dalaber; I have come, as I said. Have you a welcome for me, and for mine errand?”

“The best of welcomes,” answered Dalaber, without a moment’s hesitation; “I welcome you for your own sake, and for that of the cause in which we both desire to live, and, if need be, to die.”

Yet even as he spoke the last word the young man’s voice faltered for a moment, and he felt a thrill of cold disquiet run, as it were, through his frame. With Freda’s kiss of love upon his lips, how could he think of death? No; life and light and love should be his portion. Did not fair fortune smile upon him with favouring eyes?

The keen eyes of the elder man instantly detected that some inward misgiving was possessing him. He spoke in his clear and cutting tones, so curiously penetrating in their quality.

“You speak of death, and then you shudder. You are not prepared to lay down your life in the cause?”

Dalaber was silent for a moment; a flood of recollection overwhelmed him. He heard a sweet voice speaking to him; he heard the very words used.

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

Suddenly he threw back his head and said:

“In a good and righteous cause I would face death gladly without shrinking.”

The keen, flashing eyes were fixed full upon his face. The clear voice spoke on in terse, emphatic phrases.



“Be sure of thyself, Anthony Dalaber. Put not thy hand to the plough only to turn back. So far thou art safe. But I have come to do a work here that is charged with peril. Thou needest have no hand in it. Say the word, and I go forth from thy lodging and trouble thee no more. I ask nothing. I do but take thee at thy word. If thy heart has failed or changed, only say so. One word is enough. There are other spirits in Oxford strong enough to stand the test. I came first to thee, Anthony, because I love thee as mine own soul. But I ask nothing of thee. There is peril in harbouring such an one as I. Send me forth, and I will go. So wilt thou be more safe.”



Page 41

But even as Garret spoke all the old sense of fascination which this man had exercised upon him in London returned in full force upon Dalaber. The brilliant eyes held him by their spell, the fighting instinct rose hot within him. His heart had been full of thoughts of love and human bliss; now there arose a sense of coming battle, and the lust of fighting which is in every human heart, and which, in a righteous cause, may be even a God-like attribute, flamed up within him, and he cried aloud:

“I am on the Lord’s side. Shall I fear what flesh can do unto me? I will go forth in the strength of the Lord. I fear not. I will be true, even unto death.”

There was no quavering in his voice now. His face was aglow with the passion of his earnestness.

Next moment Garret was in the midst of one of his fiery orations. A fresh batch of pamphlets had come over from Germany. They exposed new and wholesale corruptions which prevailed in the papal court, and which roused the bitterest indignation amongst those who were banded together to uphold righteousness and purity. Unlike men of Clarke’s calibre of mind, and full of the zeal which in later times blazed out in the movement of the Reformation, Garret could not regard the Catholic Church in its true and universal aspect, embracing all Christian men in its fold—the one body of which Christ is the head. He looked upon it as a corrupt organization of man’s devising, a hierarchy of ambitious and scheming men, who, having lost hold of the truth, require to be scathingly denounced and their iniquity exposed; whilst those who thus held her in abhorrence heard the voice of the Spirit in their hearts saying, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partaker of her plagues.”

The mystical unity of the Catholic Church was a thing understood by few in those days. The one party held themselves the true church, and anathematized their baptized and Christian brethren as heretics and outcasts; whilst, as a natural outcome of such a state of affairs, these outcasts themselves were disposed to repudiate the very name of Catholic. And to this very day, in spite of the light which has come to men, and the better understanding with regard to Christian unity, Romanists arrogate that title exclusively to themselves, whilst others in Protestant sections of the church accord them the name willingly, and repudiate it for themselves, with no sense of the anomaly of such repudiation.

But in these days there had been no open split between camp and camp in the Church Catholic, though daily it was growing more and more patent to men that if the abuses and corruptions within the fold were not rectified, some drastic attack from without must of necessity take place.



Page 42

Garret was a man of action and a man of fire. He had pored over treatises, penned fiery diatribes, leagued himself with the oppressed, watched the movement of revolt from superstition and idolatry with the keenest interest. He was in danger, like so many pioneers and so many reformers, of being carried away by his own vehemence. He saw the idolatry of the Mass, but he was losing sight of the worship which underlay that weight of ceremonial and observance. Like the people who witnessed the office, the mass of symbolism and the confusion of it blinded his eyes to the truth and beauty of the underlying reality. He was a devout believer in all primitive truth; he had been, and in a sense still was, a devout priest; but he was becoming an Ishmaelite amongst those of his own calling.

He alarmed them by his lack of discretion, by his fierce attacks. He did not stop to persuade. He launched his thunderbolts very much after the same fashion as Luther himself; and the timid and wavering drew back from him in alarm and dismay, fearful whither he would carry them next.

And having, in a sense, made London too hot to hold him, he had left at the entreaty of the brethren themselves, and was now arrived at Oxford—his former alma mater—ready to embark upon a similar crusade there. Here he had some friends and confederates, and he hoped soon to make more. He knew that there were many amongst the students and masters eager to read the forbidden books, and to judge for themselves the nature of the controversy raging in other countries. But the work of distribution was attended with many and great dangers; and this visit was of a preliminary character, with a view to ascertaining where and with whom his stores of books (now secreted in a house in Abingdon) might be smuggled into the city and hidden there. And in Anthony Dalaber he found an eager and daring confederate, whose soul, being stirred to its depths by what he heard, was willing to go all lengths to assist in the forbidden traffic.

As the weeks flew by Dalaber grew more and more eager in his task—the more so as he became better acquainted with other red-hot spirits amongst the graduates and undergraduates, and heard more and more heated disquisition and controversy. Sometimes a dozen or more such spirits would assemble in his rooms to hear Garret hold forth upon the themes so near to their hearts; and they would sit far into the night listening to his fiery orations, and seeming each time to gain stronger convictions, and resolve to hold more resolutely to the code of liberty which they had embraced.

Somewhat apart from these excitable youths, yet in much sympathy with them, was a little band who met regularly, and had done so all through the winter months, in Clarke's rooms in Cardinal College, to listen to his readings and expositions of the holy Scriptures, and to discuss afterwards such matters as the readings had suggested. That there was peril even in such gatherings as these Clarke very well knew; but he earnestly warned all who asked leave to attend them of that possible peril, and some drew back faint-hearted. Still he always had as many as his room could well hold; and

Dalaber was one of the most regular and eager of his pupils, and one most forward to speak in discussion.



Page 43

The doctrine of transubstantiation was one of those which was troubling the minds of the seekers after truth.

“How can that wafer of bread and that wine in the cup become actual flesh and blood?” spoke Anthony once, with eager insistence, when in one of the readings the story of the Lord’s passion had been read from end to end.

And he began to quote words from Luther and others bearing on the subject, whilst the students hung upon his words, and listened breathless, with a mingling of admiration and fear. For was not this, indeed, heresy of a terrible kind?

Clarke listened, too, very quietly and intently, and then took up the word.

“Our blessed Lord cannot lie, nor yet deceive; and He said, ‘This is my body this is my blood.’ And St. Paul rebuked the early Christians, because in partaking of the holy sacrament they did not discern the Lord’s body. And how could they discern what was not present? Nay, let us devoutly and thankfully believe and know that we do in very truth partake of the Lord’s body, but in a spiritual mystery, higher and holier than any visible miracle would be. The very essence of a sacrament is that it be spiritual and invisible—the visible symbol of the invisible reality. Real and corporate flesh and blood is sacrifice, not sacrament; but the true spiritual presence of the Lord’s body is never absent in His holy rite. Let us, in all holiness and meekness of spirit, discern the Lord’s body, and thankfully receive it. And instead of seeking words and formulas in which to express heavenly mysteries, which tongue of man can never utter, nor heart of man comprehend, let us seek for the guiding of the Spirit into all truth, that we may dwell in unity and love with all men, loving even where we see not alike, obeying in as far as we may in sincerity of heart those who are over us in the Lord, seeking the good and not the evil, and praying that the Lord Himself will quickly come to lead and guide His holy church into all the fulness of His own perfect stature.”

This inculcation of obedience, which was one of Clarke’s favourite maxims to his hearers, was by no means palatable to Dalaber, who had launched upon a crusade very contrary to all the commands of the authorities. His heart always kindled at the fervour and beauty of Clarke’s teachings; but he was more disposed to a belligerent than a submissive attitude, and in that the influence of Garret was plainly to be felt. Garret was greatly in favour of Clarke’s influence over the students—he considered that he paved the way with them, as he himself would be unable to do; but he also held that the young canon did not go far enough, and that more was wanted than he was disposed to teach. He was not in favour of too great insistence upon obedience. He thought that the world and the church had had somewhat too much of that. He was a hot advocate of the new doctrine that every man should think and judge for himself. And Dalaber’s nature was one very ready to imbibe such teaching.



Page 44

Clarke, though he believed that the more the Scriptures were read and understood by the people, the more would light pour into the church, was not one of those who was ready to conceal and distribute the forbidden books, whether words of holy Scripture or the writings of the Reformers upon them and upon controverted subjects and church abuses. He held that his own position as a canon forbade this action on his part, and he was also of opinion that there was danger in the too great independence of thought which these writings might engender amongst the unlearned and the hot-headed of the land. He loved to read and discourse upon holy things with men whose hearts were attuned to thoughts of devotion; but he was not one who would willingly stir up strife in the fold, and he clung earnestly to the hope that the church herself would awaken from her sleep and cleanse herself of her many impurities.

Yet he was a greater power than he guessed in Oxford, for he was regarded as somewhat of a saint by those who knew him; and of late the attention of the heads of the university had become attracted towards him. Quite unaware of this, he pursued the even tenor of his way, seeking to inspire devotion and love of purity and truth in all with whom he came into contact, but never overstepping the written or unwritten laws of the college, save perhaps that he knew something of the spread of heretical books and doctrines without betraying his knowledge to those in authority.

So the winter weeks flew by; and Dalaber, divided between his hours of bliss and love with Freda (to whom he told everything, and whose sympathies were all astir in the cause to which he was pledged) and his perilous work with Garret, whose visits to Oxford from Abingdon and other places were made in a more or less secret fashion, scarcely heeded the flight of time. He was taken out of himself by the excitement of the flying hours. He knew he was doing perilous work; but he knew that Freda's sympathy was with him, and that she regarded him as a hero in a noble cause. That was enough to keep him steadfast and fearless, even if the magnetic personality of Garret had not been so often brought to bear upon him. Whenever Garret was in Oxford—and now he was more and more often there, for he had quite a following in the place eager to hear more from him and receive fresh books—he stayed either with Dalaber, or with Radley, the singing man; and in both their lodgings were cleverly-concealed hiding-places, where books could be stowed, that would defy all search, save that of the most stringent kind.

February had come, with its promise of hope, and springtide, and the longer daylight, so dear to the heart of students. Garret had recently appeared once more in Oxford, and was meeting almost daily with the confraternity there. He had brought a fresh consignment of books, some of which he lodged with Dalaber, and some with Radley, as was his wont. There were stolen meetings held in many places, but most often at those two lodgings; and the little band seemed growing in strength daily, when a sudden tempest broke upon it, falling like a bolt from the blue.



Page 45

A meeting at Radley's house had broken up. Dalaber and Garret walked homewards in the dusk towards their quarters in St. Alban Hall. When Garret was in Oxford, Fitzjames gave up his share of Dalaber's lodging to him, and betook himself elsewhere; but when they reached the room they found somebody sitting there awaiting them in the dusk, and Dalaber hailed him as Fitzjames.

But as the stranger rose he saw that he had been mistaken. It was Arthur Cole, and his face was grave as he quietly closed the door.

"I have come to warn you, Master Garret," he said in a low voice. "Your doings in this place have become known, and have betrayed your whereabouts. Cardinal Wolsey himself has sent down a mandate for your arrest. The Dean of Cardinal College is even now in conference with the Commissary of the University and with Dr. London of New College. You know very well what mercy you are like to meet with if you fall into their hands."

Dalaber started and changed colour; but Garret had been a hunted man before this, and received the news quietly.

"They know I am in Oxford, then. Do they know where I may be found?" he asked quietly enough.

"Not yet. They are about to put the proctors on the scent. Tonight you are safe, but early on the morrow inquisition and search will commence. You will be speedily discovered and arrested if you are not far enough away by that time.

"Be warned, Master Garret. You are reckoned as a mischievous man. The cardinal is not cruel, but some of his colleagues and subordinates are. Men have been burnt at the stake before this for offences lighter than yours, for you not only hold heretical doctrines yourself, but you seek to spread them broadcast throughout the land. That is not an offence easily passed over."

Dalaber felt as though a cold stream of water were running down his back. His vivid imagination grasped in a moment all the fearful possibilities of the case, and he felt his knees fail for a moment under him. Yet it was not for himself he feared at that moment. He scarcely realized that this tracking down of Garret might lead to revelations which would be damaging to himself. His fears and his tremors were all for his friend—that friend standing motionless beside him as though lost in thought.

"You hold me a heretic, too, Master Cole?"

"I do," answered the young man at once, and without hesitation.

"And yet you come and warn me—a step that might cost you dear were it known to the authorities."



“Yes,” answered Cole quietly; “I come to warn you, and that for two reasons, neither of which is sympathy with the cause you advocate. I warn you because you are a graduate of Magdalen College, and I had some knowledge of you in the past, and received some kindness at your hands long since, when I was a youthful clerk and you a regent master; and also because I have a great friendship for Dalaber here,



Page 46

and for Clarke, and for others known to you, and who would suffer grief, and fall perhaps into some peril were you to be taken. Also, I hold that it is oftentimes right to succour the weak against the strong, and I love not persecution in any form, though the contumacious and recalcitrant have to be sternly dealt with. So fare you well, and get you gone quickly, for after this night there will be no safety for you in Oxford.”

With that Cole turned to depart; but he laid a hand on Dalaber’s arm, and the latter, understanding the hint, went with him down the staircase, where they paused in the darkness.

“Have a care, Anthony, have a care,” spoke Cole with energy. “I know not as yet whether you be suspected or not; but, truly, you have shown yourself something reckless in these matters, and there must be many in the place who could betray to the proctors your dealings with Garret. Send him forth without delay. Let there be no dallying or tarrying. Look well to it; and if you have any forbidden books, let them be instantly destroyed. Keep nothing that can be used as evidence against you, for I verily believe there will be close and strict search and inquest made, in accordance with the cardinal’s mandate. I only hope and trust that our worthy friend Clarke may not fall into the hands of the bloodhounds, keen on the scent of heresy.”

“God forbid!” cried Anthony quickly.

“God forbid indeed! But there is no knowing. He may be in peril, and others, too. But let there be an end tonight of all dallying with dangerous persons. Send Garret away forthwith, burn your books, and settle once more to your rightful studies. You have played with fire something too long, Anthony; let there be an end of it forthwith, lest the fire leap upon you in a fashion you think not of.”

Chapter VII: In Peril

Dalaber stood a moment as though turned to stone as the full import of these words flashed into his mind. Again he was conscious of the sensation as though cold water were being poured upon him. He found himself shuddering strongly, and stepped out into the street to breathe the freshness of the air. Almost at the moment two of his comrades and confederates, Udel and Diet by name, both of Corpus Christi College, chanced to come along the street, and Dalaber, catching each by an arm, drew them into the shelter of the doorway, and whispered to them the peril in which they all stood more or less involved.

If an inquiry were set on foot none could say where it would cease, or who might be suspected. It was evident that Garret himself stood in imminent peril, and that to get



him safely away from the city was the first duty incumbent upon them. As soon as ever the gates of the town were opened on the morrow he ought to start away to some place of safety.

But where could such a place be found? The three young men went upstairs to Dalaber's lodging, where Garret was standing by the darkening window, lost in thought.



Page 47

“Yes, I must go,” he said, in answer to their words. “I am no longer safe here, and for the sake of the cause I must needs hide myself awhile. And yet I sometimes think it might come as well soon as late, if come it must. And surely that will be the end. I have felt it for long.”

“What end?” asked Dalaber, with a little shudder.

“Martyrdom,” answered Garret, a quick flash in his eye, which the light, just kindled, seemed to reflect back. “I shall die for the faith at last. I know it, I feel it. And there be moments when I could wish that that day had come, and that I might take the crown which is promised to those who are faithful to the death. Yet something tells me again that this day has not yet come, that the Lord has other work for me to do. Therefore I will fly, and that speedily. Yet whither shall I go? There are many places closed to me already, and I shall be searched for far and wide.”

Anthony stood hesitating, his hand upon a piece of paper; and then, as if making up his mind, he spoke eagerly and rapidly.

“Master Garret, I have here a letter written to me by my brother, who is priest of a parish in Dorsetshire; Stalbridge is the name of the place. But a week since, a clerk coming hither from those parts brought to me a letter from him, which I have here in mine hand; and as you will see, he earnestly begs me to find for him here in Oxford a suitable man to act as his curate. Now, if you were to change your name and go to him with a letter from me, no doubt he would incontinently receive you into his house and give you good welcome; and there you could lie hid and unsuspected till the tide of pursuit was over, after which you could make excuse to leave him again, and go back to where you will.”

Garret seemed to be turning the matter over in his mind, whilst the other two students appeared to think this just the opportunity desired, and eagerly bade Dalaber commence the letter of introduction, whilst they offered to pack up some clothes and provision for the traveller.

“What manner of man is this brother of thine, Anthony?” asked Garret. “Doth he belong to us of the brethren?”

A slight flush rose to Dalaber’s cheek, which else was unwontedly pale.

“Alas, no! He has no knowledge of those things which we prize. There is the trouble. He is a rank Papist. But yet he has a kind heart, and there would surely be no need to speak of such matters with him. You would have your duties to do, as in London, in church and parish. It may be that the Lord would send you thither to sow fresh seed by the wayside.”

“If I thought that—” began Garret, with kindling eyes.



“And wherefore not?” questioned the other two eagerly; “it may even be the Lord’s way of spreading the truth. Nay, Master Garret, do not hesitate or tarry. The danger is too sore and pressing, and this is, as it were, an open door of escape. Let us garb you something differently, give you a new name, which Anthony will write in his letter; the letter you will bear upon your person; and then, when you are once beyond the reach of pursuit, you can travel easily and pleasantly, sure that you will be believed, by token of the missive you bear to Master Dalaber of Stalbridge.”



Page 48

Garret's face was very set and thoughtful.

"Well, I will do it; I will try it," he answered. "It may be that it comes from the Lord. I like it not altogether; but it may be I have work to do for Him there. At least I will not tarry here, where I may be a source of peril to others. So, with the first of the morning light, I will go forth, and get me well on my way to the south ere the hue and cry begin."

There was no sleep that night in Anthony Dalaber's lodging. The news spread through the little brotherhood that Garret was in peril, that he was about to leave Oxford; and all through the night furtive visits were being paid him by those who desired his blessing, and to wish him well on his way.

As for Dalaber, he wrote his letter with a shaking hand, recommending his friend, one Edmund Thompson, as a curate to help his brother in his parish. Yet all the while he felt a strange sinking at heart which he could not explain or account for. And when, in the grey light of the dawn, he said adieu to his friend, and saw him vanish through the just opened gate and out into the dim murk of the frosty morning, there came over his ardent and impulsive spirit a strange sense of desolation and sinking; and when he returned to his chill and lonely rooms, the first thing he did was to fling himself upon his bed and break into tearless sobs, the revenge of an exhausted nature.

"Cui bono? cui bono?" was the voiceless cry of his heart, and at that moment it seemed as if everything were slipping away, even the faith and the love which had upheld him for so long.

Sleep surprised him as he thus lay, and he slept deeply for some hours, awaking somewhat refreshed, but full of anxious fears, both for the safety of his friend and for his own future.

It was scarcely possible, he argued, that, should Garret's movements be inquired into by the proctors and others, he could fail to fall under suspicion, as, having been much in his company, he would be doubtless suspected, and perhaps apprehended; and a shiver of natural fear and horror ran through him at such a prospect.

What had better be his course now? He mused of this as he got himself some food; and while he was thus musing the door opened hastily, and Fitzjames appeared, looking heated and nervous.

"Hast heard the news, Dalaber?"

"What news?—not that Master Garret is taken?"

"No; but that strict search is to be made for him in and about Oxford. Is it true that he hath had warning, and is fled? I was told so, but scarce knew what to believe."



“I saw him forth from the gates at dawn. I marvel they were not watched; but he was something disguised, and travelled under another name, so I trust and hope he may escape pursuit. Is it only he for whom they are looking?”

“I have heard naught of others; but who knows where the thing may stop? Thou hadst better have a care to thyself, friend Anthony. It may be that peril will next menace thee.”



Page 49

Alone, Dalaber had felt qualms of fear and dread, but the very sight of a comrade's face restored him to confidence and courage.

"That may well be," he answered; "and if peril come, I trust I may have courage to endure all that may be put upon me. I have done naught of which my conscience accuses me. I can be strong in mine own integrity of heart."

"Yes; but why court danger?" persisted Fitzjames, who had a cordial liking for Dalaber. "Methinks you would be safer in some lodging without the walls, that in case of sudden peril you might the more readily fly. And if these rooms should become suspected and watched, it were better you should be elsewhere. Have you not already spoken of changing into a lodging in Gloucester College, there to prosecute your studies in law?"

"Truly yes," answered Dalaber eagerly; "and it was but two days since that Robert Ferrar told me I could have the chamber next to his, which is now vacant; but I have had so many things to think of since then that the matter has passed altogether from my mind."

"Then let us quickly remove your belongings thither," spoke Fitzjames, with some eagerness. "It were better you should be gone; and I will testify, if question arise, of your reason for moving, which is that you are relinquishing your divinity studies for those of the law, and desire to enter a college where there is a library and more facilities for the prosecution of these studies. It were better, indeed, since you have resigned all thoughts of the priesthood, to commence your new studies without further loss of time. We have had something too much, methinks, of controversy and questionings of late. Let us seek greater safety by leaving such matters alone for the nonce. If happier days dawn anon, we may be able to resume our readings and discussions; but for the moment—"

A significant gesture completed the sentence, and Dalaber made no remonstrance, for indeed he felt that his mind required a space of rest from these perilous controversies. Master Garret's stay had been fraught with intense spiritual excitement for him. As long as the personality of the man was brought to bear upon him his nerves were strung to a high pitch of tension; but the strain had been severe, and the reaction was setting in. He was half afraid of the lengths he had gone in some directions, and there came over him a desire for a breathing space, for a haven of peace and safety; and he felt that Fitzjames had counselled him well in advising a removal to fresh quarters.

In those days it was not unusual for a student to move from one hall or even college to another, if he were not upon the foundation of the latter. Gloucester College (where Worcester College now stands) was one of the many religious houses still to be found in Oxford; but it was open to youths who were neither in orders nor intending to enter the priesthood, but only to prosecute their secular studies. Dalaber had a friend there who was one of the inquirers after truth, and was also a friend of Garret. It was he who had

told him of the vacant room so near to his own, and thither he and Fitzjames moved all his belongings during that day.



Page 50

It was a pleasant chamber, and he was kindly welcomed by Ferrar, who heard with great concern of Garret's peril. He himself had not fallen under any suspicion as yet, so far as he knew; and he agreed with Fitzjames that Dalaber had better keep himself very quiet for the next few days, prosecuting his studies with zeal, and not showing himself much in the streets. It was to be hoped that the flight of Garret, when known, would avert further peril from Oxford; but as Dalaber had certainly been his closest comrade and companion during his visit, it behoved him to have a care that he excited no more suspicion.

"When they persecute you in one city, flee unto another," quoted Fitzjames, as he settled his last load in Dalaber's new lodging, which was beginning to look a little habitable, though still in some confusion. "That is sound Scripture, is it not? and sound sense into the bargain. But the town seems quiet enough to me now; I have gone to and fro in many of the streets, and I have heard and seen nothing to alarm."

Dalaber heaved a sigh of relief. He was nerving himself to meet his fate bravely, whatever that fate might be; but the prospect of being arrested and charged with heresy or the circulation of forbidden books was sufficiently unnerving, and the more so to one whose life seemed opening out so full of promise and crowned with the blessing of love.

"I must see Freda!" he suddenly exclaimed, as the shades of evening began to fall. "What does she know of this matter, Fitzjames? has it reached her ears that I may be in any peril?"

"I trow not; I have told her nothing. She may have heard that the proctors are seeking Master Garret. I know not. When I came away this morn nothing was known at the Bridge House; but if she has heard aught since, she will be anxious for you and for him alike."

"Verily yes, and I will go and show myself, and reassure her," cried Dalaber, throwing on his cloak and cap. "I have time enough and to spare to set my things in order later. I have not seen Freda for full three days. I must e'en present myself tonight."

"I will go, too," answered Fitzjames; "and let us avoid the city walls and gates, and take the meadow paths past Durham College and Austin Friars, for it were best you did not show yourself abroad too much these next few days. I trust that afterwards all peril will be at an end."

There was a clear saffron sky above them, and the crescent moon hung there like a silver lamp. The peace and hush of eventide was in the air, and fell like a charm upon Dalaber's fevered spirit. The sound of the angelus bell was heard from several quarters, and as they passed St. Bernard's Chapel they stepped into the building, and remained kneeling there a brief while, as the vesper service was chanted.

Soothed and refreshed, and feeling more in harmony with life and its surroundings, Dalaber pursued his way, his arm linked in that of his friend.



Page 51

Fitzjames was one of those who halted somewhat between two opinions. He was willing and ready to hear and receive much of that new teaching which was stirring men's hearts and beginning to arouse bitter opposition; but he was still one who called himself a true son of the church, and he had no wish to draw down upon himself the perils of excommunication and other punishment which threatened the obstinate heretics. He attended many of John Clarke's lectures; he discoursed much with Dalaber, for whom he had a sincere friendship and admiration; but he did not see why there should be strife and disruption. He thought the church could be trusted to cleanse herself of her errors and corruptions, and that her mandates should be obeyed, even if they were sometimes somewhat harsh and unreasonable, as notably in this matter of the circulation of the Scriptures amongst the people.

So he was more anxious for Dalaber to avoid drawing down notice upon himself than that he should play the part of hero and martyr with constancy and courage. And his friendly solicitude had been soothing to Anthony through the day, restoring his balance of mind, and quieting the nervous restlessness which had possessed him hitherto. And now he was approaching the house of his beloved, and her gentle sweetness and tender counsels would fill up the measure of his happiness, and restore that confidence in himself and his cause which had at one time been somewhat rudely shaken.

She met him on the threshold, and for the first time since the troth plight her arms were about his neck, and he felt the tremor of her whole slender frame.

"Anthony, Anthony, thou art safe!"

"Beloved, yes; wherefore didst thou fear for me?"

"How could I not fear, not knowing all, when such stories and rumours have been flying about?"

"What stories? what rumours?" he asked, feeling his heart begin to beat more rapidly.

She drew him into a little antechamber close at hand, and by the light of the flickering fire he saw that her face was pale and anxious, whilst her eyes looked as though they had shed tears.

"My Freda, what is the matter? Thou hast been weeping."

"Yes, for my heart has been heavy within me. How should it not be? And yet I know that the cause is holy and righteous, and I would have all men to be constant and full of courage. Cannot the Lord preserve His own?"

"Yes, yes; let us not fear!" cried Dalaber, his courage rising with the need to reassure his beloved. "But tell me, what hast thou heard?"



“Arthur Cole has been here; he has come thrice today, each time with fresh news. Thou dost know how he regards my sister Magda. None can fail to note his love for her; and I think he will win hers at the last. I trow he has well redeemed the pledge he gave her, and that he will get his reward—in time.”

“His pledge?”

“Yes; he vowed to her that if he were able he would give warning to any of the brethren who might be in peril. He hears more than others of what is likely to pass, and he brought us word at daylight this morning that Master Garret was to be closely searched for.”



Page 52

"That is true; but he is fled."

"He was willing, then, to fly! Ah, I am glad, I am glad! It is not always the greatest thing to stand at bay and fall into peril. A man may rightly think of saving his life and those of his friends by flight. I am thankful he is away. Pray Heaven they get not on his track. They say if he fall into their hands he will perish at the stake."

Dalaber shuddered, but answered quietly:

"I think he will escape. Had they overtaken him we should have heard. But what else hath Cole told thee that thou shouldst fear and shed tears, thou who art so bold, and filled with spirit and constancy?"

"He spoke of Master Clarke," answered Freda, lowering her voice. "He is fearful of danger to him."

"Danger for Clarke!" cried Dalaber, almost hotly. "But he has never had aught to do with the sale or distribution of forbidden books. He knows of it, but he takes no part in it. What can they urge against him?"

"They only whisper it as yet, but Arthur says they suspect him of heresy. Men who have heard him lecture and preach have spoken of his doctrine, and others have pronounced it dangerous. Arthur himself is full of wrath, for he loves Master Clarke as a brother, and he says he has never heard aught but holy and pure teaching drop from his lips; and none may doubt that Arthur is a true son of the church. He went forth again for tidings; but he only learned that the Dean of Cardinal College, the Commissary of the University, Dr. London of New College, and a few others of like standing with themselves, have met in consultation more than once during the day, and that it is whispered abroad that whether or not they lay hands on Master Garret, they are going to make strict inquisition throughout Oxford for the discovery of heretical teachers and thinkers in the university, and take measures whereby the spread of the peril may be arrested."

Dalaber and Freda stood face to face in the flickering light, their eyes full upon each other. He bent down suddenly, and kissed her with an almost passionate intensity of feeling.

"If they make strict inquisition, my beloved, they may find that Anthony Dalaber is numbered amongst the heretics."

"I know it," Freda answered, and her voice was very low.

"And if they should hale him to prison what shall he say and do? Wouldst thou that he should save himself by submission and obedience? or shall he be bold to speak, let the consequences be what they may?"



He reached out and held her hands in his. Hers trembled, but his were steady.

“I would have Anthony Dalaber true to his soul and true to his friends. I would have him obey, inasmuch as he can do so with a clear conscience toward God and man, but no farther. O my love, my love, how I shall pray for thee now and ever!”

He clasped her in his arms, as once before he had done when they had been speaking almost upon this same subject, before the danger cloud hung lowering in the horizon of their sky.



Page 53

“Thou dost bid me be faithful above all things, my Freda—faithful unto death?”

He felt the shudder that ran through her frame. It had been easy once to speak these words, but they sounded more terrible now. Yet for all her tremors her voice did not falter.

“It is the voice of the Spirit, Anthony; it is His word. But ah! how I hope and pray that such a trial of faith will not be thine! Faithful to death—to such a death! Anthony, my love, my love, how could I bear it?”

“Thou wouldst have the strength, as I trust I should, were such a choice before me,” he answered gravely. “But why should we fear the worst, when so little has yet happened? All men say of the cardinal that he is not cruel, nor willingly a slayer of men for conscience’ sake. He is the bitter foe of heresy; but it may be that it will suffice him that Garret be gone, and that those of us that have consorted with him remain quiet and silent. That we are willing to do. I have removed my lodging to Gloucester College, where I shall henceforth study the law, since I have abandoned all thoughts of the priesthood. It may well be that the storm will roll over our heads without breaking. And when it has passed away we can recommence our readings and discourses together, but quietly, so as not to arouse notice. Even the holy apostles themselves were content to abide quiet and silent amid perils that threatened their freedom and safety. They escaped out of various dangers, and used caution and carefulness; and if they, why not we?”

Freda heaved a long breath, as of relief from the over pressure of emotion. She had seen that Arthur Cole had entertained some fears on Dalaber’s account, knowing the fiery nature of the man, and his quick, impulsive temperament. He had had misgivings lest he, by some rash act, should draw down the anger of the authorities upon himself, and be made a scapegoat, in the stead of the absent Garret.

Therefore Freda heard his words with a certain relief. Constancy and steadfastness she desired to see in him, but not the reckless defiance which rushes upon danger and courts martyrdom. She herself had scarcely known which course her lover would follow, and his appearance in this quiet and thoughtful mood was a great relief to her.

“That is how I feel, Anthony,” she answered. “Any trial the Lord sends us we must bear for His sake with all constancy; but even He Himself was obedient and submissive, and careful in His words and acts. Let none have cause to accuse us as brawlers, or headstrong, or enemies to law and order; but yet let us, when the time come, be found faithful, even unto death.”

He took her hand and kissed it, as though to seal the compact.

Chapter VIII: The Fugitive

Meantime, in the darkness of that February morning, Thomas Garret stepped forth from the sheltering walls of his still-beloved Oxford, and turned his rapid steps in a southerly and westerly direction.



Page 54

His heart was hot within him as he pushed along, choosing the most unfrequented lanes and paths. This was not the first time he had been hunted, and he had acquired some of the instincts of the quarry. He knew how to lie hidden awhile in some sheltered nook, listening and watching, himself unseen. He knew how to avoid notice, and how to pass through public places with the quiet air of confidence which drew no sort of attention towards himself. His priest's gown and hood would be a protection to him after he had shaken himself clear of the pursuit which might be set afoot by the proctors. He had Anthony Dalaber's letter in his wallet, and bread sufficient for the day's needs. He could fearlessly present himself at any religious house when he had reached another county, and he was certain of being well received and cared for by the monks, who received all travellers kindly, but especially those of the "household of faith."

He spoke the words half aloud, and then a strange sound broke from his lips, half a laugh and half a groan.

"The household of faith! O my God! What would they say if they knew that he who came to them as one of the faithful, was flying an outcast from the wrath of the cardinal, branded as a dangerous heretic? O Lord, be with me, and guide me right. Am I not faithful? Do I not love Thee, O Lord? Am I not sworn to Thy holy service? O Thou who judgest the hearts of men, and knowest all from the beginning, teach me what I should speak and do. Teach me whither I should bend my steps. I am ready to suffer persecution and death for Thy sake and the truth's. Only make me to see what Thou wilt have of me, that I may know whether Thou hast set before me an open door elsewhere, and art driving me thither, or whether Thou wouldst that I should return whence I came, and abide there whatever may befall me."

For the farther Garret travelled, the more fearful did he become that he was doing wrong in taking flight after this sort. To fly before his persecutors was one thing—his conscience did not upbraid him for that; but to go into Dorsetshire, to present himself to Anthony Dalaber's brother under a false name, to become curate to a man whose own brother termed him a "rank Papist"—was that indeed his bounden duty? Was that a right or righteous course to pursue? But if he gave up that purpose, what next? He knew not whither to turn, or where he might go with safety. The arm of the cardinal was long. He had eyes that reached far and wide. All Garret's own haunts were likely to be closely watched.

The man felt the fire of zeal burning hotly within him. He looked up into the heavens above him, and he felt as though a great work yet lay before him. He broke out into songs of praise and thanksgiving. It seemed to him as though he saw written in the sky glorious promises for those who should endure steadfastly to the end.



Page 55

There was something of the prophetic spirit in the man. At times the world about him would recede from him, and he would be left, as it were, alone upon some vast immeasurable height, seeing as in a dream the things of God and the mysteries of the heavenlies stretched out before him. Such a moment came upon him late in that day as he journeyed. He seemed to see a vast and mighty struggle—an overturning of thrones, principalities, and powers; a far-reaching upheaval in church and in state; a coming judgment, and a coming glory.

He awoke as from a trance, with his head on fire and his heart hot within him. Words sprang to his lips, and he gave them utterance with a sense of power not his own.

“The Lord will arise. He will judge between man and man, between good and evil, between truth and falsehood. The Lord Himself is our helper. Of whom shall we be afraid? He is the upholder of the righteous cause. Shall we fear what man can do unto us? The time will come when all shall come to the knowledge of the truth; He has promised, and His word cannot fail. Let us put our trust and confidence in Him, and fear no evil, even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death. He will be with us to the end, and will overcome in us, when we are too weak to overcome for ourselves.”

The shades of evening were beginning to fall, and when the reaction set in after this period of spiritual exultation, Garret found himself somewhat weary and exhausted. He had not slept at all during the previous night, and he had been afoot from earliest dawn. He had accomplished a long day's journey, and had only eaten a little bread and drunk of the water of the brooks he had passed on his road. He began to desire the shelter of a roof and the cheering warmth of a fire, for the wind had risen, and blew upon him with keen and nipping cold, and his feet were sore from his long travel over rough ground.

He had breasted the rise of a long incline, and now stood at its crest, looking rather wistfully and eagerly over the darkening landscape in search of some human habitation. He knew to a certain extent where he was, and that within some few miles there was a monastic establishment of some repute. But five miles seemed a weary way to him now, and a sense of repulsion had come over him at the thought of presenting himself at any monastery in his priestly garb. Not that he in any sort repudiated the sacred calling, but he felt that if the truth were known the monks would regard him as a wolf in sheep's clothing; and he was experiencing a sense of distaste for any sort of subterfuge, whilst hesitating about giving himself up, lest he should be deserting the cause he had at heart by robbing it of one of its most active members. If the Lord had work for him still to do, how gladly would he do it!

As he remained resting awhile on the hilltop, and gazing about him in search of some indication of human habitation, he suddenly saw the beam of some small light glimmering through the increasing darkness; and uttering an exclamation of pleasure, he bent his steps in its direction, confident of finding some human habitation at last.



Page 56

It was not easy to keep the light always in view, but he managed to bear in that direction, and came at last into a region of meadow land, where there were some sheepfolds and pens, in which the flocks had been folded for the night, and which were watched over by a dog, who sprang barking towards Garret, but was pacified when he spoke gently to him, and showed by his actions that he had no intentions upon the sheep.

From where he stood he was able to see that the light glimmered out of an unglazed window in a wattled cabin, evidently the sleeping place of the shepherd. After Garret had quieted the dog, he remained gazing for a few minutes at this steady light, and then (he scarcely knew why) he crept up very softly towards the little cabin, and looked in at the orifice.

The sight that he saw aroused his quickened interest. The place was very small—only large enough to contain a few sacks of straw for the bed, over which a couple of fleeces had been thrown by way of covering, a small rough table, on which a rush light stood, together with a few wooden platters, a loaf of bread, and a pitcher. A box was the only seat, and upon it sat a grizzled, bent old man, with his back towards the window, and his head bent low over the table.

By shifting his position very slightly, Garret was able to see that he was bending over a book which lay open beneath the rush light, and that with his forefinger he was pointing slowly along the line.

Garret held his breath in astonishment. In towns, at this time, would be found here and there a humble artisan or labouring man who could read, and amongst such the desire for the printed Scriptures was always keen and ardent. But out here in these lonely wilds, far away from the haunts of man, it was a strange sight to see an old shepherd with a book before him. The boys of the rising generation were beginning to be taught reading and writing in the grammar schools now springing up in the towns, but hinds of the age of this man were generally absolutely ignorant of letters in any form whatever.

The sound of a voice broke the stillness. The old man had begun to read the words aloud.

“I will—smite the—shepherd—and the—sheep—shall be scattered—”

Suddenly a great wave of emotion came upon Garret, and he uttered a strangled cry. The old man hastily thrust his book into the bosom of his coarse tunic, and gazed out of the opening with a strange expression of doubt and fear.

“What was that?” he asked, as he rose to his feet; and Garret, flinging back his priest’s hood, looked fearlessly in at the aperture.



“It is a friend, who loves the holy Word of God, and loves all who are bold enough to love and cherish it, also a man to whom a message has been sent through you, my worthy friend. Open the door and let us clasp hands, for I know that the Lord hath sent me hither, and hath put a word in thy mouth which is meant for me. What shall become of the sheep if the shepherd be smitten? But shall the shepherd flee, unless he be an hireling and love not the sheep? The shepherd must watch yet over his flock, even though he hold himself away from the hand of the smiter. I see it all—I see it all! The Lord hath given me light!”



Page 57

Not one syllable of this eager torrent of words did the old shepherd comprehend; but he recognized the voice of friendship and comradeship in the unseen speaker, and he unfastened his rude door and bade the stranger enter. As Garret stepped into the light in his priest's gown the man gave a little start of surprise.

"Nay, fear not," answered Garret; "I am God's priest—not the Pope's. If thou dost own the words of Holy Writ, perchance thou hast even heard the name of Thomas Garret. It is he who stands before thee now."

The shepherd gazed at him for a moment as one in a dream, and then he seized his hand and pressed it to his lips.

"It is he! it is he! I see it now! It is he whose words awoke my sleeping soul! O sir, I heard you preach once in London town, whither I had been sent on a charge of sheep stealing, but was released. And, indeed, of that offence I was innocent. But my life had been full of other evils, and I might well have sunk into the bottomless pit of iniquity, but that I heard you preach; and those words of fire entered into my soul, and gave me no rest day or night. Then I heard of the Christian Brethren, and they received and comforted me; and when I could earn the money for it, I bought this copy of the Holy Gospels. I have had it these two years now. I had learned to read by that time, and when I had bought it I wanted nothing so much as a quiet life, away from the haunts of men, where I could read and ponder and study the blessed Word without fear of man."

"So you took to the life of a shepherd—a calm and peaceful life, that reminds us of many holy things."

"I had tended sheep in my youth, and in these parts, sir, before I took to those wilder ways which well-nigh cost me my life. I came back; and some remembered me, and I got employment as shepherd. And here I hope and trust to end my days in peace. But there be whispers abroad that the cardinal and the abbots and priors will make search after the precious books, and rob us of them, and brand us as evildoers and heretics."

"Alas, and that is all too true," answered Garret, with a deep sigh. "In me you see a fugitive from the wrath of the cardinal. I left Oxford at dawn of day, and have fled apace through the wildest paths ever since. I am weary and worn with travel, and seeing this light gleaming forth, I thought I would seek here for rest and shelter; but little did I hope to find one of the brethren in this lonely cabin, and one who may himself suffer in the cause of truth and righteousness."

"We shall not suffer more than the Lord did," answered the old man, with a sudden illumination of feature, "nor more than He sees good for us. It may be that He wants His martyrs in all generations and in all lands. Does it not speak somewhere in the blessed Book of being made perfect through suffering?"

It was wonderful to Garret to find such depth of comprehension and power of expression in this apparently illiterate and humble old man. To be sure, his accent was rough and homely, but the thoughts to which he gave utterance were deep and pure.



Page 58

Soon Garret found himself sitting over the turf fire, sipping gratefully at the warm milk, in which his bread lay soaked, and telling the old man the whole history of his wanderings, his peril, and his doubts about the plan laid down for him with regard to the curacy he had been offered.

The more he talked, the more did Garret revolt against the idea of presenting himself to Master Dalaber in Dorsetshire under a false name and in false colours. He could not believe that this could be pleasing to God, and he saw that the old shepherd, though diffident of speech, was of the same opinion.

"I will not do it," he said at last, "I will not do it. I cannot. I will retrace my steps to Oxford, but will use all care and discretion to avoid notice. They will by this time have discovered my flight, and Oxford is the last place in which they will now be seeking me. I will enter it by night, slip into one of my old hiding places there, get speech with Anthony Dalaber, and tell him how I have changed my plan, so that he may know I am not with his brother. Then I will put off my priest's garb, and sally forth in the night, and make my way over to Wales, and then to Germany, where I can work with the faithful there, and perchance be of greater use to the cause than in this land, where for the present I am so watched and hunted.

"This priest's garb has become hateful to me. I feel in it as though I were acting a lie, albeit I shall ever hold myself the minister and priest of God. It deceives men, who look to see in every garbed priest a servile slave of cardinal and Pope. I can never, never be such an one; wherefore let me cast away the outer trappings, and cease to deceive the eyes of men."

The shepherd, who only partially followed this monologue, which Garret uttered half to himself, half to his companion, understood this last argument, and slowly nodded his head. There was beginning to grow up in the minds of many a fear and horror of the priesthood, not by any means always undeserved, though greatly exaggerated in many quarters.

But to go back to the perils of Oxford to secure a secular dress seemed a far cry; yet, when the men proceeded to talk the matter over, they saw no other way by which such garb could be obtained. Neither had any money; and it might be dangerous for Garret to show himself at any town to purchase secular raiment there, even if he could beg money at a monastery for his journey. He thought he knew the place well enough to make the experiment, without too much risk either to himself or to others, and before he stretched himself upon the shepherd's bed of straw that night his mind was fully made up.

Page 59

But upon the morrow he was forced to admit that one day's rest would be necessary before he could make the return journey. He was so stiff and exhausted by his long day's travel, and the tension of nerve which had preceded it, and his feet were so sore in places, that he decided to remain with the shepherd for another day and night; and then at dawn, upon the following morning, which would be Friday, he would start forth again, reach Oxford after dark, find some hiding place there for the night, and after making the needful change in his dress, and advising his friends of the change of his plan, he would start forth a free man once more by night, and instead of tying his hands by allying himself with any Papist parish priest, he would cross the water, find himself amongst friends there, and return later to his native shores, bringing with him stores of precious books, which should be distributed to eager purchasers as they had been before.

The hours of the day did not seem long to the tired traveller as he mused upon these things. The shepherd went about his daily toil, but often came indoors for a while to talk with his guest; and by the time the second night arrived, Garret was so far rested and refreshed that he had no doubt about making good his return journey upon the morrow, reckoning that by that time, at least, all hue and cry after him in Oxford would be over.

He slept soundly and dreamlessly through the night, and was awakened at dawn by the old man, who had made him the best breakfast his humble house could furnish, and waited lovingly upon him till he had satisfied his hunger and was ready to start upon his way. Then Garret embraced him as a brother, thanked him heartily for his hospitality, gave him the blessing the old man begged, receiving one in return.

He set his face joyfully towards the city from which he had fled, for it seemed to him as though he had fled thence somewhat unworthily—as though he had not shown a rightful trust in God. It was a rash step he was taking now, but somehow that thought excited in him no anxiety. He felt a great longing to see his friend Dalaber again, to explain matters afresh to him, and to start forth free from all trammels and disguises.

He was not, however, rash in exposing himself to recognition by the way, and kept to those secluded byways which had served him so well on his other journey. He scarcely saw a soul the whole of the long day of travel, and although he grew very weary and his feet again gave him pain, he plodded on with a light heart, and was rewarded just before the last of the daylight failed him by a glimpse of the distant towers and buildings of Oxford.



Page 60

His heart yearned over the place when he saw it. It came upon him that here he would stay and abide the consequences. He felt strong to endure all that might be laid upon him. If it were God's pleasure that he should suffer in the cause, would He not give him strength to bear all? For a moment he forgot the peril which might come to others from his apprehension. He only felt that if the martyr's crown were indeed to be his (a thing of which he had a strong presentiment), it might well come soon as late. And therefore, when he reached the city at dark, he slipped into the town itself, instead of lurking outside, as first he had intended, and made his way through the dark, narrow streets to a certain humble lodging, which he had used before, when Dalaber had not been able to receive him.

He met not a creature on his way. He did not think his entrance had been marked as he passed through the gates. A thick, drizzling rain was falling, which had wet him to the skin, and which seemed to be keeping every one within doors. He found the door of his old lodging unlocked and the place empty, save for a little firing in a closet, which he soon kindled into a warming blaze.

He had bought food at midday in a hamlet through which he passed, and there was enough left in his wallet to provide him with a frugal supper. He dried his clothes at the friendly warmth of the fire, and though the room was destitute of bedding, there were a few sacks on the floor. Laying himself down upon these before the fire, he was soon plunged in a deep and dreamless slumber.

How long he slept he never could have guessed. He afterwards knew that it was midnight when he woke. What roused him was the sound of trampling feet on the stairs outside, and the voices of persons ascending. He lay for a few moments in the darkness, which the few smouldering embers of the dying fire scarcely served to illuminate; and then in a sudden access of alarm he sprang to his feet and made for the door.

If escape had been in his mind, he was too late. Already the door was burst open. A flood of light from a couple of lanterns dazzled his eyes for some moments, so that he could only see that several men were in the room, and a stern voice exclaimed, "That is the man! Seize him!" Then he knew that his hour had come, and that he was arrested.

Next minute he saw clearly, and found himself confronted by the proctors of the university, who regarded him with stern faces. Who had given them warning that Garret had returned to Oxford has never, I believe, been known—at least there is no mention of this made in the history of the known facts. But some person must have recognized the man, tracked him to his lair, and set the bulldogs of the cardinal upon him. He was taken at midnight upon the night of his secret return, and now stood a helpless prisoner in the hands of those set upon his track.

He looked at them with calm fearlessness. His spirit rose to the peril, and his mien was dauntless.



Page 61

“Upon what charge am I arrested?” he asked quietly.

“You will hear that at the right time and in the right place,” was the stern reply; “we are not here to bandy words with you. Put on your gown and hood, though you so little deserve such garb, and come whither you are led. Force will not be used unless you compel it.”

Garret resumed the outer garments he had laid aside for the night, and pronounced himself ready to follow them whither they would.

“Take him to Lincoln College,” spoke the senior proctor to his servants. “Dr. London will keep him in ward, and deal with him in the first place.”

A slight smile passed over Garret’s face. Dr. London of Lincoln was well known as one of the most bitter persecutors of the new opinions, and was reported to have stocks and other implements of punishment in a room in his house, which were used upon the recalcitrant and obstinate according to his pleasure. If he were to be Dr. London’s prisoner, then farewell to any hopes of mercy.

Nevertheless he uttered no word as the men led him through the silent streets. The rain had ceased, and the moon was shining in the sky. The whole city seemed asleep as they hastened along.

But as they approached Lincoln College signs of life appeared. In the rector’s house lights gleamed from several windows; and as Garret was pushed in at a side door, which was securely locked behind him, and led into a large, square hall, he saw the stern and frowning face of Dr. London gazing at him from the stairway, and a loud and masterful voice exclaimed:

“Take him into the strong room, and lock him up for the night. I will have speech with him upon the morrow.”

Garret was led down a short, flagged passage, and thrust through an open door into a perfectly dark room. The door was closed, the bolt shot home, and he was left in silence and blackness to the company of his own thoughts.

Chapter IX: A Steadfast Spirit

The day which was spent by Thomas Garret in retracing his steps back to Oxford was passed not unhappily by Anthony Dalaber, who, after the lapse of two uneventful days, began to draw breath again, and make sure of the safety of his friend.

He had matters of his own which occupied much of his attention. The store of forbidden books brought to Oxford by Garret had been divided pretty equally between him and



Radley; and Dalaber had contrived a very ingenious hiding place just outside his lodging room in St. Alban Hall, where, by removing some planking of the floor, a cavity in the wall had been carefully excavated, and the books secreted there, where it would be difficult for any to find them who had not the clue to the hiding place.

Page 62

It was safer to hide them outside the chamber, as, if discovered, their presence would not incriminate any one—so Dalaber believed. Even Fitzjames, though sharing his lodging and some of his views, did not know where he kept his store of books. They formed such a dangerous possession that Dalaber spoke of them only to those who were heart and soul in the movement. And he decided not to remove them with his other belongings to Gloucester College, as he had no safe repository there to hold them, and it seemed to him that for the present the time had gone by for any work of distribution. It would be needful for the present to keep very quiet, until the suspicions which had evidently been aroused in the minds of the authorities should be laid to rest.

It was with a certain sense of relief that Dalaber definitely decided to quit the study of theology and divinity, and to throw himself into that of the law. Religious controversy had become suddenly distasteful to him. The Questions and other books of the theological faculty appeared to him futile and unsatisfactory. He had definitely resolved upon the secular life for himself; and although that did not mean that his convictions were shaken, or that his faith was in any way less precious to him, it gave to him a certain sense of elasticity and freedom of thought and spirit.

He could take Dr. Langton as his standard of what a man should be. He did not mix himself up with the burning and controverted questions of the day. He followed his studies in medicine and Greek. His house was a resort of learned men of all schools of thought. Free discussion was carried on there on all sorts of subjects. He favoured the liberality of mind which the church opposed; yet he did not embroil himself with the authorities, and led his own quiet scholarly life, respected and revered of all.

“That is the life for me,” spoke Dalaber, as he looked round his new lodging, and admired the fashion in which his belongings had been set up there. “I will follow the secular calling, keeping my soul and spirit free to follow the promptings of the Spirit. Whenever I see the opportunity to strike a blow in the cause of freedom, may God give me strength to strike boldly and fearlessly; but I will not thrust myself forward into needless peril. Obedience has its place in the church as well as other virtues. I will not be untrue to my conscience or my convictions, but without good cause I will not embroil myself in these hot controversies and perilous matters. I have no quarrel with Holy Church, as Master Clarke expounds her, I would only see her cleansed and purged of her iniquity, shedding light—the light of God—upon the paths of her children. Perchance, as he says, if we prayed more for her—if we pleaded more with her in secret, interceding before God for her corruptions and unholiness—He Himself would cleanse and purge her, and fit her for her high and holy calling. Love is stronger than hate, for love is of God. I would seek more of that spirit of love which shines and abides so firm in Him. I have been in peril—I am sure of it—and the Lord has saved me from the mouth of the lion. Let me show my gratitude to Him not by falling away from the narrow path which leads to life everlasting, but by treading it in meekness and humility, in His strength rather than mine own.”



Page 63

Dalaber was not unconscious of the besetting faults and failings of his temperament—an impulsive self confidence, followed by moments of revolt and lassitude and discouragement. He knew that a quiet stability was the quality he lacked, and that the fire of enthusiasm and the revolt against abuses which blazed hot within him was not the holiest frame of mind in which to meet a crisis such as had lately threatened him. He knew that he might have been tempted to speak dangerous words, to rail against those in authority, and to bring deeper trouble upon himself in consequence.

The influence of the fiery Garret upon him was always of this character. Now that he had gone, Dalaber was able to review the situation much more calmly and quietly, and to see that the Lord and His apostles were not advocates of violence and disruption, that they inculcated reverence to governors, spiritual and temporal, as well as patience, long suffering, meekness, gentleness, and forbearance. The sword of the Spirit was not a carnal weapon. Its work was of a higher and holier nature. It might have to be drawn forth in battle; but it must be wielded in obedience, and not in irresponsible rebellion. Faithful steadfastness was asked of all God's children; but not all were called on to go forth as champions of even a righteous cause. Their duty might be to stand and wait for what the Lord would bid them do.

Dalaber had a strong conviction that alone, and acting upon his own impulses only, he would do harm rather than good. He was not the stuff of which leaders are made. He knelt down suddenly, and prayed for grace and guidance; and scarcely had he risen from his knees before a step upon the stairs and a knock at the door warned him of the approach of a visitor.

The next minute Arthur Cole stood before him. He was followed by a servant, who laid down a bulky parcel and departed.

“Ah, friend Dalaber,” spoke Cole, with a kindly grip of the hand, “it was told me you were moving into fresh quarters here, and methought a few plenishings might not come amiss to your lodgings. You are something of an anchorite in your method of living, Anthony; but this chamber deserves a little adornment, if you are not averse to such.”

So speaking, Arthur unfastened the package, and there was a soft skin rug to lay before the hearth, where a small fire of wood and fir cones was burning; a gaily striped quilt for the truckle bed covered it up and gave it an air of elegance; and a few books—in those days a costly and valued possession—completed the kindly bequest.

“They tell me you are to prosecute your studies in the law,” he said, as he ranged the volumes beside Dalaber's own sparse collection on the shelf; “and since I have trodden the path before you, you are welcome to these volumes, which I seldom refer to now, and can always borrow from you if need should arise.”

“You are a true friend, Arthur,” answered Dalaber, much gratified and delighted. “I thank you heartily. You are a friend to all, and we owe you much. It is the more kindly and welcome because you are not one of us in other matters, and might very well have withdrawn from all companionship with those upon whom the wrath of the cardinal is like soon to fall.”



Page 64

"I would speak somewhat anent that same matter, Anthony," said Arthur, suddenly turning upon his friend, and signing him to take the seat opposite. "It is in some sort on that account I have come. But first tell me—is Thomas Garret safely away?"

Yes; on his way—"

"Nay, tell me not that. I have no wish to learn his whereabouts—only that he is safe outside the city, and not likely to be taken."

"He has been away these two days; and if not taken already, I trow he will escape altogether."

Arthur heaved a sigh of satisfaction and relief.

"I am right glad to hear that, Anthony—for your sake almost more than for his, since you are my friend."

"And why for my sake, Arthur?"

"Marry, thus that had Garret been found in the place, they would not have stopped short with laying hands upon him. They would have seized also those who had consorted with him. Not finding him, they begin to doubt whether the cardinal was right in tracing him hither, and whether he and his books have indeed been brought here. But let them once lay hands upon him, and not he alone, but also his comrades and associates, will stand in much peril. So have a care, friend Anthony."

Dalaber felt the thrill of what was half relief, half fear, run through him; but his glance did not quail.

"He is gone," he answered quietly, "and no man has sought to lay hands upon me."

"No, and right glad am I of it. I have spoken up for you as one of my friends, and a young man of promise and integrity. But I beg you to have a care for the future, Anthony, and especially during these Lenten weeks upon which we have just entered. For a strict watch will be kept over all suspected men; and if you are found with forbidden books in your possession—"

Arthur's eyes roved keenly round the pleasant chamber as he left his sentence unfinished.

"I have none here," answered Dalaber. "I have nothing but mine own little copy of the Gospels, which I carry ever on my own person. There are no books here to bring danger upon me or any."



“I am right glad to hear it, and I trust you will have no more to do with that perilous traffic. For sooner or later it will bring all men into trouble who mix themselves up with it. And for you who can read the Scriptures in the tongues in which they were written there is the less excuse. I warn you to have a care, friend Anthony, in your walk and conversation. I trust that the storm will pass by without breaking; but there is no telling. There is peril abroad, suspicion, anger, and distrust. A spark might fire a mighty blaze. The cardinal’s warning and rebuke to the heads of colleges has wrought great consternation and anger. They are eager to purge themselves of the taint of heresy, and to clear themselves in his eyes.”

“I misdoubt me they will ever succeed there,” muttered Dalaber, with a slight smile. “Thought will not be chained.”

Page 65

“No; but men can think in silence and act with prudence,” spoke Arthur, with a touch of sharpness in his tone. “I would that you thinkers, who stand in peril of being excommunicated as heretics, had a little more of the wisdom of the serpent which the Scriptures enjoin upon the devout.”

“Excommunicated!” exclaimed Dalaber, and said no more.

To a devout young student, who had all his life through regularly attended the office of the Mass, and had communicated frequently, and prepared himself with confession and fasting and prayer, the idea of excommunication was terrible. That the Mass was overlaid and corrupted in some of its rites and ceremonies Dalaber and others were beginning openly to admit; but that it was based upon the one sacrifice of the atonement, and was showing forth the Lord’s death according to His own command, none doubted for a moment; and to be debarred from sharing in that act of worship was not a thought easily to be contemplated.

Arthur saw his advantage and pressed it.

“Yes, my friend—excommunicated. That is the fate of those who mix themselves up in these matters, and draw down upon their heads the wrath of such men as the cardinal. Believe me, there is such a thing as straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. And that is what you might chance to find you had done, were you cast out from the fold of the church for a few rash acts of ill-advised rebellion and disobedience, when all the while you might have lived in peace and safety, waiting till a better time shall come. If this movement is of God, will He not show it and fight for it Himself?”

“Yes; but He must use men in the strife, as He uses men in His Holy Church for their offices there. Yet, believe me, I do not desire strife. I would rather live at peace with all men. I have taken up a secular calling, that I may not be embroiled, and that I may be free to marry a wife when the time comes. Always shall I love and revere those who stand for truth and righteousness; always, I pray, shall I have strength to aid them when occasion serves: but I shall not embark on any crusade upon mine own account. You may make your mind easy on that score, my friend. I do not desire strife and controversy.”

Arthur looked relieved, and smiled his approval.

“Then I trust that on your account, friend Anthony, my fears are needless. I would that I were not anxious also for our beloved friend and master, John Clarke.”

“Is he in peril?” asked Dalaber, with a startled look. “He had no great dealings with Master Garret.”



“No; and for that I am thankful. But there are other causes for fear. The cardinal wrote to the chancellor that he had been told how that Oxford was becoming deeply tainted with heresy, that Garret was selling his books by scores to the clerks and students and masters, and that teaching and lectures were being held contrary to the spirit of the church. This has stirred the hearts of the authorities deeply; they have been making close investigation, and have sent word back to the cardinal what they have found here.”



Page 66

“And what have they found?” asked Dalaber, breathlessly.

“I know not all; but mine uncle told me this much—that they have reported to the cardinal how that the very men chosen and sent by him to ‘his most towardly college,’ as they call it, are those amongst whom the ‘unrighteous leaven’ is working most freely, and they specially mention Clarke and Sumner and the singing man Radley as examples of danger to others. What will come of this letter God alone may tell. It has been dispatched, together with the intimation that Garret is not to be found in or near Oxford. We await in fear and trembling the cardinal’s reply. Heaven grant that he do not order the arrest of our good friends and godly companions! I am no lover of heresy, as thou dost know, friend Anthony; but from Master Clarke’s lips there have never fallen words save those of love and light and purity. To call him a heretic would bring disgrace upon the Church of Christ. Even mine uncle, to whom I spoke as much, said he had never heard aught but good spoken of these men.”

Dalaber looked very anxious and troubled. The friends sat silent awhile, and then Arthur suddenly rose to his feet, saying:

“Let us go and see Master Clarke and have speech of him. I have not been able to get near to him alone since I knew of this matter—so many flock to his rooms for teaching or counsel. But let us to St. Frideswyde for evensong. He will certainly be in his place there, and afterwards he will accompany us, or let us accompany him, to his chamber, where we can talk of these things in peace. I have much that I would fain say to him.”

“And for my part, I have promised to sing in the choir at the evensong service there as oftentimes as I can spare the time,” said Dalaber, rising and throwing on his gown. “I have not seen Master Clarke these past two days. I would tell him of the safe escape of Master Garret; for the twain are sincere friends, and belong both to the brotherhood, though they agree not in all things, and have diverse views how the church is to be made more pure—”

“Peace, peace, good Anthony!” spoke Arthur, with a half laugh. “Thou must have a care how thou dost talk rank heresy, and to whom. Such words are safe enow with me; but they say that even walls have ears.”

“It is my weakness that I speak too freely,” answered Dalaber, who had already opened the door. “But in sooth I trow we are safe here, for yonder chamber belongs to the monk Robert Ferrar, who—But no matter. I will say no more. My tongue is something over fond of running away with me, when I am with friends.”

Evensong at St. Frideswyde’s was always a well-attended service. Although it was now the chapel of Cardinal College, the old name still clung to it. The cardinal had removed much of the former priory and chapel of St. Frideswyde to carry out the plans for his college; but though the collegiate buildings were called by his name, the chapel



generally retained its older and more familiar title. The daily services were better performed there than in any other college chapel; and many men, like Dalaber himself, possessed of good voices, sang in the choir as often as their other duties permitted them.



Page 67

Service over, the two friends passed out together, and waited for Clarke, who came quietly forth, his face alight with the shining of the Spirit, which was so noticeable in him after any religious exercise.

He greeted them both in brotherly fashion, and gladly welcomed them to his lodging.

There was something very characteristic of the man in the big, bare room he inhabited. It was spotlessly clean—more clean than any servant would keep it, though the canons of Cardinal College were permitted a certain amount of service from paid menials. The scanty furniture was of the plainest. There was nothing on the floor to cover the bare boards. Two shelves of books displayed his most precious possessions; the rest of his household goods were ranged in a small cupboard in a recess. His bed was a pallet, covered by one blanket. There was no fire burning on his hearth. Several benches ranged along the walls, and a rather large table, upon which a number of books and papers lay, stood in the middle of the room. One corner had been partitioned off, and was very plainly fitted up as an oratory. A beautiful crucifix in ivory was the only object of value in all the room.

Arthur and Anthony both knew the place well, but neither entered it without a renewed sensation impossible to define.

“It is the abode of peace and of prayer,” Dalaber had once said to Freda, describing the lodging to her. “You seem to feel it and to breathe it in the very air. However worn and anxious, fretful or irate, you are when you enter, a hush of peace descends upon your spirit, like the soft fluttering of the wings of a dove. Your burden falls away; you know not how. You go forth refreshed and strengthened in the inner man. Your darkness of spirit is flooded by a great light.”

They sat down in the failing gleams of the setting sun, and Dalaber told of Garret's night and the errand on which he was bound. Arthur smiled, and slightly shrugged his shoulders; but the confidence his friend unconsciously put in him by these revelations was sacred to him. He had not desired to know; but at least the secret was safe with him.

“He will not go there,” said Clarke, as he heard the tale.

“Not go to my brother?” questioned Dalaber quickly.

“No, he will not go there. I know the man too well to believe it. The impulse for flight came upon him, and he was persuaded that it might be an open door. But he will not carry the plan through. His conscience will not permit him to hire himself under a false name to a man who believes him an orthodox priest holding his own views. Garret will never do that, and he will be right not to do it. It would be a false step. One may not tamper with the truth, nor act deceitfully in holy things.”

Then Arthur Cole began to speak, and to tell Clarke what had happened with regard to the cardinal and the heads of various houses, and how his own name had been set down as one who was suspected of the taint of heresy.



Page 68

“They know that men come to your rooms to read the Scriptures and discourse thereon,” he concluded, “and in these times that is almost enough to brand a man a heretic. And yet I know that you are not one. I would that the cardinal himself were half so true a servant of God.”

A slight smile passed over Clarke’s beautiful face. The light seemed to deepen within his eyes.

“Take heed, my kindly young friend, or men will call thee heretic next,” he said. “It is hard to know sometimes what they mean by the word. Let it be enough for us to know that we are all members of the mystical body of Christ, and that none can sever us from our union with Him, save He Himself; and His word, even to the erring and the feeble and the sinner, is, ‘Come unto me. Him that cometh I will in no wise cast out.’”

“I know, I know—if that were only enough!” cried Arthur, in perplexity and distress.

“It is enough for me,” answered Clarke, with his illuminating smile.

“But will you not have a greater care for yourself—for our sakes who love you, if not for your own?” urged the other.

“What would you have me to do, or not to do?” asked Clarke.

“I would have you abandon your reading and discussions—for a time. I would have you, perhaps, even quit Oxford till this storm sweeps by. Why should you not visit your friends in Cambridge? It would excite no great wonderment that you should do so. We cannot spare you to the malice of enemies; and Garret being escaped from the snare, there is no knowing upon whom they may next lay hands. It would break my heart if mischance happened to you, Master Clarke; wherefore I pray you have a care for yourself.”

Clarke regarded both young men with a very tender smile.

“I think I will not go; and how can I refuse to speak with those who come to me? The reading of the Scriptures in any tongue has not been forbidden by the Holy Catholic Church. I will maintain that against all adversaries. What I say here in my room I will maintain before all men, and will show that the Lord Himself, by His holy apostles and prophets, has taught the same. If any are in peril through words which I have spoken, shall I flee away and leave them to do battle alone? Nay; but I will remain here and be found at my post. My conscience is clear before God and man. I have not disobeyed His voice nor yet that of the Catholic Church. Let Him judge betwixt us. I am in His hands. I am not afraid what man can do unto me.”

Dalaber’s face kindled at the sound of these words, and the flame of his enthusiasm for this man blazed up afresh. There had been times when he had fancied that Garret



possessed the stronger spirit, because his words were more full of fire, and he was ever a man of action and strife. But when Garret had been brought face to face with peril his nerve had given way. He had struggled after courage, but all the while he had been ready to fly. He had spoken of coming martyrdom with loftiness of resolution; but he had wavered, and had been persuaded that the time had not yet come.



Page 69

Something in Clarke's gentle steadfastness seemed loftier to Anthony Dalaber than what he had witnessed in Garret a few days back. Yet he would have said that Garret would have flown in the face of danger without a fear, whilst Clarke would have hung back and sought to find a middle course.

"But if these meetings be perilous," urged Arthur, "why will you not let them drop—for the sake of others, if not your own?"

He looked calmly in the questioner's eyes as he answered:

"I invite no man to come to me to read or discourse. If any so come, I warn them that there may be peril for them; and many I have thus sent away, for they have not desired to run into any peril. Those who gather round me here are my children in the Lord. I may not refuse to receive them. But I will speak earnestly to them of the danger which menaces them and us; and if any be faint hearted, let them draw back. I would not willingly bring or lead any into peril. But I may not shut my door nor my heart against my children who come to me. The chariots of God are thousands of angels. They are round and about us, though we see them not. Let us not fear in the hour of darkness and perplexity, but wait patiently on the Lord, and doubt not that in His time and in His way He will give us our heart's desire."

Clarke's face was uplifted; in the gathering gloom they could scarcely see it, and yet to both it appeared at that moment as the face of an angel.

Chapter X: A Startling Apparition

It was the following afternoon—Saturday—and Anthony Dalaber sat in his new quarters with an open book before him. He was beginning to feel at home there, and to lay aside some of those pressing anxieties which had beset him ever since the flight of Master Garret upon Arthur Cole's warning.

Notwithstanding even the grave talk which had taken place the day previously in the room of John Clarke, Dalaber did not find himself seriously uneasy at present. He had been going to and fro in the town for the past two days, and no one had molested him, or had appeared to take any special note of him. He had attended lecture that morning, and had walked through the streets afterwards in company with several other students of his own standing, and not a word had been breathed about any stir going on, or any alarm of heresy being raised by those in authority. He began to think that Arthur Cole had taken somewhat too seriously some words he had heard on the subject from his relative the proctor. Upon his own spirit a sense of calm was settling down. He trusted and hoped that he was not in personal danger; but he also resolved that, should peril arise, he would meet it calmly and fearlessly, as Clarke was prepared to do should it touch him.



Page 70

On returning to his room he had paid a visit to the monk Robert Ferrar, who lived on the same staircase, and was a friend of Garret's, and had oftentimes made purchases from him of forbidden books. As they sat and talked in Ferrar's room, Anthony espied a copy of Francis Lambert on St. Luke, and eagerly pounced upon it. Although he had left behind him all dangerous books, and had resolved to give himself up to the study of the law, his heart felt hungry and unsatisfied, and he begged leave to carry the volume to his own chamber, that he might indulge himself in its study and in pious meditation thereupon, preparatory to the exercises of the Lord's day, so close at hand.

Ferrar made no objection, only remarking that he himself was going out, and should not return until after compline, and asking Dalaber to take care of the book and keep it safe till he should come and claim it, for it was dangerous to leave such volumes where any prying eyes might find them.

So now Dalaber was sitting in his own lodging, with the door locked upon him, reading greedily from the open page, and drinking in, as it were, refreshment and strength, when he was roused from his reverie by the sound, first of voices, and then by a sharp rap upon the panels of his door.

His heart gave a great throb, and then stood still. He sat mute and motionless, giving no sign of his presence. Something seemed to warn him that this visit, whatsoever it might be, boded him no good. The knock was repeated more loudly. But he still gave no answer, sitting very still, and listening with all his might. He heard no more the sound of voices. Nobody spoke or called his name. But after a very brief pause the knock was repeated a third time, and with that fierce energy which bespoke some strong emotion; and suddenly it came over Dalaber that perhaps it was some one who was in trouble, or was in need of him or his help. Were not the brethren likely to be brought into sudden peril or distress? Might it not even be a friend come to warn him of approaching danger? At least it seemed to him that he must open the door and inquire; and so rapid was the passage of these thoughts that the reverberation of the third summons had scarcely died away before he had turned the key and flung open the door.

Then he started back in startled amazement.

"Master Garret!" he gasped.

"Shelter me, friend Anthony," gasped Garret, whose face was white as paper, "for I am a man undone. They have captured me once. I have escaped them. But they will have me again if I make me not away with all speed."

Dalaber dragged him almost roughly within the room, and closed the door with a bang, for he had seen on the staircase the eager face of one of the college servants; and the



young man, immediately upon hearing Garret's words, had slipped downstairs—Dalaber guessed only too well upon what errand.

“Alas! why have you spoken such words?” he cried, almost fiercely. “Know you not that by so doing in the hearing of that young man, and by such uncircumspect fashion of coming hither, you have disclosed yourself and utterly undone me?”



Page 71

Garret looked fearfully over his shoulder. He seemed completely unnerved and unstrung.

“Was the young man following? Alas! I knew it not. I came hither to seek Robert Ferrar, but he was out; and knowing that you had planned to move hither, and thinking it likely you might already have done so, I asked the servant where you were to be found, and he pointed out the place, and said he knew that you were within; but I knew not he had followed me. Could he have known who I am?”

“Nay, that I know not; but he heard you declare how you had been taken and had escaped. Alack, Master Garret, we are in a sore strait! How comes it that you are not safe in Dorsetshire, as I have been happily picturing you?”

Garret burst into tears. He was utterly broken down. He had not tasted food during the whole day, and was worn out with anxiety and apprehension. Dalaber set bread before him, and he fell upon it eagerly, meantime telling, with tears and sighs, the story of his wanderings, his resolution to return, and his apprehension in the middle of the previous night by the proctors.

“They took me to the house of the commissary,” added Garret, “and they shut me up in a bare room, with naught save a pitcher of water beside me. I trow they sought to break my spirit with fasting, for none came nigh me when the day dawned, and I was left in cold and hunger, not knowing what would befall me. But when the afternoon came, and a hush fell upon the place, and no sound of coming or going was to be heard, I made shift, after much labour, to slip the bolt of my prison, and to steal forth silently and unobserved; and surely the Lord must have been with me, for I met no living soul as I quitted the college, and I drew my hood over my face and walked softly through the narrowest streets and lanes, and so forth and hither, thinking myself safest without the walls. And now I pray you, my dear young friend and brother, give me a coat with sleeves instead of this gown, and a hat, if you have one that smacks not of the priest; for from henceforth I will stand as a free man amongst men, and will serve no longer in the priest’s office. To the Lord I am a priest for ever. I will serve Him with the best that I have; but I will no longer hold any charge or living, since I may not deny my Lord, and thus am called heretic and outcast by those in high places. I will away. I will get me to Germany. I will join the labours of the brethren there. Son Anthony, wilt thou go with me? for I love thee even as mine own soul. Think what we might accomplish together, were we to throw in our lot one with the other, and with the brethren yonder!”

Garret looked eagerly in Dalaber’s face, and the tears started to the young man’s eyes. He had been much moved by Garret’s emotion, and for a brief space a wild impulse came over him to share his flight and his future life. What lay before him in Oxford if he stayed? Would he not be betrayed by the servant as Garret’s accomplice? Would he not certainly be arrested and examined, and perhaps thrown into prison—perhaps led to the stake? Who could tell? And here was a chance of life and liberty and active service



in the cause. Should he not take it? Would he not be wise to fly whilst he had still the chance? Who could say how soon the authorities might come to lay hands on him? Then it would be too late.



Page 72

He had well-nigh made his decision, when the thought of Freda came over him, and his heart stood still. If he fled from Oxford and from her, would he ever see her again? What would she think of him and his flight? Would that be keeping "faithful unto death"? If he left her now, would he ever see her again? And then there was Master Clarke, another father in God. Could he bear to leave him, too—leave him in peril from which he had refused to fly? The struggle was sharp, but it was brief, and with the tears running down his face, Dalaber embraced Master Garret with sincere affection, but told him that he could not be his companion. It seemed to him that the Lord had work for him here; and here he would stay, come what might.

"Then, my son, let us kneel down together upon our knees, and lift up our hearts unto the Lord," spoke Garret with broken voice, "praying of Him that He will help and strengthen us; that He will prosper me, His servant, upon my journey, and give me grace to escape the wiles of all enemies, both carnal and spiritual; and that He will strengthen and uphold you, my son, in all trials and temptations, and bring us together in peace and prosperity at last, in this world, if it be His good pleasure, but at least in the blessed kingdom of His dear Son, which, let us pray, may quickly come."

They prayed and wept together, for both were deeply moved; and then Garret, having donned a coat of Dalaber's, and having filled his wallet with bread, embraced his young friend many times with great fervour; and after invoking blessings upon him from above, he watched his opportunity, and stole softly away from the college, Dalaber watching till his slight figure disappeared altogether from view.

Then with a heavy heart he went up to his room again, and locked his door. Opening his New Testament, which lay on the table beside the borrowed book of the monk, he knelt down and read very slowly aloud to himself the tenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel.

"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings. But when they deliver you up, take no thought what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake, but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

Long did Dalaber kneel in prayer, his reading being over, asking that God would endue His tender and newly-born little flock in Oxford with heavenly strength from above, and with the anointing of the Spirit, that they might patiently bear the heavy cross of Christ, which was presently, as he well saw, to be laid upon them, and that their young, weak backs might be strengthened to meet the burden and the cruel yoke.



Page 73

Calmed and soothed by prayer, for others as much as for himself, Dalaber rose, and carefully wrapped together Garret's gown and hood with the monk's book, and hid them carefully beneath his bedding, that none entering the room might see them; and then he robed himself and started forth to warn the brethren of what had happened, for were there any who desired to flee the coming tempest, they must needs lose no more time.

He walked rapidly towards the city gate, when he was met by Arthur Cole, who came hastily towards him, a look of great anxiety and vexation on his face. With him was a student of his own college, Eden by name, one of the little band of brethren; and as soon as he saw Dalaber he quickly ran forward.

"We are undone!" he exclaimed. "They have taken Master Garret. He is in prison in Lincoln College. He is to be strictly examined after evensong today. If he refuse to give up the names of all to whom he has sold his books, and who have listened to his teachings, they declare he will be sent to the Tower to be examined by the rack."

The young lad was quivering all over in excitement and fear. Arthur, coming up at the same minute, spoke almost fiercely.

"What possessed the man to return to Oxford, once he was safe away? It seems he came back after dark last night, and was seen and followed and reported on. They found him at midnight, and will use sharp methods with him. I have no love for Garret and his firebrand doctrines; but he will be the means of betraying the whole brotherhood, and he be not steadfast; and who knows how such an one will meet the trials which will beset him? If he should betray thee, Dalaber, or our good master and friend John Clarke, I should find it hard indeed to forgive him."

"He will betray none—" began Dalaber; but Cole broke in with a scornful snort.

"I would not answer for him. He is a strange mixture of strength and weakness, devotion, constancy, and nervous fear. He—"

"He will not betray any, for he is no longer a prisoner. He has escaped from the commissary's house. He is miles away from Oxford by this time. Heaven send he quickly escape beyond the seas!"

Dalaber then related what had passed during the afternoon; and Eden, with great joy, volunteered to take the news to some of the brethren, who were suffering great anxiety on his behalf. As for Dalaber himself, he desired above all things to see and speak with Clarke; and Arthur being of the same mind, they proceeded arm in arm along the street in the direction of St. Frideswyde, where evensong would soon be in course of proceeding.



“It seems to me, friend Anthony,” spoke Arthur gravely, “that if Master Garret has escaped, you are the person most in peril now. If that young man betrays that he fled to you in your lodging in Gloucester College, they will not be long in calling upon you to answer to them for it.”

“I trust I shall be ready to do so,” answered Dalaber, with grave steadfastness.



Page 74

Arthur looked at him with a mixture of admiration and uneasiness. He hesitated awhile, and then said:

“What think you of an instant flight? I would help you with the best will in the world. There is my house at Poghley open to you. There is an excellent hiding place there.”

Again Dalaber hesitated just for a moment; but this time the hesitation lasted scarce more.

“Master Garret desired that I should fly with him, but I refused. It came to me that I have been set here, and here will I remain. It may be that the Lord has a testimony for us to deliver. I am ready to leave myself in His hands.”

Arthur looked thoughtfully at him.

“I will do what I can for you, Dalaber; you may be certain of that. But it may not be much.”

“There is one thing you can do,” cried the other quickly, with a lightening of the eyes. “You can tell Freda all the tale, and ask her prayers for me. Now that I am like to be a suspected person, I will no more go to her. But tell her that, come what may, my heart will ever be hers, and that I will seek to remember her words to me. I will strive to be faithful unto death.”

“I will tell her,” answered Arthur, not unmoved. “But we will not think or speak of death. Whatever may be done elsewhere, we men at Oxford have always set our faces against any bitter persecution for conscience’ sake. Students are sent here to read, and study, and think; and if here and there be some whose speculations have led them somewhat astray, I doubt not that, when the consensus of opinion is taken, the greater number will be for using mild and gentle methods with them. Only be not too stiff necked, good Anthony. Do not fall into the delusion of thinking that none can be true Christians save your brethren. Bear an open mind as well as a bold front, and I doubt not we shall weather this storm without great hurt or loss.”

“We?” questioned Dalaber, with a slight smile. “You are not one of us, Arthur, though you show yourself the kindest of friends, and that in the days of adversity rather than of prosperity, for which the Lord will reward you.”

“I spoke the ‘we’ in the sense of another brotherhood, Anthony,” said the other, with a slightly heightened colour; “for thou art the plighted husband of Frideswyde Langton, whilst I hope soon to win the troth plight of the beauteous Magdalen. Then shall we be brothers, thou and I, and I will play a brother’s part by thee now if thou art in danger.”

The two comrades clasped hands. Dalaber had long known that his friend was paying court to Magdalen, though he did not know how far that suit had progressed. But



evidently Arthur did not think the time far distant when he might look upon her as his own, and his friend rejoiced with him.

Evensong at St. Frideswyde had already begun before the two friends reached the chapel, so they did not go in, but stood at the choir door, from whence they could see the dean and canons in their robes, and hear the singing, in which Dalaber had so often joined; but there was little of song in his heart just now—only a sense of coming woe and peril. They had scarce been there a few minutes before they beheld Dr. Cottisford coming hastily towards the place, bareheaded, and with a face pale and disturbed, so that Dalaber caught Arthur by the arm and whispered:



Page 75

“Sure, he hath discovered the escape of Master Garret!”

The young men drew back behind a buttress to let him pass, and he was too disturbed in mind to mark them. They looked after him as he went up the church, and saw him go to the dean and enter into a whispered colloquy with him. Then both came forth again, looking greatly disturbed; and at that moment up came Dr. London, the Warden of New College, all out of breath with his hurry, so that Arthur whispered from his nook of concealment to Dalaber:

“He hath the air of a hungry lion ravening after his prey.”

The three then stood together talking in excited fashion.

“You are to blame, sir, much to blame! How came you to leave him for so many hours unguarded, and only one bolt to the door? These men are as artful as the devil their master. It may be that he gives them powers—”

“Tush!” answered Dr. Cottisford angrily; “he got out by his own craft. I had thought that fasting and loneliness would be a profitable discipline for him. But I bid my servants keep an eye to the outer doors, which they omitted to do.”

“You have done wrong, very wrong. I know not what the cardinal will say,” spoke the dean of the college, thrusting out his lips and looking very wise. “It was his command that this pestilent fellow should be taken; and when he hears that he was laid by the heels, and then escaped, being so carelessly guarded, I know not what he will say. You will have to answer for it, Dr. Cottisford. The cardinal’s anger is not good to brook.”

Tears of mortification and anger stood in the eyes of the commissary. He felt that fate had been very unkind to him.

“He cannot have got far. He shall be taken. We will haste to send servants and spies everywhere abroad. He got out in full daylight. He must have been seen. We shall get upon his tracks, and then we will hunt him down as bloodhounds hunt their quarry. He shall not escape us long, and then shall he answer for his sins. He will not find that he hath profited aught by the trouble he hath given us.”

The voices died away in the distance, and the two young men came slowly forth, looking gravely into each other’s eyes.

“Will they indeed take him?” spoke Dalaber beneath his breath.

“They will try, and they will be close on his heels; yet men have escaped such odds before this. But here comes Master Clarke. Heaven be praised that they have not spoken of him in this matter. Perchance the hunt after Garret will divert their minds from the question they have raised about the lectures and readings in his room.”



Clarke greeted his friends with a smile, but saw that they were troubled; and when they reached his room and told the tale, his own face was serious.

They talked awhile together, and then he prayed with them earnestly, for Arthur would not be excluded from joining in this exercise. He prayed that if trial and trouble overtook them, they might have needful strength and faith to meet it; might have grace to follow the Lord's injunction to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves; and might never be tempted to think themselves forgotten or forsaken of the Lord, even though the clouds might hang dark in the sky, and the tempest rage long and furiously about them.



Page 76

After Dalaber had left Clarke's presence, refreshed and strengthened, and had parted from Arthur, who was going back to his own rooms at Magdalen, promising to keep a sharp outlook on all that passed, and do anything he could for his comrades, he went direct to Corpus Christi, where his friends Diet and Udel were generally to be found at this hour; and not only were they in their chamber, but Eden and Fitzjames and several others of the brethren were gathered together in great anxiety, having heard first of the arrest and then of the escape of Garret, and not knowing what to believe in the matter without further testimony.

Dalaber's story was listened to, with breathless interest. The escape of Garret was assured thereby, but there was no knowing when he might be captured. In any case Dalaber's position seemed full of peril. But he expressed no fear.

"Let them take me if they will," he said; "I will betray none other. Let them do to me what they will; the Lord will give me strength. Have no fear, my friends; I will not betray you. And I trow that there be few, save Master Garret and myself, who could give all the names of the brotherhood, even were they willing."

They crowded round him and pressed his hands. Some shed tears, for they all loved the warm-hearted and impetuous Dalaber, and knew that at any moment now he might be arrested.

"At least you shall not go back to Gloucester College tonight," spoke Fitzjames eagerly. "They shall not take you there, like a rat in a trap. Come to your old lodging for the night. It may be we shall have thought out a plan by the morning. We will not let you go without a struggle, Anthony. Come with me as of old, and we will watch what betides in the city."

Dalaber consented, with a smile, to the entreaties of his friends. He knew that it would make little difference whether he were taken in one place or the other; but he loved Fitzjames, and was ready to go with him.

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," he said to himself, whilst his friends escorted him in a body to his old lodging, and left him there with every expression of affection and good will.

"I shall not be without comfort in the days to come," said Anthony, "be they never so dark and drear."

Chapter XI: Evil Tidings

"Anthony Dalaber taken!" spoke Freda, and her face grew white to the lips. "Oh, speak, good sir; what will they do to him?"



The monk who stood before the sisters, his cowl drawn over his face, his hands folded in his sleeves, took up the word again, which Freda's impulsive ejaculation had interrupted.

“He is not as yet taken prisoner, but he has been commanded to appear before the prior, and I fear me that is but the first step. He begged of me to come and tell you, and give you that packet,” and his eyes rested upon a small parcel which Freda held tightly between her two hands; “so here am I to do his bidding, without staying to know what will befall him at the prior's hands. He went to answer the summons as I came forth hither.”



Page 77

The monk had found the sisters in their garden, having followed Dalaber's directions, and entered by the little door which he himself had so oftentimes used. At this hour the sisters were wont, in fine weather, to take an hour's exercise up and down the pleasant sheltered walk beneath the wall. Here the monk had found them, and had presented to Freda a small packet which contained Dalaber's New Testament, of which he knew full well he would speedily be deprived, and a few jewels and valuables which he possessed and desired to make over to her.

"Tell us all that has befallen him!" cried Freda breathlessly.

So far all she had taken in was that Dalaber had been summoned before the prior, but she felt that more lay behind. The monk was visibly troubled, and she knew him to be Anthony's friend. He stood before them with downcast mien and told his tale.

"It was yesterday in the afternoon that Anthony Dalaber came to me and borrowed a book. I lent it to him, bidding him be careful of it; and he locked himself into his room, whilst I went my way to sundry tasks I had to perform, and then on to vespers and compline. When I returned, Dalaber's chamber door was shut and locked. I went to mine own room, and presently the young man, a servant of the college, came in to perform some small duty, and he looked at me very cunningly, and asked whether I knew that Master Thomas Garret had been inquiring for me and for Master Dalaber. Having been made aware that he had already fled from Oxford, I gave no credence to the young man's words, and this seemed to anger him, for he told me plainly that Master Garret had come to the college, and had knocked many times at my door in my absence, and then coming away, had asked where Dalaber lived; and being directed to his door by this same youth, he had knocked till he obtained entrance, and had been shut up with him a great while.

"I was in doubt what to believe, and so said nothing; but later in the evening I was sent for of the prior, who asked me if I had ever had speech with Master Garret, and knew aught of him. I told him I had not seen him this many a day, nor knew that he was in Oxford, save that the servant had spoken of his having been there this very day, which I scarce believed. Having questioned me closely, he let me go, only warning me to have no dealings in the future with so pestilent a fellow. He saw that I was ignorant of his present whereabouts, and suffered me to depart with only a rebuke. But I left in fear and trembling for Anthony Dalaber, if indeed it should be true what the fellow had said that Master Garret had been shut up with him.



Page 78

“I went many times to his room that evening, and sat up far into the night; but still he did not come, and I was in great fear that he might have been taken prisoner. I resolved not to seek my bed, but to pass the night in fasting and prayer on his account; and I was thus occupied when there was a sound of commotion nigh at hand, and I heard steps and voices and the sound of blows upon the door of Dalaber’s chamber. I opened mine own door cautiously, having extinguished my rush light, and I saw that the proctors were there, together with the prior and various servants of the college. Not being able to obtain any reply to their summons, they had up a man with a great bunch of keys; and after some ado they forced open the door, and forthwith entered the chamber. It was empty of its occupant; but they were by no means satisfied with that, and made great search everywhere, tossing everything about in the greatest confusion, ransacking his chest and flinging his clothes about hither and thither, examining every chink and cranny, and well-nigh pulling the bed to pieces in hopes of making some discovery. And here they did find somewhat, for out tumbled a small bundle that had been hid in the bedclothes. There was the book which I had lent him—Lambert on St. Luke—and a gown and hood, which might have been his own; but so soon as the young man of whom I have spoken before saw them, he straightway vowed and declared that it was these things which Master Garret had been wearing when he visited Anthony Dalaber, and showed them a rent in the shoulder, which he said he had particularly observed when showing the priest the way. He had not known till Dalaber opened his door who the visitor was, but as soon as he knew he went to inform the proctors; and the chiefest marvel to me is that they tarried so long before visiting Dalaber’s chamber. But belike they made hue and cry after Garret first. Heaven have mercy upon him if they get him into their hands!”

“But Anthony, Anthony!” cried Freda, with a quick catch in her breath—“I pray you tell me of him.”

“Verily I will. When they had finished their search, and had got evidence that Master Garret had been there, they came across to my chamber and asked me what I knew concerning Dalaber. I did answer that I knew nothing, but supposed he would shortly return. I did not believe he had been to his room all night; which thing they did not seem to believe, and kept gazing all around my room, as though wondering whether I were not hiding him there. However, as my bare chamber offered no concealment even for a cat, they had to be satisfied at last; and they went away, only charging me straitly that so soon as Dalaber should return, I must tell him to repair him instantly to the prior, who would have speech of him. This I promised to do, though with a woeful heart, for I felt that evil was meant him, and I love him right well.”

“Yes, yes; and what followed next?”



Page 79

“Marry, this—that so soon as ever the college gates were open in the morning, at five o’clock, in comes Anthony Dalaber himself, his shoes and hosen all stained with mud, his face pale as though with watching and anxious thought, though his aspect was calm and resolute; and he came up the stairs without seeing me, and began to unlock his door. But the lock had been twisted and bent, and he was still struggling with it when I came out to him and began to tell him what had happened. He got his door opened, and the sight he saw before his eyes confirmed my tale, and he sat down and listened to all I had to say, very quietly, and without flinching. He told me that he and certain of the brethren had passed the night together, in his old lodging at St. Alban Hall, in prayer for grace and guidance; but that, though they had prayed of him to fly, it had not seemed good to him to do so; and that he had resolved to return immediately to his own lodging, and to await there whatever might befall him.”

“My own brave, steadfast Anthony!” spoke Freda beneath her breath, her eyes shining like stars, but with a glint of tears behind their brightness.

“So I gave to him the prior’s message, and he said he would lose no time in going to see him. But he knew not when or whether he might ever return to this place. So he made up that little parcel, and he gave it into my hands; and in so doing he begged of me that when eight o’clock had sounded from the steeples, I would myself enter yonder door and present it to one of the two maidens I should find walking here, and say that it was a parting gift from Anthony Dalaber, who was like to be taken of his foes.”

The tears suddenly welled over and flowed down Freda’s cheeks. It was Magdalen who found strength to ask:

“What will they do to him? Of what offence can they find him guilty? All the world speak well of him.”

Robert Ferrar slowly shook his head, but made no reply; indeed, none could say what would befall next. When a man stood in peril of a charge of heresy his friends could not bear to ask too closely what might be his ultimate fate. Freda clasped her sister’s hands hard as the monk slowly turned to go.

“Peace be with you! May the Lord help and sustain you,” he said, in his low, earnest voice, “and give to us all the strength to bear the cross which He may see good to lay upon us!”

He paced with bent head along the walk, and vanished through the door by which he had come. Freda, with trembling hands, tore open the packet she had all this while been holding tightly clasped between them, and when she saw its contents the tears gushed forth.

She sank down upon the seat in the arbour, and the little, well-worn book fell open at a place where the page had been turned down. It was that chapter in St. Matthew which Anthony had been reading after the departure of Garret, and the sisters devoured the words together, both deeply moved.



Page 80

“O Magda, Magda, how can I bear it?” cried Freda, laying her head upon her sister's shoulder; “I had thought to be so brave, so steadfast. We have spoken of it, and I had thought that in a righteous cause it would not be hard to suffer. And, in sooth, I verily believe I could suffer mine own self. But I cannot bear for him to be alone—for him to have so much laid upon him. O my Anthony! my Anthony!”

“And it is so little they ask, so little they hold; and our beloved Master Clarke maintains that the true Catholic Church has forbidden naught that they would fain see restored—only the liberty to read and study the living Word for themselves. They are not rebels; they are not heretics. They love the church, and they are her true sons. Only they maintain that some errors have crept in of man's devising, for which no Scripture warrant can be found; and they know that corruption hath entered even into the sanctuary, and they would fain see it cleansed. Is that sin? Is that heresy? Then methinks our Lord must needs have been a heretic and sinner (if it be not blasphemy to say it), for He would not suffer His Father's house to be polluted nor made a den of thieves. And what else do these godly men ask now than that the Christian Church shall be purified and cleansed of merchandise and barter, and become again a holy house of prayer, undisturbed by any such things?”

Magdalen had been one of those who had most earnestly drunk in the teachings of such men as Clarke, who combined an intense and devoted love of Holy Church with an ardent desire after a purer spiritual administration. His words to her soul were as words of life; and one of the things which had first attracted her to Arthur Cole, and become a bond of sympathy between them, was the deep admiration and enthusiasm that he always expressed with regard to Clarke and his doctrine and preaching. Freda had gone somewhat farther along the road which Anthony was pursuing—the road which led eventually to a greater upheaval and disruption than at that day any, save the most ardent foreign reformers, dreamed of. Even Garret and Dalaber and their companions were as yet ignorant of the inevitable result of their teaching and convictions. It seemed to them at this time that such a very little would satisfy them, that the church could not seriously excommunicate them or persecute them for what they believed. And yet—and yet—there was a sense of coming tempest in the very air. And when the sisters, having recovered their self-control, went indoors to tell their tale to their father, they saw that he was much disturbed, and that he considered Anthony's position as very precarious.

Just as they were discussing the matter in all its bearings, and anxiously wondering when it would be possible to obtain further news, there was a short summons at the door, and Arthur Cole entered, with a pale and anxious face. Evidently he saw from their faces that something had reached them, and his first question was:



Page 81

“Have you heard the news?”

“That Anthony Dalaber has been summoned before the prior? Yes; his friend Ferrar brought us that news not long since. But beyond that we know nothing. Tell us, good Arthur, what is like to befall from that. Is he in any great peril?”

“I scarce know myself; but I fear, I fear. They are in a great rage at the escape of Garret; and since he is not to be found, they have laid hands upon Dalaber, and he is even now at Lincoln College, where he is to be examined by the commissary and others, with what result cannot yet be known.”

“Then he did not go before the prior?”

“Yes; he did so at the first. News was hastily brought to me by a clerk from Gloucester College, and I hurried thither in time to hear much that passed at the prior’s court. I have friends amongst the fellows and monks. I stood just within the door and heard all. The prior asked him of Garret’s visit the day before, and he confessed the latter had been with him, but had quickly gone forth again. He was asked whither he had gone, and answered that he had spoken of Woodstock, where he had a friend amongst the keepers who had promised him a piece of venison for Shrovetide.”

“Was that true?” asked Freda, who was listening with wide and eager eyes.

Arthur smiled slightly.

“Most like it was a witty invention to put the bloodhounds off the scent, since Dalaber would scarce deliver over his friend into the hands of his bitter foes.”

“Is it right to speak a lie even in a good cause?” asked the girl, seeming to address no particular person, but to be thinking aloud.

“A nice question in ethics, sweet mistress,” spoke Arthur, with a smile; “and it may be there are some (I can believe that Master Clarke would be one) who would die sooner than utter a falsehood. But for my part I hold that, as a man may take life or do some grievous bodily hurt to one who attacks him, and if he act in self defence no blame may attach to him, though at other times such a deed would be sin, so a man may speak a false word (at other times a sin) to save the life of his friend, and keep him out of the hands of those who would do him grievous bodily hurt, and perhaps put him to a cruel death. At least our own priests will assoil us for such sins. They suffer us to do evil that good may come—if not openly preaching the doctrine, yet by implication. I hold that no blame attaches to Anthony for speaking an untruth to save his friend.”

Freda could not blame him either, though she held the truth in high esteem. It was a cruel predicament in which to be placed, and Anthony was ever impulsive in his thoughts and words.



Arthur took up his story again.

“The prior gave orders that search should instantly be made in the direction of Woodstock; and then, turning once more to Dalaber, he caught sight of the signet ring he always wore upon his hand, and asked him what it was. Dalaber took it off and gave it him to look at. You doubtless have noted the ring—a piece of jasper, with the letters A. D. graven upon it. The prior looked at it with covetous eyes, and finally put it on his finger.



Page 82

“Sure, this must be mine own signet ring,” he said, with a sinister smile, “for it hath mine own initials upon it—A for Anthony, and D for Dunstan.”

“The robber!” ejaculated Freda hotly. “What said Anthony to that?”

“He said naught. He had other matters to think of than the loss of his ring. But, in sooth, there was no time for more to be spoken, for at that moment up came the beadle and other servants of the commissary, desiring that Anthony Dalaber should be brought at once before him in Lincoln College; and forthwith he was taken away, and I could only just whisper to him as he passed me by that I would see you and tell you all that happened.”

Silence fell upon the little group as Arthur ended his narrative. All hearts were heavy, and they were not made less so by his next words.

“And I fear me greatly that Dalaber is not the only one who is in peril in Oxford this day. I fear me much that it will not be long before they lay hands upon Master Clarke.”

Dismay and sorrow were in all faces. Dr. Langton looked intently at the speaker, as though to ask more, and Arthur answered the unspoken question.

“I think I have told you how that the cardinal has been informed that the very men he introduced into Oxford have been foremost in the spread of those doctrines which are begun to be called heresy, though not one word has Master Clarke ever spoken for which he cannot find confirmation in the words of Holy Writ and in the pure teachings of the primitive church. But having heard this, the cardinal is much disturbed, and hath ordered a very close and strict investigation to be made. I know not exactly yet what these words may mean to us; but at no moment should I be surprised to hear that Clarke and others of like mind with himself had been suspended from teaching, if not arrested and accused as heretics.”

“Oh, it is too much! it is too much!” cried Magdalen, whose face had turned deadly pale. She was much agitated, and her wonted calm had deserted her.

Freda, who was standing at the window, suddenly exclaimed that Master Radley was coming hastily across the meadow path towards them, and some instinct seemed to warn them all that he was the bearer of heavy tidings. They could not await his coming, but went downstairs and out into the garden, where they met him breathless with his speed.

“Master Clarke is taken!” he cried, emotion and haste making his words barely audible. “He was warned last night of coming peril. The place was full of rumours, and it was known that Garret had been back and had escaped again. We counselled him to fly, but he refused. This morning the proctors sent for him, and he hath not returned. I am



expecting a visit every moment to my chambers. They may or may not find the books concealed there; but it is known that I have hidden Master Garret. I shall not escape their malice. For myself I care little; but for that saint upon earth, John Clarke—oh, a church that can call him heretic and outcast must be corrupt to the very core!”



Page 83

“Have a care, my friend, have a care,” spoke Arthur, with a quick look round. “I would I could teach you zealous men a little of the wisdom of the serpent. You are careful one for the other, yet for your own selves ye seem to have no thought. But your tidings is evil indeed. So Master Clarke is to be another victim?”

“Alas! I fear me so. All the college is talking of it. Our dean, after matins this morning, spoke very grave words, and said how it was grieving him to the quick that this godly college, built and endowed by the holy cardinal himself, should be regarded as a centre of growing heresy, and how that he hoped by God’s grace to purge and cleanse it. Master Clarke was not in his stall, and when we came out we heard that he had been taken. They think that others will shortly follow. Master Clarke and Anthony Dalaber are in their hands, and will be straitly examined. If they tell all that will be asked of them, many of us may be in prison ere long; if not, it may take time to hunt the victims down; but I trow they will be snared and taken at last.”

“Anthony will never betray his friends,” spoke Freda beneath her breath, a wave of colour flooding her face.

Magdalen had turned away, and was pacing up and down in a secluded walk. Arthur followed and came up with her, looking into her face, which was wet with tears. He took her hand, and she did not repulse him. She felt the need of help and sympathy. She was deeply troubled, and she knew that he was also.

“It will be a heavy blow to many of us, Mistress Magdalen, if aught befall our father and friend, Master Clarke.”

“I feel as though I could not bear it,” she answered, with a sob. “His words were as words of life to me.”

“And to me also,” answered Arthur gravely, “even though I do not call myself, as he did, one of this new brotherhood. But I hold him to be a holy man of God, with whom was pure and sound doctrine. If harm befall him, Oxford will suffer the stain of an indelible disgrace.”

“Can nothing be done?” cried Magdalen earnestly. “Oh, can we do nothing? You are rich, you are powerful, you have many friends in high places—can you do nothing?”

“Whatever I can do, I will do,” answered Arthur gravely. “I fear me in a crisis like this it will be little; and yet I will leave no stone unturned. I will even see the cardinal himself if I can achieve it, and if his life or safety are in peril. I would risk much for him and for Dalaber, for both are dear to me. Believe me, I will do all that in me lies; but I fear I cannot promise success. I know not what is intended, but I feel that there is much abroad of hatred and enmity against those who are branded with the name of heretic.”



“It is so hard, so hard,” spoke Magdalen again, “when they ask so little—just the liberty of thought and study, and only such things as the Word of God enjoins.”

Arthur slightly shook his head. He knew well what the answer of the opposing party would be to such an argument; but he was in no mood for controversy, least of all with Magdalen.



Page 84

He stopped as they reached the end of the walk, and she paused instinctively. He possessed himself of both her hands, and she did not draw them away.

“Magdalen,” he said gently, “when Dalaber spoke to me of the peril that threatened him, he said that he regarded me almost as a brother, in that he was the betrothed of Freda, and he knew how that I did love thee as mine own life. Sweetheart, it scarce seems a moment in which to speak of love and joy; but let me ask at least the right to be near thee and to comfort thee in the hour of darkness and trouble. Those who are in peril are dear to us both. I will do all that one man can compass on their behalf. But let me have one word of hope and comfort ere I leave thee. Say, my beloved—dost thou, canst thou, love me?”

She hesitated a little, and then her head bent lower till it rested for a moment upon his shoulder.

His arm was round her, and he drew her towards himself.

“I think I have loved thee a great while now, Arthur,” she answered, and felt his lips upon her brow and hair.

So when he walked away an hour later, although his heart was clouded by anxiety and doubt, there was a deep joy and triumph in his soul, and the sun seemed to shine with a golden radiance, despite the heavy clouds hanging in the sky.

Chapter XII: “Brought Before Governors”

The news brought by Arthur Cole to the house by the bridge was true enough. Anthony Dalaber had scarce answered the questions put to him by the prior of students at Gloucester College before he was called to answer more interrogatories before other potentates of the university.

He was bidden to follow the beadle and servants who had come for him without further ado, and had not so much as time to go to his room to make any change of shoes or hosen, which were bedaubed with mud, from his having come through the wet streets and miry roads to Gloucester College that morning at sunrise. Having been told by the monk that the prior’s summons was urgent, he had presented himself before him instantly; and now he was hurried off in the direction of Lincoln College, with the soil and dishevelment of his sleepless night yet upon him.

Matins were evidently just over, and the students had left the chapel, but to his surprise Dalaber was pushed into that place by his conductors; and there, beside the altar, he saw Dr. Cottisford in close confabulation with Dr. Higdon, the Dean of Cardinal College, and Dr. London, the Warden of New College. These three men were noted throughout the university for their hatred of heresy in any form, and their abhorrence of the



movement which had begun to show itself amongst the students and masters. Dalaber felt a certain sinking of spirit as he saw their stern faces, and noted their gestures and the vehemence of their discourse. He felt it boded no good to him, and he lifted his soul in silent prayer for help and strength and wisdom.



Page 85

Then they saw his approach, regarding him with lowering and wrathful glances; and at a sign from them one of the servants fetched chairs in which they seated themselves just without the choir, and the prisoner stood before them. A man in the garb of a notary fetched a small table, with ink horn and parchment, as though to make notes of the answers of the accused.

“Your name is Anthony Dalaber,” spoke the commissary sternly; “what is your age and standing in the university?”

Dalaber explained in a few words what was asked of him, and answered some quick questions as to his removal from hall to college without betraying any confusion or hesitation.

“What made you desire to study the law rather than continue in the study of theology and divinity?”

“I had reached the conclusion that I was not fitted for the life of a priest,” answered Dalaber; “there were too many questions that troubled and perplexed me. In the study of the law I was free from these; therefore I resolved that that should be my vocation.”

Dr. Cottisford frowned heavily.

“What need have you young men to trouble yourselves with vexed questions? I have heard of you, Anthony Dalaber, and it is no good report that hath been brought to me. You have been known to consort this long while with that pestilent heretic, Thomas Garret. He has lodged with you many a time, has lain concealed in your chamber at St. Alban Hall, and has left in your charge a quantity of his pernicious books, which doubtless you have assisted him to distribute amongst other students, so spreading the poison of heresy in our godly and obedient university, and seeking to turn it into a hotbed of error and sin.”

Dalaber made no response, but his heart beat thick and fast. It seemed as though all were indeed known.

“Speak!” thundered Dr. London, now breaking in with no small fury; “what have you to say to such a charge?”

“I have known Master Garret, it is true,” answered Dalaber, picking his words carefully. “He is an ordained priest in the church. He is a godly man—”

“Peace!” roared the angry warden; “we are not here to bandy words with you, Anthony Dalaber. We know what Thomas Garret is, and so do you. Have a care how you provoke us. He was known to be with you the night that he escaped first from Oxford. He is known to have been in your chamber yesterday, ere he slipped away for the second time. Do you dare to deny it?”



Dalaber looked with quiet firmness into the angry faces that confronted him.

“Master Garret visited me yesterday,” he answered quietly, “and went forth from my chamber after a short while, when we had offered prayer and supplication there together.”

“And whither went he?”

“I know not, unless to Woodstock, where he spoke of having a friend among the keepers,” answered Dalaber, repeating the fiction he had spoken to the prior.



Page 86

“Tush!” cried the commissary angrily; “right well do you know that you went with him, and kept company with him through the night. Your shoes and your hosen show as much. You have been companying with him for many a mile upon the way. You have not been in bed all night. We were in your room before daybreak, and you were not there.”

“I abode last night with Master Fitzjames, my former comrade, in our old lodging at St. Alban Hall,” answered Dalaber readily, “and that can be proven of many witnesses. Neither did I go forth with Master Garret when he left. I came to St. Frideswyde for evensong, and there I saw you, Mr. Commissary, and you, Dr. London, enter to speak with the dean. And I did well guess that you had come to tell him of the escape of Master Garret, of which he had spoken with me a short while before.”

It was perhaps not a very politic speech on Dalaber’s part. The three men turned angry and threatening glances upon him.

“You knew that that pestilent man was being sought for, and had escaped out of our hands, and you assisted him to further flight, and told nothing of what had chanced. Do you know the penalty which is attached to such misdemeanors, Anthony Dalaber?”

He made no answer. He knew himself to be in their power; but he resolved not to commit himself or to betray others by any rashness, whereunto by nature he was somewhat prone.

The three judges conferred together for a brief while, and then ordered that a Mass book should be brought, and bade Dalaber lay his hand upon it and swear to answer truthfully all questions put to him.

“That will I not do,” he answered, “for I will not speak of those matters which concern other men. And as for myself, it is abundantly plain that you know already all that there is to be spoken of mine own affairs.”

A smile passed over Dr. Higdon’s face. He was the least severe of the three men, and something in Dalaber’s bold bearing touched a sympathetic chord in his heart.

“Then, friend Anthony, why should you fear to be sworn? I pray you, show not yourself disobedient and contumacious, lest you bring discredit and trouble upon yourself which otherwise you may escape. It is not our wish to deal harshly with any man; but we would fain purge our godly colleges from the taint of deadly sin. If you are not guilty of such sin in your own soul, have no fear. It is a guilty conscience that makes men fear to lay hands upon the holy Book and take the name of the Most High upon their lips.”

This specious but rather vague reasoning had its effect upon Anthony; and even more did the kindness with which the words were spoken prevail with him, so that he

consented to swear to speak the truth, though in his heart he resolved that he would only answer for himself, and that nothing which might incriminate others should pass his lips.

Page 87

A long interrogatory now followed, in which he had much ado to fence and parry many of the questions. He soon learned, to his deep grief and sorrow of heart, that John Clarke was under suspicion, if not already arrested under the charge of heresy. He admitted to have been much in his company, and to have attended his public lectures, his public preachings, and those meetings in his rooms for reading, meditation, and discussion, which had long been going on. These were well known by this time to the authorities; but only since the cardinal's letter had stirred up suspicion and fear had there been any distrust aroused as to the nature of such meetings. A whisper here, a hint there, had lately gone abroad, and now Anthony was closely questioned as to the nature of the doctrines discussed, and the readings which had taken place.

He answered that no word had ever passed Master Clarke's lips that was not godly, pious, and full of the Holy Ghost. He heeded not the angry looks of Dr. London and the commissary, but addressed himself to Dr. Higdon, who was evidently wishful to think as well as possible of one of the leading canons of his own college. Anthony strenuously denied that Clarke had had any hand in the distribution of forbidden books or translations of the Scriptures. When they read the Bible together, it was read both in the original and in the vulgar tongue, so that the two versions might be carefully studied together; and Dalaber maintained with spirit and success the arguments learned from Clarke that the Catholic Church in this land had never forbidden such reading and study of God's Word. Dr. Higdon might have been satisfied, and even spoke a few words in favour of letting the young man go to his lodgings, only binding him over to appear when summoned in the future.

But the other two, having lost Garret, were resolved to make the most of his accomplice; and they argued that what Master Clarke had or had not said was not the main point at issue. He might or might not be the dangerous heretic some asserted. What they maintained was that Dalaber had been associated with Garret in a hundred ways, and that a great bale of forbidden books had been discovered in a secret hiding place just outside his deserted chamber at St. Alban Hall; and that, until he had given some better account of himself and his connection with these matters, he should certainly not be allowed to depart. Moreover, they desired to know the names of other students who had attended Master Clarke's readings and discussions. These were known to have taken place; but as they were mostly held in the evening after dark, it was not so easy to discover who attended them, and Dalaber was required to give such names as he could remember.



Page 88

But here he was resolutely silent, and this so obstinately that he irritated his questioners to the extreme, even Dr. Higdon losing patience with him at the last. Dalaber's manner was bold, and to them aggressive. The poor youth at heart felt fearful enough as he marked the anger his obstinacy had aroused; but he was resolved not to show fear, and not to betray others. He admitted freely that he had helped Garret in the distribution of the forbidden books. Denial would have been useless, even could he have brought himself to take a lie upon his lips and perjure himself; but he absolutely refused to give the names of any persons to whom the books had been given or sold, and this refusal evoked a great deal of anger and some rather terrible threats.

"Young man," said Dr. London sternly, "do you know what can and may well be done to you if you remain thus obstinate, and refuse the information which we, as the guardians of the university, do justly demand of you?"

"I am in your power," answered Dalaber; "you can do with me what you will."

"We can do but little," answered Dr. London. "We can do little but keep you safe in ward—safer than Master Garret was kept; and that shall be my task. But what we can do later is to send you to the Tower of London, where they will examine you by the rack, and thrust you into the little-ease to meditate of your obstinacy; and then will you desire that you had spoken without such harsh pressure, and had listened to the words of counsel and warning given you by those who have your welfare at heart. If once you are handed over to the secular arm, there is no knowing what the end may be. Therefore take heed and be not so stubborn."

They watched his face closely as these terrible threats were made; and Anthony, aware of their scrutiny, braced himself to meet it, and to show no signs of any sinking at heart. And indeed the very imminence of the threatened peril seemed to act as a tonic upon his nerves, and he felt something of the strengthening power which has been promised to those who suffer persecution for conscience' sake; so that at that moment there was no fear in his heart, but a conviction that God would fight for him and keep him strong in the faith. Come what might, he would not betray his friends.

It was not a question of subtle doctrines, in which his understanding might become confused; it was a simple question of honour betwixt man and man, friend and friend. He had the power to betray a vast number of men who had trusted him, and nothing would induce him to do it, not even the threat of torture and death. He trusted to be able to endure both, should that be his fate.

"Take him away," spoke Dr. London at last, in a voice of thunder—"take him away, and we will see him again when discipline has something tamed his spirit. And it will then be strange if we cannot wring somewhat more from him. I will see him myself at a later hour; and you, Dr. Cottisford, will have a care that he doth not escape, as Master Garret did yesterday."



Page 89

"I have provided against that, methinks," was the rather grim reply; and forthwith the three men rose and marched towards the chapel door, the prisoner being led after them by the servants.

The commissary then led the way through various passages and up a long stair, and Dalaber gazed with interest as he passed through the door of a large upper chamber, where a strange-looking apparatus stood in one corner. It was something like the stocks set in the marketplaces of the towns, for the detention of rogues and vagrants; but the holes in this were very high up, yet scarce high enough for the hands of a man standing.

"Empty your pockets, Anthony Dalaber," spoke the commissary sternly; and when Dalaber had obeyed, he quietly possessed himself of his purse, loose money, knives, and tablets, which, with the girdle he wore, were wrapped together and made into a packet.

"If you are found guiltless of the charges wherewith you stand accused, you shall have them again," said Dr. Cottisford somewhat grimly; "meantime they will be safer with me."

Dalaber's heart sank somewhat, for he had a few silver pieces in his purse, and had thought perchance to purchase therewith some greater favour from his jailers, whosoever they should be; but being thus robbed, he was powerless in the matter, and could only trust that they would not deal with him over harshly, since he had no means of winning favour and ease.

"Set him in the stocks and leave him," spoke the commissary. "Then we shall know there can be none escape."

Anthony made no resistance as he was forced to the ground and his legs firmly locked into the stocks, so that his feet were well nigh as high as his head. He uttered no complaint, and he spoke not a word of supplication, although the commissary lingered for a few moments as though to give him chance to do this; but as he remained silent and irresponsive, the latter left the room with a muttered word that sounded like an imprecation, and Dalaber heard the chamber door locked behind him as the last servant took his departure.

Left thus alone in that constrained posture, the thoughts of Dalaber flew back to those words of fatherly counsel and warning spoken the previous year by his master and friend John Clarke; and half aloud did Dalaber repeat the concluding sentence of that address: "Then will ye wish ye had never known this doctrine; then will ye curse Clarke, and wish ye had never known him, because he hath brought you to all these troubles."

"No, no!" cried Dalaber eagerly, as though crying aloud to one who could hear his words; "that will I never do, God helping me. Come what may, I will thank and praise



Him that I have been honoured by the friendship of such a saint upon earth. I thank Him that I have learned to love and to know the Scriptures as I never could have known them but for reading them in mine own tongue, and hearing him discourse upon them. Come what may, none can take



Page 90

that knowledge from me. Whatever I may have to suffer, I shall ever have that treasure in mine heart. And since I am no heretic in doctrine, and believe all that the canons of the church teach, how can they treat me as one who hates and would confound her? I am no follower of Martin Luther, though I hold that he is waging war in a righteous cause. But I would see the church arise and cast forth from herself those things which defile; and more and more do her holy and pious sons agree in this, that she doth need some measure of purification, ere she can be fit to be presented to the Father as the bride of the Lamb.”

Dalaber was just now under the influences of Clarke rather than of Garret. It was not only fear of what was coming upon him, though that might have some share in the matter, but he had found of late more comfort in the spiritual utterances of Clarke than in the bellicose teachings of Garret. Moreover, he had not been blind to the fact that Garret's courage had ebbed very visibly under the stress of personal peril, whilst Clarke's spirit had remained calm and unshaken. Dalaber had keen sympathy with Garret, in whose temperament he recognized an affinity with his own, and whose tremors and fits of weakness and yielding he felt he might well share under like trial and temptation. Indeed, he did not deny to himself that, were he not thus fast bound, he might have attempted the escape which yesterday he had scorned. But he thought upon the words of his beloved master, and spent the long, weary hours in meditation and prayer; so that when the commissary visited him later in the day and questioned him again, although he still refused to implicate others in any charge, he spoke of his own convictions with modesty and propriety, so that the commissary began to question whether he were, after all, so black a heretic as had been painted, and promised that he should have food sent him, together with pens and paper, on which he was desired to set forth a confession of his faith. He was not, however, released from the stocks until the college was safely shut up for the night, and all gates closed.

Dalaber wrote his confession of faith with great care and skill; and he trusted that he had not committed himself to any doctrine which would arouse the ire of those who would read it. Those very early reformers (to use the modern term) were in a very difficult position, in that they had very slight cause of quarrel with the church of which they called themselves true sons. Modern Protestants find it hard to believe what men like Wycliffe and Latimer taught on many cardinal points. To them it would sound like “rank papacy” now. The split between the two camps in the church has gradually widened and widened, till there seems no bridging the gap between Christian and Christian, between churchman and churchman—all being members of one Catholic Church.

But it was not so in the days of Anthony Dalaber. The thought of split and schism was pain and grief to most. Luther had foreseen it, was working for it, and the leaven of his teaching was permeating this and other lands; but it had taken no great hold as yet.

The church was revered and venerated of her children, and here in England the abuses rampant in so many lands were far less flagrant.



Page 91

England had been kept from much evil by her inherent distrust of papal supremacy. The nation had more or less combated it in all centuries. Rome's headship only received a qualified assent. Sovereigns and people had alike resented the too great exercise of the papal prerogative; and this had done much for the church in England. It seemed as though a very little would be enough to serve the purpose of these early reformers, and in the main they held the doctrines taught, and were willing and ready to obey most of the church's injunctions.

A man like Anthony Dalaber, versatile and eager, easily roused to enthusiasm and passionate revolt, but as easily soothed by gentleness and kindly argument of a truly Catholic kind, was not a little perplexed in such a situation as he now found himself. It seemed to him that he would be in a far more false position as a branded heretic, debarred from the communion of the church, than as a faithful son, undergoing some penance and discipline at her hands. He spent many long and painful hours writing out his confession, seeking to make plain the condition of his mind, and proving to his own satisfaction that he was no heretic. He only claimed that men might have liberty to read for themselves in their own tongue the words of the Lord and His apostles, and judge for themselves, under reasonable direction, what these words meant. For the rest, he had little quarrel with the church, save that he thought the sale of indulgences and benefices should be stopped; and in conclusion he begged that, if he had spoken amiss, he might be corrected and reproved, but not given over as a reprobate or heretic.

Perhaps, had the words of this confession been read a few days earlier, Dalaber might have escaped with no more than a reprimand and heavy penance. But unluckily for himself the bale of books last brought by Garret, hidden near to his chamber, and traced therefore direct to him, contained writings of a character more inflammatory and controversial than anything which had gone before—books which were thought full of deadly errors, and against which exception could very well be taken on many grounds, both on account of their violent tone and their many contradictions.

As a matter of fact, Dalaber had hardly read any of these treatises himself. He had been otherwise occupied of late. But it was not likely that the authorities would believe any such disclaimer, or leave at large one who had meddled with what they regarded as so deadly a traffic.

When Anthony's confession was brought to them, they were sitting in conclave over these books, and with a list which had been found of the names and number of works brought over and circulated by Garret. The magnitude of the traffic excited in them the utmost concern and dismay. If one half had been circulated in Oxford, there was no knowing the extent of the mischief which might follow. It was necessary that an example should be made. Already close inquiry had elicited the names of some dozen students or masters concerned. Dalaber and Clarke were accounted ringleaders, but others came in for their share of blame.



Page 92

By Monday night quite a dozen more arrests had been made, and Anthony Dalaber was only taken from the commissary's chamber to be thrown into prison in Oxford, with the grim threat of the Tower of London sounding in his ears.

Chapter XIII: In Prison

The wrath of the cardinal was greatly stirred. Thomas Garret had escaped once again. His own college had been proved to be, if not a hotbed of heresy, at least one of the centres whence dangerous doctrines had been disseminated; and amongst those who had been engaged in this unrighteous task were several of those very men whom he himself had introduced there, that they might, by their godly life and conversation, be shining lights amongst their companions.

It was natural, perhaps, that Wolsey's wrath should burn somewhat fiercely, and be especially directed against the black sheep of his own college. He was too busy with public affairs to come himself to Oxford at this juncture; but he wrote many and lengthy epistles to the authorities there, and prayed them to use every means in their power of ridding the place of heresy, promising to give the matter his own earnest consideration. He had believed that heresy was for the present stamped out in London, owing to the prompt and decisive measures taken. He declared it would be far easier to tackle in the smaller town of Oxford; yet he and others who knew the two schools of thought had an inkling that the seed, once sown in the hearts of young and ardent and thinking men, would be found sprouting up and bearing fruit sometimes when least expected.

However, there was no lack of zeal in executing the cardinal's commands; and Clarke, together with other canons of his college, Dalaber of Gloucester College, Udel, Diet, Radley, and even young Fitzjames, whose friendship with Dalaber was thought highly suspicious, were all cast into prison, and some of them into very close and rigorous captivity, with an unknown fate hanging over them, which could not but fill even the stoutest soul with dread and horror.

The prisons of the middle ages will scarce bear detailed description in these modern days; the condition of filth and squalor of the lower cells, often almost without air, and reeking with pestilential vapours, baffles words in which to describe it. To be sure, persons in daily life were used to conditions which would now be condemned as hopelessly insanitary, and were not so susceptible and squeamish as we have since become. The ordinary state of some of the poorer students' halls in Oxford appears to us as simply disgusting; yet the thing was accepted then as a matter of course.

Nevertheless, the condition of those cast into the prisons of those days was a very forlorn and terrible one, and almost more calculated to break the spirit and the constancy of the captive than any more short and sharp ordeal might do. It is scarcely to be supposed that the prisons in Oxford were superior to those in other parts of the

country, and indeed the sequel to the incarceration of Clarke and his companions seems to prove the contrary.



Page 93

But at least, in those days, bribes to the jailers could do, in most cases, something for the amelioration of the lot of the prisoner; and Arthur Cole was possessed of a warm heart, a long purse, and a character for orthodoxy which enabled him to associate on friendly terms with suspected persons without incurring the charge of heresy. His own near relative being proctor of the university, and his own assured position there, gave him great advantages; and these he used fearlessly during the days which followed, and even sought private interviews with the three heads of houses who had the main jurisdiction in the matter of these unfortunate students.

But for the first few days after Dalaber's arrest and imprisonment the excitement was too keen to admit of any mediation. The authorities were busy unravelling the "web of iniquity," making fresh discoveries of books, chiefly copies of the New Testament, circulating amongst the students, and sending to prison those who possessed them, or had been known to be connected with the Association of Christian Brothers.

All that Arthur could contrive during that first week was a visit to the cell of Dalaber. He was absolutely refused admittance to Clarke, who, he heard, was lodged in a dark and foul prison, where once salt fish had been stored, and which was the most noxious of any in the building.

Clarke, it seemed, had now become the object of the greatest suspicion and distrust. The Bishop of Lincoln—then the Diocesan of Oxford—had written most stringently on his account, and no inducement would prevail to gain admittance to him; nor did Arthur feel the smallest confidence that the money greedily accepted by the warder in charge would ever be expended upon the prisoner.

He was very heavy-hearted about this friend of his; but he had better fortune in his attempts to gain speech with Dalaber.

At the end of a week he prevailed so far as to gain a short interview with him, and was locked into the cell in some haste by the jailer, and bidden to be brief in what he had to say, since it was not long that he could be permitted to remain.

Dalaber sprang up from the stone bench on which he had been sitting in a dejected attitude, and when he saw the face of his friend he uttered an exclamation of joy.

"Arthur! you have come to me! Nay, but this is a true friend's part. Art sure it is safe to do so? Thou must not run thine own neck into a noose on my account. But oh, how good it is to see the face of a friend!"

He seized Arthur's two hands, wringing them in a clasp that was almost pain, and his face worked with emotion.



Arthur, as his eyes grew used to the darkness, was shocked at the change which a week had wrought in his friend. Dalaber's face seemed to have shrunk in size, the eyes had grown large and hollow, his colour had all faded, and he looked like a man who had passed through a sharp illness.



Page 94

“What have they done to you, Anthony, thus to change you?” cried Arthur, in concern.

“Oh, nothing, as yet. I have but sat in the stocks two days, till they sent me for closer ward hither. After Master Garret’s escape bolts and bars have not been thought secure enough out of the prison house. But every time the bolt shoots back I think that it may be the men come to take me to the Tower. They have threatened to send me thither to be racked, and afterwards to be burnt. If it must come to that, pray Heaven it come quickly. It is worse to sit here thinking and picturing it all than to know the worst has come at last.”

His hands were hot, and the pulses throbbed. Arthur could see the shining of the dilated eyes. Dalaber’s vivid imagination had been a rather terrible companion for him during these days of darkness and solitude. The authorities had shown some shrewd knowledge of human nature when they had shut him up alone. Some of the culprits had been housed together in the prison, but Dalaber had been quite solitary.

It was not so evil a cell that he occupied as some of the others. Arthur’s gold had prevailed thus far. But nothing could save him from the horrors of utter loneliness, and these had told upon him more than greater hardships would have done, had they been shared with others. It had been characteristic of Dalaber all through his life that he could be more courageous and steadfast for others than for himself.

“Tush, Anthony! There will be no more such talk now,” answered Arthur, with a laugh. “They have found out for themselves all that you withheld. They have laid by the heels enough victims to satisfy the wrath of the bishop and the cardinal. And already there is a difference in the minds of the authorities here. In a short while they will become themselves advocates of mercy. They took a great fright at hearing of heresy in Oxford; but persecution is against the very essence of our existence as a university—persecution for what men think. Mine own uncle only last night was beginning to hope that, having laid hands upon the culprits, they would now be gently dealt with. But for the cardinal and the bishop there would be little to fear.”

Anthony drew a deep breath, as of relief. His clasp on Arthur’s hands slowly slackened.

“Then they talk not of the Tower for me, or for any?”

“I have heard no word of it. I am sure such matter is not in their thoughts. And truly, if heresy be so grievous a crime, they have need to look to themselves; for those same three judges before whom ye were brought, Anthony, have committed an act of heresy for which the penalty is the same death with which they have threatened you and others.”

“What mean you?” asked Dalaber, with wide-open eyes.



Page 95

“Marry, this—that when they sought in vain for Master Garret, and were unable to find him, they went themselves to an astrologer, and bid him make a figure by the stars, that he might know whither the fugitive had fled; and he, having done so, declared that Garret had escaped in a tawny coat to the southeastward, and was like to be found in London, where doubtless some of the brotherhood have hid him. And this they have dared to tell to the cardinal and to the bishop, in no wise ashamed of their own act; whereas the church forbids expressly any such asking of portents from the stars, and it is as much heresy as any deed of which you and your comrades have been guilty.”

Dalaber broke into a short laugh.

“By the Mass, but in sooth it is so!” he exclaimed, drawing a long breath. “Shall not the God of all the earth look down and judge between us and our foes? O Arthur, Arthur, how can one not call such men our foes? They hunt us down and would do us to death because we claim the right to love and study the Word of God, and they themselves practise the arts of necromancy, which have been from the beginning forbidden as an abomination in the sight of the Lord, and they feel no shame, but blazon abroad their evil deed. Is it not time that the church were purged of such rulers as these?”

“Perchance it is; but that I hold is to be settled not by us but by God Himself. He has not shown Himself backward in the past to cleanse His sanctuary of defilement, and I trow we can leave this work to Him now, and wait His time. Patience, good Anthony, patience. That is my word of counsel to you. You will not reform the church singlehanded. The brethren will not do it; and it were only a source of weakness to rob the church of those of her sons who are longing after righteousness and truth. Be not in such haste. Be content to stand aside, and see for a while how the Lord Himself will work. You know the words of Scripture, that in quietness and confidence shall be your rest. There may be periods when quietness does more to prevail than any open strife. You have made your protest. The world will not listen yet; but the time shall come when it will be more ready. Wait in patience for that day, and seek not to run before the Lord.”

Such sage counsel was not unpalatable to Dalaber, who was in a less combative mood now than he had been of late. He had been threatened with excommunication, and indeed for a while there was no hope that he would be regarded as a fit person to receive the holy rite. That in itself was terrible to his devout spirit, and when any person spoke gently and kindly to him, and in a friendly and persuasive fashion, he was always eager to declare his love and loyalty for the Catholic Church.

He hated the thought of being regarded as an outcast and heathen. He knew that it was so terribly unjust. He had borne witness to his own beliefs; he had made full confession of faith; he had steadfastly refused to betray any comrade. Perhaps he had now done enough for the cause of liberty and righteousness, and might step aside for a while and see what would be the result of the movement now set on foot.



Page 96

He asked eagerly about those who had been taken, and his eyes filled with tears when he heard that Clarke was one of the victims, and one who was likely to be treated with greater harshness than the rest.

“A saint of the Lord, if ever there was one!” cried Dalaber earnestly. “Oh, if only they would let me share his confinement! What would not I give to be with him, to tend and comfort him, and listen to his godly words! I should fear nothing, were he beside me. Surely the angels of the Lord will be about his bed through the hours of darkness, and will keep him from the malice of his enemies.”

“I trust that he will be liberated ere long,” answered Arthur gravely. “But they will never make him speak a word that his heart goes not with. And it is said that the bishop and the cardinal are much incensed against the canons of the college who have been found tampering, as they choose to call it, with the holy Catholic faith.”

“And Freda? How is she, and what says she of all these matters?”

“She is in much trouble of spirit, but she bears it with courage, and I do all that I may to comfort her.

“I have won the right to think of her as a sister now,” added Arthur, with the colour rising in his face, “for Magdalen has promised to be my wife. We are betrothed, and I ask your congratulations, Anthony.”

These were given with great fervour, and for a brief while the two young men forgot all else in eager lovers' talk. Anthony was assured that no danger threatened the house of Dr. Langton for his friendship with Clarke and others of those now in prison. The anxiety of the authorities was simply with the students and those under their care in the university. The private opinions of private persons in the place did not concern them in any grave fashion.

Already enlightened men were beginning to foresee a gradual change in ecclesiastical government in the land, though it might not be just yet. Even the most zealous of the church party, when they were shrewd and far-sighted men, and not immediately concerned with the present struggle, saw signs of an inevitable increase in light and individual liberty of thought which would bring great changes with it. To check heresy amongst the students was the duty of the authorities, in virtue of their office; but they gave themselves no concern outside the walls of their colleges. Perhaps they knew that if they attempted to hunt out all heretics, or such as might be so called, from the city, they would denude it of half its population.

Indeed, having once laid hands on the offenders, and argued and talked with them, Dr. London himself, though regarded by the culprits as somewhat like a greedy lion roaring after his prey, and being, in truth, a man of whom not much good can be written, wrote

to the cardinal and the Bishop of Lincoln, plainly intimating that he thought the matter might be safely hushed up, and that it would be a pity to proceed to any extremity.



Page 97

“These youths,” he said, “have not been long conversant with Master Garret, nor have greatly perused his mischievous books; and long before Master Garret was taken, divers of them were weary of these works, and delivered them back to Dalaber. I am marvellous sorry for the young men. If they be openly called upon, although they appear not greatly infect, yet they shall never avoid slander, because my lord’s grace did send for Master Garret to be taken. I suppose his Grace will know of your good lordship everything. Nothing shall be hid, I assure your good lordship, an every one of them were my brother; and I do only make this moan for these youths, for surely they be of the most towardly young men in Oxford, and as far as I do yet perceive, not greatly infect, but much to blame for reading any part of these works.”

It was Arthur who brought word to the Bridge House of this letter of mediation which had been sent to the bishop, who would then confer with the cardinal; and the hearts of all beat high with hope.

“Surely, when he reads that, he will not deal harshly with them!” spoke Freda, her colour coming and going.

“I hope not—I trust not; but for the bishop none may answer. I would rather we had the cardinal directly over us; but it is the bishop who is our lord and master.”

“And is he a hard and cruel man?”

“He is one who has a vehement hatred of heresy, and would destroy it root and branch,” answered Arthur. “It may be that even this letter will in some sort anger him, though it is meant for the best.”

“How anger him?” asked Magdalen.

“Marry, in that he sees how godly and toward has been the walk of those youths who are now accounted guilty of heresy. Even Dr. London, who has been so busy in the matter of the arrests, now that he hath gotten them safe in ward, is forced to own that they are amongst the best and most promising of the students of the university, and therefore he himself pleads that they be not harshly dealt with. But how the bishop will like to hear that is another matter.”

“Yet to us it cannot but be a testimony,” spoke Dr. Langton gravely, “and one which those in authority would do well to lay to heart. In the matter of wisdom, prudence, and obedience, these young men may have failed somewhat—they may have been carried away by a certain rashness and impetuosity; but that they are of a pious and godly walk and conversation, even their accusers know well. And here in Oxford, where so much brawling and license and sinfulness stalks rampant, does it not say somewhat for these new doctrines that they attract the more toward and religious, and pass the idlers and reprobates by?”



So there was much eager talk and discussion throughout Oxford during the days which followed, and excitement ran high when it was known that Garret had been taken—not in London, not in a tawny coat, but near to Bristol—by a relative of Cole, one of the proctors, who had recognized him from the description sent by his relative, and was eager to be permitted to conduct him to Oxford, and hand him over to the authorities.



Page 98

Arthur heard all the story, and was very indignant; for though Garret was no favourite or friend of his, he was a graduate of his own college, and he felt it hard that he should have been hunted down like a mad dog, and caught just at the very moment when he was nearing the coast, and might well have hoped to make good his escape.

“I am no friend to Master Wylkins for his zeal,” he said, “and right glad am I that the law would not allow him to take possession of the prisoner, but had him lodged in Ilchester jail, despite his offer of five hundred pounds as surety for his safe appearance when called for. He is to be taken now to London, to the cardinal, under special writ. But I have greater hopes of his finding mercy with the cardinal than had he come here and been subject to the Bishop of Lincoln.”

A little later and the news came that the monk Ferrar, who had suddenly disappeared from Oxford after the arrest of Dalaber, had been taken in London in the house of one of the brethren, and that he and Garret were both in the hands of the cardinal.

“What will they do to them?” questioned Freda of Arthur, who came daily to visit them with all the latest news.

But that was a question none could answer as yet, though it seemed to Freda as if upon that depended all her life's future. For if these men were done to death for conscience' sake, could Dalaber, their friend and confederate, hope to escape?

Arthur always spoke hopefully, but in his heart he was often sorely troubled. He came at dusk today, clad in a cloak down to his heels, and with another over his arm. He suddenly spoke aside to Freda.

“Mistress Frideswyde, I sometimes fear me that if our friend Anthony get no glimpse of you in his captivity he will pine away and die. I have leave to take some few dainties to the prison, and I have below a basket in which to carry them. It is growing dusk. Wrapped in this cloak, and with a hat well drawn down over your face, you might well pass for my servant, bearing the load. I might make excuse that you should carry in the basket instead of me. Are you willing to run the risk of rebuke, and perchance some small unpleasantness at the hands of the keepers of the prison, to give this great joy to Anthony?”

Freda's face was all aflame with her joy. In a moment she had, with her sister's aid, so transformed herself that none would have guessed her other than the servant of Arthur, carrying a load for his master. She was tall and slight and active, and trod with firm steps as he walked on before her in the gathering dusk. She suffered him not to bear the load even a portion of the way, but played her part of servant to perfection, and so came with a beating heart beneath the frowning gateway of the prison, where it seemed to her that some evil and terrible presence overshadowed all who entered.



Arthur was known to the sentries and servants by this time. He visited several of the prisoners, and his gratuities made his visits welcome. He was conducted almost without remark towards Dalaber's cell, and no one made any comment when he said to Freda, in the commanding tone of a master:



Page 99

“Bring the basket along, sirrah! Follow me, and wait for me till I call. I shall not be above a few moments. It grows late.”

Freda had trembled as she passed the portal, but she did not tremble now. She stood where she was bidden, and Arthur, for a very short time, disappeared in the darkness, and she heard the shooting of a bolt. Then the turnkey came back and said, with a short laugh:

“Thy master hath a long purse and a civil tongue. I go to do his bidding, and refresh myself with a sup of good canary. Go on thither with that basket. I shall be back in a few short minutes. He will call thee when he wants thee.”

The man and his lantern disappeared, and the door of the corridor was slammed to and locked. There was no hope of escape for any behind it, but at least there was entrance free to Anthony’s cell.

The next moment she was within the miserable place, faintly lighted by the small lantern Arthur had brought, and with a cry she flung herself upon her knees beside the pallet bed on which Dalaber lay, and called him by his name. Arthur meanwhile stood sentry without the door.

“Freda, my love!” he cried, bewildered at sight of her, and with the fever mists clouding his brain.

“Anthony, Anthony, thou must not die! Thou must live, and do some great good for the world in days to come. Do not die, my beloved. It would break mine heart. Live for my sake, and for God’s truth. Ah, I cannot let thee go!”

He partly understood and kissed her hand, gazing at her with hungry eyes.

“I would fain live, if they will let me,” he answered. “I will live for thy sweet sake.”

She bent and kissed him on the brow. But she might not tarry longer. The sound of the bolt was already heard, and she stood suddenly up, and went forward.

“I will live for thy sake, sweetheart!” he whispered; and she waved her hand and hurried out, with tears gushing from her eyes.

Chapter XIV: The Power Of Persuasion

“I have sent for you, Master Cole,” spoke the Dean of Cardinal College, “because it is told to me that you, whilst yourself a blameless son of Holy Church, have strong friendship for some of those unhappy youths who are lying now in ward, accused of the



deadly sin of heresy; and in particular, that you are well known to Anthony Dalaber, one of the most notable and most obstinate offenders.”

“That is true,” answered Arthur readily. “I have had friendship this many years with Dalaber, long ere he took with these perilous courses against which I have warned him many a time and oft. Apart from his errors, which I trust are not many or great, he has ever appeared a youth of great promise, and I have believed him one to make his way to fame and honour in days to come, when once these youthful follies are overpast.”



Page 100

“I have heard the same from others,” answered Dr. Higdon; “and albeit he has never been a student here, nor come under my care, I have oftentimes come across him, in that he has sung in our chapel, and lent us the use of his tuneful voice in our services of praise. I have noted him many a time, and sometimes have had conversation with him, in the which I have been struck by his versatility and quickness of apprehension. Therefore (having in this matter certain powers from my lord cardinal in dealing with these hapless young men) I am most anxious so to work upon his spirit that he show himself not obstinate and recalcitrant. Almost all his comrades have proved their wisdom and the sincerity of their professed devotion to Holy Church by promising submission to the godly discipline and penance to be imposed upon them; but Dalaber remains mutely obstinate when spoken to, and will neither answer questions nor make any confession or recantation of error. I have therefore avoided his company, and abstained from pressing him, lest this only make him the more obstinate. I would fain use gentle and persuasive measures with all these misguided youths, and I trow that we shall thus win them, as we might never do by harshness and cruelty. Loneliness and the taste they have had—some amongst them—of prison life has done somewhat to tame them; and for the rest, we have had little trouble in persuading them to be wise and docile.”

“I am right glad to hear it,” spoke Arthur quickly, “for I have consorted with many amongst these same men; and I know right well that they are godly and well-disposed youths, earnestly desirous to be at peace with all men, and to live in obedience to Holy Church, whom they reverence and love as their mother. They have been something led away through such men as Master Garret, who—”

Arthur paused, for a curious smile had illumined Dr. Higdon’s face. He looked full at Arthur as he said:

“Yes, Master Garret has been much to blame in this matter; but the cardinal has so dealt with him by gentleness and kindness, and by the clear and forceful reasoning of which he is master, that Thomas Garret himself is now here in Oxford, ready to do penance for his sins of disobedience and rebellion; and to this submission do we owe that of his confederates and lesser brethren. When they heard that he had promised compliance to the cardinal’s commands, they themselves yielded without much delay.”

“Garret here in Oxford!” exclaimed Arthur, in surprise, “and a penitent, submissive to the cardinal! Then, truly, no others should be hard to persuade. But what is it that the cardinal asks of them?”

Dr. Higdon smiled that rather subtle smile which on many faces, and especially on those of ecclesiastics, tends to grow into one of craft.



Page 101

“He calls it an act of recantation, but we speak of it to the young men as one of obedience and reconciliation. There will be here in Oxford a solemn function, like unto what was seen not more than a year ago in London, when those who have been excommunicated, but are now about to be reconciled, will appear in procession, each carrying a fagot for the fire which will be lighted at Carfax; and having thrown their fagot, they will then throw upon the flames some of those noxious books the poison of which has done such hurt to them and others; and having thus humbled themselves to obedience, they will be received and reconciled, and on Easter Day will be readmitted to the holy ordinances from which they have been excluded all these weeks.”

“And Garret will take part in that act of obedience?” asked Arthur, in subdued astonishment.

“He will. The cardinal has persuaded him to it. What means he has used I know not, save that all has been done by gentle suasion, and nothing wrung from him by cruelty or force. And thus it is that I would deal with Anthony Dalaber. If I know aught of his nature, he would stand like a rock against the fierce buffeting of angry waves, he would go to the rack and the stake with courage and constancy. But a friend may persuade where an adversary would only rouse to obstinacy. And therefore have I sent for you, hoping that you may have wisdom to deal with him and persuade him to this step; for if he submit not himself, I fear to think what may be his fate.”

“I will willingly try my powers upon him,” answered Arthur, speaking slowly and with consideration. “I trow that the world will lose a true and valuable man in losing Anthony Dalaber. It will go far with him that Master Garret has consented to this act of obedience and submission. But there is one other of whom he is sure to ask. Is Master Clarke also about to take part in this ceremony of reconciliation?”

A very troubled look clouded Dr. Higdon’s face.

“Alas! you touch me near by that question. With Clarke we can prevail nothing. And yet there is no more pious and devoted son of the church than he; and God in heaven is my witness that I know him for a most righteous and godly man, and that to hear him speak upon these very matters brings tears to the eyes. His face is as the face of an angel; his words are the words of a saint. My heart bleeds when I think of him.”

“Why, then, is he accounted heretic and excommunicate?”

“You may well ask. I have asked myself that same question, for, as one of the canons of this college here, he is to me as a son. I was wroth at the first when it was told that here in this place we had a nest of pestilent heretics; but since I have come to know more of John Clarke, the more do I grieve that such doctrine as he holds should be condemned as heresy. It is true that he is unsound on some points—that I may not deny; but he is so full of sweetness, and piety, and the love of God



Page 102

and of the church, that I would hold his errors lightly and his graces and gifts in esteem. But alas! the bishop has heard much about his readings and his expounding of the Scriptures. He vows that he and Garret and the monk Ferrar have been the ringleaders in all this trouble, and that, unless they formally recant and join in this act of open submission, they shall be dealt with as obstinate heretics, and handed over to the secular arm, to perish by fire.”

Arthur’s face grew suddenly pale to the lips.

“They would burn a saint like Clarke! God forgive them even for such a thought! Truly men may say—”

Dr. Higdon raised his hand to stop Arthur’s words, but his face was full of distress and sympathy.

“We will trust and hope that such a fearful consummation will not be necessary. The others have submitted; and Clarke is but a shadow of himself, owing to the unwholesome nature of the place in which he is confined. I do not despair yet of bringing him to reason and submission. He is not like Dalaber. There is no stubbornness about him. He will speak with sweet courtesy, and enter into every argument with all the reasonableness of a great mind. But he says that to walk in that procession, to take part in that act of so-called recantation and reconciliation, would be in itself as a confession that those things which he had held and taught were heretical. And no argument will wring that admission from him. He declares—and truly his arguments are sound and cogent—that he has never spoken or taught any single doctrine which was not taught by our Lord and His apostles and is not held by the Catholic Church. And in vain do I quote to him the mandates of various Popes and prelates. His answer ever is that, though he gives all reverence to God’s ministers and ordained servants in the church, it must ever be to the Head that he looks for final judgment on all difficult points, and he cannot regard any bishop in the church—not even the Bishop of Rome—as being of greater authority than the Lord.

“It is here that his case is so hopeless. To subvert the authority of the Pope is to shake the church to her foundations. But nothing I say can make Clarke understand this. It is the one point upon which he is obstinately heretical.”

“But you still have hopes of inducing him to submit?”

“I shall not cease my efforts, or cease to hope,” answered Dr. Higdon earnestly, “for in truth I know not what will be the end if he remain obstinate or, rather, I fear too much what that end will be. If it lay with the cardinal, there would be hope; but the bishop is obdurate. He is resolved to proceed to the uttermost lengths. Pray Heaven Clarke may

yet see the folly of remaining obstinate, and may consent at the last to submit as the others have done!"

"Have all done so?"



Page 103

“There is Dalaber yet to win,” answered the dean, “and there are a few more—Sumner for one, and Radley for another—who have not given the assurance yet. If Clarke would submit, they would do so instantly; but they are near to him in the prison, and they can speak with each other, and so they hang together as yet, and what he does they will do. But their peril is not so great as his. The bishop has not named any, save Garret, Ferrar, and Clarke, as the victims of the extreme penalty of the law. Dalaber may well be included if he remains obdurate, and therefore I am greatly concerned that he should be persuaded.

“Think you that you can work upon him, were I to win you permission to see him? I have heard that you did visit him awhile since, when he was kept less strictly than is now the case. What was his frame of mind then? and what hopes have you of leading him to a better one?”

Arthur sat considering awhile, and then said:

“Dalaber is one of those upon whom none can rightly reckon. At one moment he will be adamant, at another yielding and pliable. One day his soul will be on fire, and nothing would move him; but in another mood he would listen and weigh every argument, and might be easily persuaded. One thing is very sure: gentleness would prevail with him a thousand times more than harshness. A friend might prevail where a foe would have no chance. I will gladly visit him, and do what I can; but I would fain, if it might be accorded, see Master Garret first, and take word to Dalaber of mine own knowledge that he has promised submission.”

The dean considered awhile, and then rose to his feet.

“Come, then,” he said. “It is not known in Oxford yet; but the cardinal has sent Garret here to me, to be kept in close ward till the day of the reconciliation, now at hand. This is what is to take place. The men who have been excommunicated and set in ward, but who are ready to make submission, will be brought to trial a few days hence, and will sign their recantation, as we call it, to the cardinal, in the presence of the judges, who will then order them to take part in this act of penance, after which they will be admitted once more to communion, and have liberty to resume their studies, or to return to their homes and friends, as best pleases them. Thus we trust to purge Oxford of heresy. But if Master Clarke remain obdurate, and others with him, I fear me there will be some other and terrible scene ere this page of her history closes.”

“Let me see Master Garret,” said Arthur abruptly. “I would I might also see Master Clarke. But whenever I ask this boon it is refused me.”

The dean shook his head slowly.



“No one is permitted access to him, save those who go to reason with him; and so far we reason in vain. But I will admit you to the other prisoner for a few minutes. You have been acquainted with him in the past?”

“Slightly. He has never ranked as my friend, but I have known him and met him. He is of my college, and I have been sorry that he has used his knowledge of Oxford to spread trouble there.”



Page 104

Garret sprang up as Arthur entered the bare but not unwholesome room where he was confined. He had grown very thin with the long strain of flight, imprisonment, and hardship that had been his portion of late. He greeted Arthur eagerly, his eyes aglow, and on hearing somewhat of his errand he broke out into rapid and excited speech.

“Tell Dalaber that the time is not ripe—that it lingers yet. I have been warned of God in a dream. My hour has not yet come. There is work yet for me to do, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! Yes; you need not shrink from me as from a blasphemer. I hold that every man must follow in the steps of the Lord, and drink of His cup, and be baptized with His baptism. But He waited for His hour. He hid Himself and fled and conveyed Himself away. He paid tribute to kings and rulers. He submitted Himself to earthly parents, earthly potentates. And shall we not do likewise? I would lay down my life in His service, and He knows it. But something within me tells me that my work is not yet done. And the church is yet holy, though she has in part corrupted herself. If she will but cleanse herself from her abominations, then will we work in her and not against her. Even the cardinal has spoken of the purifying which must be accomplished. Yes, he has used good and godly words, and I will wait and hope and trust. The Lord would be served by one body, of which He is the Head. He wants one, and not many. Let us have patience. Let us wait. Let us watch and pray. And if we have to submit ourselves to painful humiliation in this life, let us fix our eyes upon the crown of glory which is laid up for us in the heavens, and which fadeth not away.”

Arthur was convinced of the truth of what Dr. Higdon had spoken, and saw that Garret's mind was made up to do what was required of him. The young man was glad enough that this should be the case; but he felt a certain contempt for the facile disposition of the man, who, after spending years of his life and running innumerable perils in the circulation of these books, could in a few weeks consent to become a participant in the ceremony of solemnly burning them, in acknowledgment that they were dangerous and evil in their tendencies. Far greater was his admiration for Clarke, who, in obedience to the vows he had taken, would have no hand in distributing the forbidden volumes, yet in the hour of trial and peril refused to take part in the ceremony which would be regarded by the spectators and by the world at large as an admission that the Word of God was not for the people, and that he, as a teacher and preacher, had spoken unadvisedly with his lips in expounding the living Word to his hearers.

With his mind full of these things Arthur found his way to the prison, and was conducted to Dalaber's cell, which was more closely guarded than at first. The young man, who had been prostrated by fever at the first, had recovered in a measure now, but looked very gaunt and wan and haggard; and he seized Arthur's hands, and wrung them closely in his, whilst tears of emotion stood in his eyes.



Page 105

"I thought you had forgotten me, Arthur!"

"Surely you know that I would have come had I been able. But of late neither bribes nor entreaties have availed to gain me entrance. How has it been with you, my friend?"

"Oh, I am weary of my life—weary of everything. I would they would end it all as soon as may be; death is better than this death in life. I am sick for the sight of the sun, for a breath of heaven's pure air, for the sight of my Freda's face. Tell me, was it all a dream, or did she indeed come to me?"

"She came, and she would have come again, but they made your captivity closer at that time. She grows thin and pale herself in grief and hunger for your fate, Anthony.

"But today I come to you with glad tidings of hope. In a few days from this, if you act but wisely and reasonably, as your friends and companions are about to do, you will stand a free man, and you will see your Freda face to face, none hindering."

He staggered back almost as though he had been struck.

"I shall be free! I shall see Freda! Speak, Arthur! Of what are you dreaming?"

"I am not dreaming at all. I come from the Dean of Cardinal College, and from Master Garret, whom he has there in ward, but who is also to be released at the same time. I was permitted speech with him, that I might bring word to you, and that you might know in very truth what was about to happen."

"And what is that? Speak!" cried Anthony, who was shaking all over like an aspen.

To some temperaments hope and joy are almost more difficult to bear than the blows of adverse fortune. Had the commissary come with news that Dalaber was to suffer death for his faith, he would not have found him so full of tremors, so breathless and shaken.

"I have come to speak," answered Arthur kindly, as he seated himself upon the low pallet bed, and made Dalaber sit beside him. "It is in this wise, Anthony. When you and your comrades were taken, the heads and authorities were in great fear that all Oxford was infected and corrupt by some pestilent heresy; but having found and carefully questioned the young men of their faith, and having read your confession, and heard more truly what hath been the teaching they have heard and received, they find nothing greatly amiss, and are now as anxious to deal gently and tenderly with you all as at first they were hot to punish with severity. Had they the power to do as they would, you might all be sent speedily to your homes; but they have to satisfy the cardinal, and, worse still, the bishop, and hence there must somewhat be done ere peace be restored, to assure him that Oxford is purged and clean."

"And what will they do?" asked Dalaber, who was still quivering in every nerve.



Page 106

“Marry, nothing so very harsh or stern,” answered Arthur, who was feeling his way carefully, trying to combine truth and policy, but erring distinctly on the side of the latter. “But those later books which were found in your hiding place and Radley’s room, which are more dangerous and subversive than any that have gone before, are to be cast solemnly out of the place; and, in truth, I think with cause. See, I have brought you one or two to look at, to show you how even Martin Luther contradicts himself and blasphemes. How can the Spirit of God be in a man who will say such contrary things at different times?”

And Arthur showed to Anthony a few marked passages in certain treatises, in which the reformer, as was so often the case in his voluminous and hastily-conceived and written works, had flatly contradicted himself, to the perplexity and confusion of his followers.

“Such books are full of danger,” pursued Arthur, speaking rapidly now. “I say nothing about the translated Scriptures; but the works of a man, and one who is full of excitement and the spirit of controversy, are like to be dangerous to the young. Let the church read and decide, but do not you disseminate such works. It may be more sinful than you have thought.

“And now for what will soon happen. You did see the same in London once. There will be a fire in Carfax, and those who have circulated and read such books will walk each with his fagot, and cast first these and then the books upon the flames. So will the bishop be satisfied, and so will peace be restored.

“Be not proud and disobedient, Anthony, and refuse to be reconciled with the mother you have offended. The cardinal has shown even to Master Garret the error of his ways, and he will be one to share in this act of submission and reconciliation. He bid me tell you that the hour has not yet come for any further blow to be struck. He, like Master Clarke, now begins to hope that, having pleaded with their mother, she will hear and cleanse herself from all defilement and impurity. He will submit and be reconciled; and if he will do this, surely you, friend Anthony, need not stand aloof.”

Anthony was pacing the floor in hot excitement. He recalled the scene at St. Paul’s the previous year, and his face was working with emotion.

“Am I to be called upon to burn the Word of God, as though it were an unholy thing, to be cast forth from the earth?”

“No,” answered Arthur boldly; “you will only be required to burn a few pamphlets of Martin Luther and other reformers.”

And he vowed in his heart that he would make good this word, and that, whatever other men might do, Anthony’s basket should contain nothing but those later and fiery



diatribes, which were certainly not without their element of danger and error and falsehood.

“And if I refuse?”

Arthur answered with a patience and gentleness that went farther than any sort of threat could have done.



Page 107

“If you refuse, friend Anthony, I fear you will find yourself in danger, and that not in a good or holy cause. For if Master Garret and your comrades are willing to make a small sacrifice of pride, and do a small penance to satisfy the bishop, who is in some sort your lawful ruler in the church, so that peace and amity may be restored, and hatred and variance banished from our university, it were an ungracious act that you should refuse to join with them, for they have sought by patience and kindness to restore you to your places; and surely it cannot be God’s will that you should hold back for this small scruple, and remain cut off from His church by excommunication, as must surely be if you will not be advised and humble yourself thus.”

“What would Freda bid me do?” suddenly asked Anthony, who was much agitated.

Arthur was thankful that he did not ask a question about Clarke. The young man was doing his utmost to win his friend, and had been reared in a school where it was lawful to do evil for the sake of the good which should follow. But he did not wish to be driven to falsehood, and it was with relief that he heard this question.

“When Freda came to see you she bid you live—live for her sake,” he answered, without hesitation. “Let me leave that word with you—live for her sake. Do not fling away your life recklessly. She has begged that you will live. Therefore, for love of her, if for no other reason, make this submission—be reconciled, and live.”

Anthony’s face was working; he was greatly moved; the tears rained down his cheeks. But at last he seized Arthur’s hands in his, and cried:

“I will! I will! God forgive me if I judge amiss; but for her sake I will do it, and live.”

Chapter XV: The Fire At Carfax

“Magda, I want my reward.”

She raised her eyes to his face, a deep flush suffused her cheek, and then faded, leaving her somewhat paler than before.

“Thy reward, Arthur? And what is that?”

“Nothing less than thyself, my beloved,” he answered, with a passionate tenderness. “I have thy heart, thy love; these have been enough this long while. Now I want thee, thine own self. Why should we wait longer? Art thou not ready to give thyself to me—now?”

She let her lover draw her close to his side. She looked up at him, and saw that his face was grave and pale. This gravity had grown upon him of late, and she saw that



lines of anxiety had begun to appear on his brow, which had not been there six months ago. Her woman's instinct of seeking to comfort and support came instantly to her help.

"I will do all that thou dost wish of me, Arthur. If thou hast some trouble, let me share it. A wife should be the helpmeet of her husband in all things. If I am soon to be that, let me begin mine office now."

He bent his head and kissed her, and drawing her hand through his arm, began pacing to and fro in the budding nut walk, where the tender flickering green of early springtide was shimmering in the golden sunlight.



Page 108

“My Magda, I have been thinking much of late. I have many plans, and some of them must needs be carried out in all haste. But ere I can fulfil them as I would, I must needs have my wife at my side to help and support me. There will be woman’s work as well as man’s, and such work as thou dost love.”

“Tell me,” she said, lifting her eyes to his face.

“Magda, thou dost know that tomorrow there will be a form of trial, and Anthony Dalaber and others will make submission, be condemned to do penance, and in a few days will fulfil that penance, and then be restored to communion with the church, and to liberty and life?”

“Yes, I know,” answered Magdalen gravely.

“And when this has been done, and they are free, it will be better, far better, that they should quit Oxford for a while, and remain in some seclusion, away from prying eyes and from the suspicion which must attach to all those upon whom the taint of heresy has once fallen. Oxford will be no place for them for a while.”

“I can believe that they would be happier elsewhere,” she answered. “But I sometimes fear for Anthony. He will suffer from agonies of shame and remorse; I know he will. Thou dost think him right to make submission, but he will feel that in so doing he has denied his faith and his Lord. I fear for him, and so does Freda. She is very unhappy.”

“I know it,” answered Arthur quickly; “I can see both sides of this most difficult question of conscience. But I may not be the one to blame Anthony, for I have greatly persuaded him to this act of submission, and I would that, if blame attach to any in Freda’s mind, she should throw that blame on me. I will speak with her later anent the matter.”

“But, Magda, this is the plan I am revolving in my mind. I would provide for Anthony and for others a place of rest and peace and refreshment, where they can regain health of body and serenity of spirit. And where better than at the old manor near to Poghley, where we have spent so many happy days of yore? But I would have my wife with me there—not as guest, but as mistress of the house. And Freda would have a home with us, and thy father likewise, when he desired it. But thou dost know how that he greatly desires to visit Italy; and wert thou my wife, and Freda beneath our care, then he could start with a free heart upon his journey. And we would take up our abode together at Poghley, and live such a life as I have sometimes dreamed of, but which has ever seemed too fair and peaceful for attainment in this world of strife.”

Magdalen’s eyes grew bright and big with the rush of thoughts that came over her.



“And thou wouldst have Anthony and his friends, and would seek for them there health, both of body and of spirit? Oh, that would be a sweet and commendable work, Arthur. I would that I might share it with thee.”



Page 109

“And so thou shalt, my beloved, for alone I should be sorely let and hindered. Anthony shall be our guest and kinsman—soon to be our brother; for he is without home, and his brother in Dorset is a man of fierce temper, and has sent him a violently accusing letter on hearing what has happened in Oxford, which has cut him to the quick. He will be in sore need of comfort and repose; and if there be others in like case with him, whose friends will only persecute and revile them, then let them come to us also. Ours shall be a house of refuge for the distressed and oppressed.

“Thou wilt not refuse to aid me in that task, Magda? I know that thy heart yearns always over all who suffer from sorrow and pain, even though they may in some sort have brought this upon themselves.”

“I should love such a task,” answered the girl earnestly; “I would ask nothing better myself than to tend and comfort those who have suffered in such a cause. But thou, Arthur—how hast thou come to think of such a thing? Thou hast never been one of the brethren; thou hast never been touched by heresy; thou hast ever deplored the rashness of those who have committed themselves to such courses; and yet thou art showing thyself now the friend of all.”

He looked straight before him with a thoughtful smile.

“These men will be ‘purged from heresy,’ as it is called, ere I offer them the shelter of my house,” he answered. “I am risking nothing by so doing. And in truth, sweetheart, if there were somewhat to risk, methinks I would be willing to do the same, if thou didst not shrink from the task. Whether we study the Scriptures for ourselves, or whether we let the church expound them, one lesson we always learn if we listen and read aright, and that is the lesson of charity. We are brethren in Christ, if we are bound by no closer tie—no tie of our own making. Christ was ever merciful to the sick, the afflicted, the erring, the desolate, and we are bidden to follow in His steps. He did not shut Himself up behind walls to live the life of meditation; He walked amongst men, and bid men come to Him. In lesser measure we may surely do the same; and this is what I would fain attempt in these days of trouble for so many—bind up the broken heart, give medicine to the sick, rest to the weary, cheering and comfort to those who are cast down in spirit. It may be little we can accomplish, but let us do that little with all our might. I trust and hope that God will give us His blessing, and grant us power to be a blessing to others.”

Dr. Langton heard Arthur’s proposal with great satisfaction. He had grown somewhat weary of his life in Oxford, and was desirous of taking a long journey into foreign countries, to pursue there some studies which would require the assistance of foreign libraries. Moreover, the frequent outbreaks of sickness now sweeping over Oxford, and especially during the summer months, had aroused his concern, and made him anxious to remove his daughters into some more healthy place. Latterly this matter had appeared likely to arrange itself, with the betrothal of the girls respectively to Anthony

Dalaber and Arthur Cole. Still there might be a lapse of several years between betrothal and marriage, and he was seriously meditating the best course to pursue, when Arthur's proposition came as a solution of the problem.



Page 110

Marriages were very quickly and easily performed in those days. They could be consummated at the briefest notice. And Magdalen, having given her promise, was ready to give her hand at any time that Arthur should desire, and depart with him at once for the new home, whither Freda and their father would quickly follow them, and any amongst their suffering friends who, on release, desired that haven of peace and rest.

The trial of the tainted students was over. It was Arthur who brought word to the Bridge House as to what had been the result. All day Freda had moved to and fro with restless steps and burning eyes. Her whole being seemed rent asunder by the depth of her emotion. What would Anthony say and do? How would he comport himself? Would he yield and sign the recantation, and join in the act of humiliation and penance, or would he at the last stand firm and refuse compliance? Which choice did she wish him to make? Could she bear to see him treated as an outcast and heretic—he, her faithful, devoted Anthony? But would he ever be quite the same in her eyes, if he, to save himself from the pains and penalties which beset him, drew back and denied those things which he believed?

She knew not what to think, what to wish. She paced the house and garden with restless steps, and when Arthur came at last, her agitation was so great that she could not speak a word.

But her face was eloquent of her emotion, and he kept her not a moment in suspense.

“All has gone well,” he answered, “with Anthony as with the rest. They were gently handled and fairly spoken. The confession of faith demanded of them was such as no Christian man could hesitate to make. They were admonished for disobedience, but the errors with which they were charged were not sternly pressed home. They were asked if they desired to be reconciled and restored to communion; and on affirming that they did, they were only bidden to take part in the public act of penance of which they had already heard. All consented to do this, and were then removed to their several prisons; and four days hence will this act of penance be performed, after which our friends will be restored to us and to the church once more.”

“And Anthony consented with the rest?” asked Freda, with pale lips and wistful eyes.

“He did.”

Arthur looked her full in the face as he spoke.

“Anthony might perchance have refused compliance, had it not been for me, Freda. If thou hast any blame for him in this matter, let it rest upon my head, not upon his.”

“Thou didst persuade him?”



Page 111

“I did. I would do so again. Anthony is young, hot headed, impulsive, rash. Whatever he may grow to in the future, whatever convictions he may then hold, he is not fit yet to be a leader of men, to take up an attitude of defiance to the laws and statutes of the university—leaving the church out of the question—to ruin his career in an impulse which may not be a lasting one. Let him and others have patience. Those things which they ask they may likely obtain without such fierce struggle and such peril. Let men bear the yoke in their youth; it does them no hurt. To be cast forth from the communion of the church would be a greater hurt to Anthony, body and soul, than to do a penance which may do violence to some of his cherished convictions. In this world we oftentimes have to choose, not between absolute right and wrong, but between two courses, neither of which is perfect; and then we are forced to consider which is the less imperfect of the two. I trow that Anthony has made a wise choice; but if to you it seems not so, I pray you blame me rather than him, for I did plead with him more than once, and right earnestly, to take this way. I did use your name also, and begged of him to live for your sake; and methinks that argument did more prevail with him than any other I could have urged.”

Freda drew her breath rather hard, but the expression of her face softened.

“You did bid him do it for my sake? Did he think that I would have thus bidden him act?”

“I know not that, but it is like. Remember, sweet Freda, how that, when thou didst see him in his prison, thou didst rain kisses and tears upon his face, and bid him live for thee. How could I not remind him of that? And wouldst thou not rather that he should live than die?”

“Oh yes, oh yes! I cannot bear to think of that other terrible peril. I am torn in twain by grief and perplexity. Why do they make it so hard for men to take the perfect way? He would be faithful unto death—I know he would—if he could but see his course clear. But as it is, who can tell what is the best and most right way? To be cut off from the Church of Christ—it is so terrible! Yet to tamper with conscience—is not that terrible too?”

“They made it as easy for them as was possible,” answered Arthur gently; “let not us make it hard afterwards. Anthony would suffer—it is his nature—whatever course he took. To be excommunicate is keen pain to one of his devout nature; to do penance for what he holds to be no act of sin or heresy will pain him, likewise—not the humiliation of the pageant alone, but the fear lest he has taken a false step and denied his Lord. It is for us, his friends, to receive him joyfully, and restore him to peace and comfort. Be sure that Christ would pardon him, even though he may find it hard to pardon himself.”

Freda sighed, but her face softened. Magdalen asked a whispered question.

“And Master Clarke—did he submit?”



Page 112

“He was not called,” answered Arthur gravely; “some say he is too sick to appear, others that he has recanted, but has been spared joining in the procession because that he and two more are not able to walk. Others, again, say that he will not abjure the errors with which he is charged, nor take part in the prescribed penance. I have not been suffered to see him. I know not how it may be. But in sooth, if he be sick as they say, it were time they let him forth from his prison. It is not right nor justice that men should be done to death in noisome dungeons when no crime has been proven against them.”

The girls' faces were pale with horror and pity.

“Canst thou do nothing, Arthur?” pleaded Magdalen. “Thou art rich, and powerful, and well known to so many. Canst thou do nothing to aid them?”

“I will do what I can, once the act of penance be over,” he answered. “Till then it is useless to stir, for they will seek to work upon them to the very last moment by threats, or by argument, or by entreaty. Should they prove obstinate to the last, I know not what will befall. But if they are like to perish in the prison, it may be that the dean's word will prevail for their release. He is grieved that one so godly in his life and conversation should suffer so cruelly. When this act has been accomplished, belike they may listen to the words of his friends, unless the cruel will of the bishop prevail, and he is sent to a fiery death.”

It was a very quiet wedding on the morrow that united Magdalen Langton and Arthur Cole as man and wife. They were married at an early hour in St. Mary's Church, and set off that same day for the old manor house, which was to be their future home. Freda could not, however, be persuaded to accompany them on that day.

“I must see the fire at Carfax,” she said; “I would see it with mine own eyes. Afterwards I will come to you, and will bring Anthony with me; but not till I have seen this thing for myself. I cannot help it. I must be there.”

Magdalen entreated awhile, but Freda stood firm.

“I must see the fire at Carfax,” she answered; and at last they forbore to press her, knowing her mind was made up.

It wanted but a few days to Easter when the day came for which Freda had waited with feverish, sleepless eyes. The sun rose clear and bright birds carolled in the gladness of their hearts; all nature was filled with the joy of happy springtide; but there was a heavy cloud resting upon Freda's spirits.

“I will not blame him; I will speak no word of reproach. In this hard strait should I have been more brave? It may be he is doing what he believes most right. I will not believe



him unfaithful to his truer self. Who can judge, save God alone, of what is the most right thing to do in these dark and troublous days?"

She rose and donned a black gown, and shrouded herself in a long cloak, the hood of which concealed her face. She was very pale, and there were rings around her eyes that told of weeping and of vigil. Oh, how she had prayed for Anthony, that he might be pardoned wherein he might sin, strengthened wherein he was weak, purified and enlightened in the inner man, and taught by the Holy Spirit of God!



Page 113

As she walked through the streets by her father's side, and marked the gathering crowd thronging towards Carfax and the route to be taken by the procession, she seemed to hear the words beaten out by the tread of hurrying feet: "Faithful unto death—faithful unto death—unto death!" till she could have cried aloud in the strange turmoil of her spirit, "Faithful unto death—unto death!"

There was a convenient window in the house of a kindly citizen, which had been put at her father's disposal. When they took their places at it they saw the men already at work over the bonfire in the centre of the cross roads. All the windows and the streets were thronged with curious spectators, and almost at once the tolling of the bells of various churches announced that the ceremony was about to begin.

The procession, it was whispered about, was to start from St. Mary's Church, to march to Carfax, where certain ceremonies were to be performed, and then to proceed to St. Frideswyde, where a solemn Mass would be performed, to which the penitents would be admitted. Then, with a solemn benediction, they would be dismissed to their own homes, and admitted to communion upon Easter Day.

Freda sat very still at the window, hearing little beside the heavy beating of her own heart and the monotonous tolling of the bells. The crowd was silent, too, and almost all the people were habited in black, partly out of respect to the season of the Lord's passion, partly because this ceremony took the nature of a solemn humiliation.

Perhaps there were many standing in that close-packed crowd who knew themselves to have been as "guilty"—if guilt there were—as those who were compelled to do penance that day. There was evident sympathy on many faces, and the girl, looking down from above, noted how many groups there were talking earnestly and quietly together, and how they threw quick glances over their shoulders, as though half afraid lest what they were saying might be overheard.

"I trow there are many here who have dared to read the Word of God and discuss it freely together, and compare the church as it now is with the church, the Bride of the Lamb. I wonder if they would have all submitted, had it been their lot to stand before those judges and hear the sentence pronounced."

A thrill seemed suddenly to pass through the crowd; the people pressed forward and then surged back.

"They are coming! they are coming!" the whisper went round, and Freda felt the blood ebbing away from her cheeks, and for a moment her eyes were too dim to see.

The solemn procession of heads and masters, clerks and beadles, seemed to swim before her in a quivering haze. Her strained eyes were fixed upon those other figures



bringing up the rear—those men in the garb of the penitent, each bearing a fagot on his shoulder, and carrying a lighted taper in his hand.



Page 114

Was Anthony among them? She held her breath in a sickening suspense, scarce knowing whether or not she longed to see him. She knew almost each face as it loomed up into view: there was young Fitzjames, their kinsman, looking shame-faced but submissive; there were Udel and Diet, Bayley, Cox, and others whom she had never suspected of having been concerned in the movement; and there, almost at the rear of the long procession, walked Anthony Dalaber, his dark, thin face looking worn and haggard, his hair tumbled and unkempt, his dark eyes bent upon the ground, his feet slow and lagging, but whether from weakness or unwillingness she was not able to say. She held her breath to watch him as he appeared. She saw the heavy frown upon his brow; she marked the change which had come over him—the cloud which seemed to envelop him. She knew that he was bowed to the ground with shame and humiliation, and with that sort of fierce despair of which she had seen glimpses in his nature before now.

Suddenly all the old tenderness rushed over her as in a flood. She forgot her sense of disappointment in his lack of firmness; she forgot how he had boasted of his courage and devotion, and how, in the time of temptation and trial, he had let himself be persuaded to take the easier path; she forgot all save that he had loved her, and that she had loved him, and that love can surmount all things, because its essence is divine. If he had fallen, he had suffered keenly. Suffering was stamped upon every line of his face.

Was not God's love for sinners so great that before the world repented of its wickedness He gave His Son to die for an atonement and expiation? Must we then not love those who err, and who repent of their weakness? Nay, are we not all sinners, all weak, all frail and feeble beings in weak mortal bodies? Shall we judge and condemn one another? Shall we not rather seek to strengthen one another by love and tenderness, and so lead one another onward in the way which leads to life everlasting?

These thoughts rushed like a flood through Freda's mind as she watched through a mist of tears the throwing of the fagots and the books upon the fire at Carfax. Three times did the penitents walk round the fire, the bells tolling, and the crowd observing an intense silence, as the servants handed to the young men books from the baskets to fling upon the fire.

Only one was given to Anthony, and he gave one quick glance before he threw it into the heart of the blaze. Arthur Cole had been as good as his word. It was no portion of God's Word that he was condemned to burn, but a pamphlet of peculiar bitterness by one of the foreign reformers.

Then the procession formed up again, and started for its final goal; and Freda, rising, laid her hand upon her father's arm and said:



“Take me home, I prithee, sweet father—take me home first. I have seen enough. I would now go home. And then, when all is over, go thou to St. Frideswyde and bring Anthony to me.”



Page 115

Chapter XVI: “Reconciled”

Anthony sat with his face buried in his hands, in an attitude of profound dejection. He was gaunt and haggard and worn to a shadow, and Freda’s gentle, pitying gaze held in its depths nothing but love and tender compassion.

The first rapture of meeting once again had passed. The exultant joy engendered by a sense of freedom had lasted for several hours. Anthony had laughed and sung aloud and shouted for joy in the shady alleys of the garden, amid all the blissful sights and sounds of springtide. He had wandered there with Freda beside him in a sort of trance of happiness, in which all else had been forgotten. The joy to both had been so keen, so exquisite, that it had sufficed them for the present.

But with the falling of the softened dusk, with the setting of the sun, with the natural and inevitable reaction upon an enfeebled body and sensitive spirit, following upon a severe and protracted strain, Dalaber’s spirits had suddenly left him. An intense depression both of body and mind had followed, and in the gathering twilight of that familiar room he sat in an attitude of profound dejection, whilst Freda scarce knew whether it were better to seek to find words of comfort, or to leave him alone to fight out the inevitable battle.

“Why did I do it? Why did I consent?” he suddenly broke out. “Why did I listen to the voice of the charmer? Would it have been so hard to die? Will it not be harder to live with the stain of this sin upon my soul?”

“The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,” spoke Freda very softly.

“And I have denied my Lord—in deed, if not in word,” and he groaned aloud.

“It was an act of submission and obedience,” spoke Freda, using the arguments familiar to her. “Nor did you yourself cast upon the fire the precious Word of God; you did not deny your faith. You affirmed—so they say—your assent to the doctrines of Holy Church, and did penance for past disobedience. Is that a matter to grieve so greatly over?”

She spoke very gently, yet not as though her heart went altogether with her words. Anthony raised his head and broke out into vehement speech, which she welcomed gladly after the long silence of utter depression.

“They made it easy for us. They sought to win us by gentle methods. They knew that the most of us loved Holy Church, and were loath indeed to be divorced from her communion. They did not bid us in so many words to deny those things which we have held—the right of every man to hold in his hand the Word of God, and to read and study it for himself; but they made us perform an act which in the eyes of the world will be

taken to mean as much—to mean that we acknowledge the sinfulness of circulating that precious, living Word, and are ready to cast it into the flames like an unholy and corrupt thing.



Page 116

“And I consented. I let them persuade me. I let mine eyes be blinded. And now, whither shall I go? I have denied my Lord. I have sinned in His sight. I have not taken up my cross and followed Him. I have sought to save my life, and yet I had thought myself ready to follow Hun to the cross and the grave.”

“Like Peter,” spoke Freda softly. “Yet the Lord looked upon him with tender love; and He forgave him freely and fully, and gave him special charge to strengthen the brethren, to feed the sheep and the lambs. The Lord wore our mortal flesh. He knows that it is weak. He understands all. Be not too much cast down, my Anthony. Perchance in the past thou didst too much trust in thine own strength. In the days to come let us look ever more and more to the Lord Himself. He will first forgive, and then confirm His strength in us.”

“In us? But thou hast ever been strong in faith,” spoke Anthony quickly. “I can read it in thine eyes how that thou dost hold me weak and wavering. Had it been thou who wast thus tried, I trow thou wouldst have stood firm.”

“Indeed I know not that, Anthony,” she answered earnestly, “and I dare not say that I did desire it of thee. I was rent in twain by the struggle. If, indeed, patience and tenderness are shown by those in authority to the sons they hold to be in error, then love should be met by love. We must not rend the body of the Lord by needless strife and contention, if other and gentler means may with patience prevail. We know that obedience and submission to the powers that be are enjoined upon us; yet we know that we must keep our conscience void of reproach. It is hard, indeed, to judge; but let us always seek to take the highest path, and if we fall by reason of weakness in faith, in judgment, or in spirit, let us pray the more fervently for the Spirit of truth to guide us into all truth, and keep us pure within.”

They had been so earnestly talking that they had not heard the sound of steps and voices in the house, and started when the door was suddenly opened by young Fitzjames, who ushered in Garret and the monk Robert Ferrar.

Dalaber started to his feet. He had seen both these former companions of his in the procession that morning, but not a word had been exchanged between them. He stood gazing at them with a strange mixture of emotion.

“Anthony Dalaber, we have come to say farewell,” said Garret, whose thin, white face and the burning brightness of his eyes testified to the struggle through which his own spirit had passed. “For the present the brotherhood is broken up; for the present the powers of the world are too strong for us; but the day will come when the truth shall be vindicated, when it shall shine forth as the sun in his strength, and we of the faith will be the first to welcome the rising rays. Be not afraid; be not cast down. The Lord will arise, and His enemies will be scattered. And there is work for us all to do, to prepare for His appearing. Let us not be weary in well doing. Though we have bent our heads to the

storm, yet we will lift them up with joy anon, knowing that redemption draweth nigh. You believe that, Anthony Dalaber?"



Page 117

"I verily believe that God will visit the earth and His church, and that He will sit as a refiner, and purify her from all impurities; but whether He will condescend to use again such imperfect instruments as we have proved, I do not know. We have bowed ourselves in the house of Rimmon. Shall we ever be fit for the service of the house of God?"

Garret was still for a moment, silenced by the strange expression of concentrated remorse upon Dalaber's face. It was Ferrar who spoke in his low, even voice.

"And when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon his servant in this thing. And Elisha said unto him, Go in peace."

Deep silence fell upon the room, and then Freda spoke.

"I think God is ever more merciful than man. God reads the heart, and He knows that, though men may fail through weakness, they may rise again in His strength and yet do valiantly."

"I will yet live to do Him service!" cried Garret, with kindling eyes. "I will yet live that I may lay down my life for Him if He call me. If I have been deceived this once, He will lead me aright in the days to come. Mine hour will yet come; I know it, I feel it. And He shall see then that Thomas Garret will not shrink even from death for His name's sake."

Dalaber looked straight into his face.

"I consented to take part in this penance today because I heard that you had submitted. I believed that all had done so. Had I known that Master Clarke had refused, God helping me, I would have refused also; for surely never was there a man who had so fully the mind of the Lord Jesus as John Clarke."

Garret's glance fell before that burning gaze. He too had noted that Clarke was not amongst the penitents, and it had cut like a knife into his heart. He had always been so ready with his protestations of willingness to die for the faith, yet he had been won over to an act which looked like one of recantation. Clarke had never boasted, had always spoken with gentle warning of the dangers which beset them, and his doubts as to whether they should have strength to withstand the fiery trial if it came upon them. There had been times when Garret had openly charged him with being lukewarm in the cause. Yet Clarke lay still in his noisome prison, excommunicate, and in danger of death at the stake, whilst they stood free men, reconciled to the church, and restored to her favour.

Whose position was that of most true blessedness? Garret twisted his hands nervously together as this flood of thought came surging over him.



“They say that Clarke would have been there,” spoke young Fitzjames, “but that he was too enfeebled by captivity to walk in the procession.”

“That is false,” said Freda, in a low voice. “Master Clarke might have won his liberty with the rest, but he refused to take any part in the spectacle today at Carfax.”

“Yet he never circulated the books,” broke out Garret. “He oftentimes cautioned me against importing too many of the treatises written in Germany. He would not approve all that they contained. He could have cast such books upon the flames without violating his conscience. Wherefore was he not there with the rest of us?”



Page 118

It was Freda who, after a pause, made answer:

“He knew that men would not distinguish between the burning of books by men and the burning of the precious Word of God. It was this that held him back.”

“Yea, verily,” cried Dalaber, with a blaze of his old excitement, “he was true to his conscience, and we were not. He knew that those who saw that procession would regard it as an admission of heresy. He was no heretic, and he would have neither part nor lot with it. He has ever stood firm in this—that the church of the living God is pure and holy, and that she asks no such acts of submission and recantation from her sons, when their only desire has been to extol Him and to make His way clear upon earth. How could his pure and holy spirit make confession of evil? He could not, and he would not. He will lay down his life for the gospel’s sake; but he will not be deceived, as we were.

“I can see it now as I could not when the walls of prison and the mists of fever were closing me in. We have, as it were, admitted that to read the Word of God and to give it to others to read is a sin against the church. He has stood on the ground he adopted from the first—that the church has never forbidden it, and that those who do so are not her true and faithful stewards and ministers; and for that conviction he is ready to die. He will not let himself be deceived or cajoled. His light is the light from above, and it will shine upon his path to the very end.”

Ferrar and Garret had no intention of lingering long. They were about to go forth together into the world—probably to make their way to Germany—and Garret had had some thought that Dalaber might possibly accompany them on their journey. But they saw that he had other views for himself, and did not even ask him.

The spell which Garret had once exercised upon him was broken now. They would ever be as friends and brothers in a good cause, but the special tie had snapped. Garret was no longer a hero in the eyes of Dalaber, and he felt the subtle change which had come over his ex-pupil.

So they clasped hands warmly, exchanged farewells, and the two companions passed out into the darkening night, whilst young Fitzjames lingered wistfully, and brightened as Freda bade him take up his old quarters in that pleasant house.

“And on the morrow we will all travel to Poghley together; and you, Fitzjames, shall take word to others who have suffered imprisonment, and whose friends, perchance, may look coldly upon them, that they are welcome to Arthur’s house, if they desire a brief space for rest and refreshment. It is open to all who have suffered, but are now ‘reconciled,’ as it is termed. Anthony and I go thither early in the day, and any who desire may come with or follow after us.”



“I feel as though I never wished to set eyes on Oxford again, once I get free from it!” cried the youth, who felt bitterly the ignominy and hardships through which he had passed.



Page 119

He had submitted to the imposed penance, having, indeed, no very strong opinions of his own upon controverted subjects, though he had heard much, and received the new doctrines with open mind. But now he felt as though he hated the rulers of the church with a deep and implacable hatred. His boyhood seemed to have passed away from him during those weeks of harsh imprisonment; and he came forth a man, with a stern hatred of bigotry and intolerance, with no formulated plan of action or resistance, with no very definite opinions as to doctrine or dogma, but with a fixed resolve to cast in his lot with those who were fighting for liberty of conscience, or liberty in any form, and with a strong hope that he might live to see the day when he should break a lance for the cause he had espoused.

It was indeed too often that men's hearts were filled with bitterness, and that those in places of power and authority made themselves bitter enemies, even of those towards whom they were kindly disposed; whilst the day was coming slowly but surely when they were to reap what they had sown.

It was a soft and radiant evening when Freda and her father and Dalaber rode slowly through the gates which led to the moated manor where Arthur Cole and his bride awaited them. Fitzjames and a few others were to follow. But these three, with a couple of servants, arrived first; and upon their approach through the golden green of the beech avenue, Magdalen flew, as it were, to meet her twin, and the sisters were clasped in each other's arms. Arthur was not far behind his fleet-footed spouse, and was clasping hands with Dalaber, and gazing long and searchingly into his face.

"Welcome, my friend, welcome!" he said. "It is good to see you stand a free man once more. You have suffered, Anthony; I can see it all too clearly in your face. But I trust that the dark days are over now, and that better times are in store. In the sweet security of home we will seek to forget those trials and troubles which have gone before."

Dalaber looked round him at the awakening beauty of the springtide world, and a lump seemed to rise in his throat. His face contracted as though with a spasm of pain, and he spoke in sharpened accents of suffering.

"The world of nature looks—thus—to me. And Master Clarke lies rotting in a foul prison, in peril of his life both from sickness and from the cruel malice of the bishop. How can I forget? How can I be happy? Methinks sometimes I would be more truly happy were I lying beside him there."

Arthur drew Dalaber a little away from the rest.

"Have you had news of him?"

"Such news as might be had. Some of the brethren, if they can still be so called, when they are as sheep scattered without a shepherd—some of them came to bid me adieu



and speak comforting words. I asked them one and all of him, our beloved teacher; but none had seen him—only they had one and all made inquiry after him, and one had heard this, and the other that. But all affirmed that he, together with Sumner and Radley, was lying in a foul prison, sick unto death with the fever that besets those who lie too long in these noisome holes, or, as some said, with the sweating sickness, which has shown itself once more in Oxford.



Page 120

“But since he refused to take part in the scene at Carfax, and as his companions were firm as himself, they are kept yet in the same foul place. And if help come not they will certainly die; for how can men recover of sickness without some care, or tendance, or better nourishment than will be given them there? Ah, it makes my blood boil to think of it!”

It was almost impossible for Dalaber to rejoice in his own freedom and in the beauty of all about him, so woeful were his thoughts about this man whom he so greatly loved. He went to his room that night, but sleep came not to him. He paced to and fro in a strange tumult of mind; and with the first light of dawn he clad himself in his riding suit, and when the household began to stir he sought a servant, and bade him tell the master that he desired instant speech of him.

Arthur came in brief space, and looked with surprise into Dalaber’s pale, set face. His wan looks told of his sleepless vigil, but he gave no chance for questions to be asked. He spoke himself, and that rapidly.

“Arthur, I must forthwith to London. Canst thou lend me a good horse? Else I must needs go afoot.”

“A horse! Why, the pick of the stable is at thy service, friend Anthony. But whither away so fast, and wherefore?”

“I go to seek speech with the cardinal.”

“With the cardinal, quotha? And wherefore with him?”

“I go to ask the life of Master Clarke. They say the cardinal is not bloodthirsty or cruel. I will prove that for mine own self. And if a victim must needs be had, I will offer myself in his place.

“Yes, Arthur, I will. Seek not to stay me by fair words. Methinks I have had too much of such. I have been cozened both by friend and by foe—for mine own good, as they would say, but not I. My heart is heavy and hot within me. If Clarke is to lie languishing in prison, let me lie there with him. There can be a worse prison house of the soul than any made by bolts and bars. We can suffer as keenly in such a place as this as in the lowest depth of a dungeon. I have made trial of both. I know what I say. Seek not to stay me, good Arthur, for I must needs go. The fire burns hot within me. It will not be quenched.”

Arthur looked keenly at him. He was silent for a very brief while, and then he spoke quietly and persuasively.

“Thou shalt go, Anthony; but wait only for Monday. Thou art in need of rest, and upon the eve of the festival of Easter thou wouldst never get nigh to the cardinal. Thou art



not fit for the long ride today. In two days more thou wilt be in better case for the journey. And I myself will be thy companion, for I have some friends in high places who will lend me their help; and it will be strange if together we cannot succeed in obtaining sight and speech of the cardinal, and proffering our petition. Only wait these two days, that thou mayest be more fit for the fatigues lying before thee.”



Page 121

Dalaber would fain have been off that moment, but he saw the force of Arthur's words; and, in truth, the long strain was telling heavily upon him, and as he stood he almost reeled from weakness. He was in no fit state for another day's riding; and when Freda added her voice to that of Arthur, he consented to put off his journey until after Easter.

Yet he looked straight into her eyes in making this concession, and added firmly:

"But when the time comes I must go. And thou wilt bid me Godspeed, my beloved; and if this journey should perchance bring me hurt—if I should not return to thee therefrom—thou wilt not grieve over it too much. Thou wouldst not withhold me, Freda?"

She looked into his eyes. She knew that peril might menace her lover. It was as though he would, having once escaped, put his head again into the jaws of the lion. None could say, if he and the cardinal met, what might be the result to the impulsive but not always discreet Dalaber. It seemed as though some power from within urged him to make a confession, different from the one he had so recently signed. It seemed as though his conscience would not let him rest—as though he felt that he had been guilty of some act of treachery towards his Lord.

Freda understood. She would not hold him back, though her eyes filled with tears as he put the question.

"I will never withhold thee from what thou dost deem the right path to tread, my beloved," she answered. "I will trust thee in the hands of the all-loving Father, and pray that He may deliver thee out of all peril. Be not rash. That is all I ask. Be as Master Clarke—gentle, faithful, true, pure of heart and blameless of speech. I ask nothing more of thee. Be true unto thine own better self, and thou wilt be supported and upheld through all."

Arthur and his wife spoke much of the proposed journey.

"Wilt thou risk aught by it, my husband?" asked Magdalen, with a tender anxiety in voice and look.

"I risk but little—nothing, perhaps; and right glad am I to proffer this petition for our dear friend and teacher, Master Clarke. It may be we shall fail in what we seek to accomplish, and it may be that Anthony may fall once again under suspicion, and be cast into prison as a heretic. No man can forecast these things, and he will not seek to save himself this time.

"He has suffered already from tampering with his conscience. Perchance I overbore him too much. It is hard to know what a man in such straits should do. But I will seek to safeguard him all I can, and bring him safely back. And if we win our petition, and gain



liberty for those three sick prisoners, it will be worth all the risk and labour we have undergone to gain it.”

“Hast ever had speech with the cardinal before?” asked Magdalen, trembling a little at the thought.



Page 122

“I have been in his company at times, but received nothing but a fleeting glance or a passing word of courtesy. I have watched him in converse with others many times. He hath a stately presence, and a great gift of speech. He can win hearts by the grace and kindness of his address, or he can send men away quaking in fear by the flash of his eagle eye and the stern rebukes which fall from his lips. And none can know beforehand which will be his fashion of receiving a petition, and particularly such a petition as ours.

“In God’s hands must we leave the issues. But at least for such a man as John Clarke it must surely be right to adventure somewhat. I will go with Anthony. Together, I trust, we shall succeed.”

“And we at home will pray day and night for your success,” answered the young wife, clinging to her husband, from whom she must make up her mind to part on an errand that might be fraught with peril; “and surely I think that God will hear and answer us, and give you grace and power to intercede.”

So as soon after Easter as Anthony was fit for the saddle the two friends started off together on horseback for London, whilst the wife and the betrothed stood to watch them away, waving them a farewell, and hiding from their eyes the starting tears, which were only allowed to fall when the sisters were left alone together.

Chapter XVII: The Clemency Of The Cardinal

The great man sat in his private closet, with the ivory crucifix in the corner before the prie dieu chair, a wonderful picture of the annunciation on the wall, where he could see it every time he lifted his eyes, and a table piled with papers before him, though piled with a certain method and order which enabled him to lay his hand in a moment upon any required document.

He wore the scarlet robes of his office, and a scarlet skullcap was on his head. His features were those of the ascetic and man of the world. The skin was pale and slightly sallow, like old parchment; the hair was turning white, and was thin upon the temples. The clear-cut features were impressive, both in outline and in expression, and the eye was as the eye of the eagle, so keenly penetrating and far-seeing that many had shrunk before its gaze as before the sharp thrust of a rapier.

Arthur Cole entered the presence of the great man with the habitual courtly and almost exaggerated reverence that custom imposed. But Anthony Dalaber, who followed, only bowed with a sort of sullen defiance in look and aspect, not even raising his eyes to meet the flashing, rapid glance which the great man bent upon him as he slowly followed his companion into that august presence. He stood in the background, and his dark face and gaunt figure did not lack elements of dignity. There was something

distinguished in the personality of Dalaber, of which those who knew him were keenly conscious.



Page 123

The statesman, who had all his life been wont to take the measure of men with great acumen and discernment, gave more than one quick, keen glance in the direction of Dalaber, as he received Arthur's credentials and cast his eye over them.

"You are welcome, Master Cole. I have heard of you before, and everything I have heard redounds to your credit. You are highly spoken of in Oxford, and your career there has not been without distinction. I am keenly interested in all that happens there, and in the welfare of each individual clerk and student. To hear a good report of any gives me sincere pleasure. I am glad on that account to give you this audience, albeit I am always pressed for time in which to compress each day's work."

"I thank your Eminence from my heart," answered Arthur; "and if I be permitted to speak, I will be as brief as I can in presenting my petition and pleading my Cause."

"You come with a petition? Very good; I will listen and consider it. Is it one that relates to yonder companion of yours?—

"Anthony Dalaber, I believe I mistake not in calling you by that name."

Dalaber came a step forward, but made no reply, for Arthur had answered for him, and the cardinal was turning over some papers upon his table, and selecting one or two, ran his eyes rapidly down them, after which he looked up.

"I hear of you that you are a youth of excellent parts, and of a quick understanding, and that, with industry and application, you may do great things. I also hear that though you have been led into some indiscretions and dangerous courses, that you have submitted to lawful discipline, and are forgiven and reconciled. All this is as it should be. I rejoice in the repentance of any sinner. I pray, my son, that in the future you may be guarded from all such perilous courses."

Arthur almost trembled as these words were spoken. The cardinal's wonderful eyes were fixed full upon the face of Dalaber, and the magnetic nature of the glance seemed to act with a curious, restraining power upon him. He spoke, but it was not with the outburst which his comrade had feared. It was slowly and almost haltingly.

"I have done amiss," he said. "None can better know than I how much amiss I have done. I repent me from the bottom of my heart. But I repent not of those things for which I suffered in prison, for which I thought I might be called upon to lay down my life. I repent me that I, having put mine hand to the plough, did look back. I would I had had the courage and steadfastness to resist and stand firm."

Arthur trembled; his eyes sought the cardinal's face. Wolsey was regarding Dalaber with great intensity of interest, whilst a fine smile played in shadowy fashion over his thin lips.

“Is that what you have come hither to tell me, my son?”



Page 124

“In part it is,” answered Dalaber, “for I have felt like a hypocrite and renegade all these days. I love the church; I hold her doctrines; I trow that I would die for the truth which she teaches: but I hold also that men should not be condemned for the reading and free discussion of the Word of God; and if those who did persuade me to submit to discipline and penance for disobedience believe that I repent me of holding and spreading that doctrine, then must I ever live with the sense of having been a traitor to the cause of my Lord and my God.”

“And you wish to tell me this?”

“Yes; that your Eminence may send me back to prison, or to the stake, if it be your will.”

The same slight smile played round the cardinal’s lips. He looked once more at his papers.

“It is said here, Anthony Dalaber, that you have given up the study of divinity, and have taken up that of the law?”

“That is true,” he answered freely. “I am not made for the priesthood; of that I am well assured. I will seek to serve God in the lesser calling, and do my duty there to Him and to the brethren.”

“A laudable resolve,” answered the great man, “in which I wish you all success. Listen to me for a brief moment, my son. The words you have spoken here this day will not be used against you. I have followed your career. I know your courage and steadfastness of spirit, as well as its weaknesses and vacillations. I know how many godly youths are in like case with you—halting between two opinions, torn asunder in the struggle to judge all these hard and difficult questions for themselves. For you, and for all who yet love Holy Church, I have this piece of counsel to give. Beware how you seek to tamper with the unity of the one body. Beware how you sacrifice the greater for the lesser. It is only a church at unity in herself that can convert the world; we have the Lord’s own word for that. If you have read in any tongue His last charge on earth to His apostles, as recorded in the Gospel of St. John, you must see and recognize that. The burden of that wonderful pastoral is, ‘That we all may be *one*: that the world may believe.’ To rend the body is to destroy its unity. To destroy its unity is to hinder the work of Christ upon earth. Think and ponder that well, and pray for guidance, for patience, for the submissive will which would endure much rather than bring war amongst the members of the one body. Our Lord Himself has warned those who are devout and sincere from the error of straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. Let the church minister the Word of God. Let those who hunger for more ask of her. She will not send them empty away. Already those who style themselves reformers are quarrelling amongst themselves. Soon they will be broken up into a thousand camps. Unity will cease to reign in the church. Confusion and hatred and even bloodshed will follow.



“Be advised, Anthony Dalaber. Quit these hard and vexed questions for a while. Take to the less perilous study of the law. With age and experience you will learn your lesson. And I will pray for a blessing upon you, my son, for in truth I believe that the Lord may have work for you to do in days to come; and if so, I trow you will not shrink from doing it.”



Page 125

Anthony stood mute. A thousand questions and replies seemed to spring to his lips, but no word passed them. He felt that in argument he was no match for the cardinal, even had disputation with so eminent and august a personage been possible. He felt that somewhere there was an answer to this irrefragable argument, but for the moment he could not find it; he stood tongue tied, silent. The cardinal looked at him with his slight, peculiar smile, and then turned once again to Arthur.

“And now for your petition. If it is for favour to be shown to your ardent young friend, after the statement he desired to make to me, with greater courage than discretion (for which, however, I like him none the less), then it is granted already.”

“It is not for him,” answered Arthur; “we have both come hither on the same errand. But we do desire your Eminence’s good offices for one who was in somewhat similar case with Dalaber. We have come to plead for the life and liberty of John Clarke, canon of your own beauteous and godly college in Oxford, who, with two other companions, one of them a canon and the other a singing man of that foundation, is lying near to death in a foul prison, and will without doubt perish miserably there, if release doth not speedily come.”

The cardinal’s steel-blue eyes took a new expression, and one which Arthur could in no wise interpret.

“Like to die!” He spoke somewhat more abruptly than had hitherto been the case. “You are sure of that?”

“I am sure of it,” answered Arthur; “and Dr. Higdon, the dean, will tell you the same, if your Eminence will ask him of it. And though Master Clarke lies under the imputation of heresy, I trow there is no sounder churchman nor godly and pure-living man in all Oxford than he, nor one whose life holds so fair a promise of shining like a light in a dark world.”

“I have heard of this man,” spoke the cardinal thoughtfully; “I have known of him many years. I had report of him or ever he was sent to Oxford.”

“It is known in all Oxford how that your Eminence did send to us there this godly man, whom we have learned to love and revere,” spoke Arthur eagerly; “and many a time have we blessed you that your choice did fall upon one of so saint-like a walk in this world. How should we, then, not plead with your Eminence for his life, when it lies thus in jeopardy? If you would speak the word of release we would do the rest.”

The cardinal sat very still and thoughtful.

“John Clarke is not my prisoner. He belongs to the Bishop of Lincoln.”



“I know that well,” cried Arthur eagerly. “But surely the word of your Eminence would prevail with the bishop, and free him from his bonds.”

“My Lord of Lincoln is very bitter against heretics.”



Page 126

"Then let him take me in lieu of Master Clarke!" suddenly cried Dalaber, stepping forward to the cardinal's table, upon which he leaned with both his hands, and his dark eyes flashed fire. "If he must have a victim, let me be that victim. I am tenfold more heretic than Master Clarke. Let me take his place in the foul dungeon; let me, if need be, go to the stake for him. If there must be a victim, let me be that victim; but shall he die whose life has been given for the purity of the faith, and for teaching that very doctrine of the unity of the one Holy Catholic Church upon which your Eminence laid such stress in speaking awhile ago? Give me up to the mercy of the bishop, and let Clarke go free!"

The piercing gaze of the cardinal was fixed upon Dalaber's strenuous face. All weakness had vanished from it now. It was full of passionate earnestness and dauntless courage. His dark eyes met those of Wolsey without fear or shrinking. The loftiness of a great resolve, a great sacrifice, was shining in them.

"I will consider this matter, my sons," spoke the cardinal, whose face softened as he gazed first at one young man and then at the other. "I must communicate with the bishop, and I will see you again. Fortunately he is not far from London. A messenger can quickly reach him. Come to me here in four days' time, and I will see you again and perchance give you an answer. Will your mind have changed in those days, Anthony Dalaber? Do you indeed mean the things that you have said?"

"I do," he answered quietly, and added no protestations.

"I will remember," spoke the cardinal; and rising to his feet he gave to Arthur the benediction for which he bent his knee.

Dalaber hesitated for a moment, and then he too knelt. There was no hypocrisy in this act. Something in the aspect and the words of the cardinal had changed his opinion of the man during the brief interview.

"The Lord bless thee, my son," spoke the priest solemnly. "The Lord give thee grace and discernment, wisdom and light. The Lord strengthen all that is good in thee, that it may live and grow, and cast out and uproot all that may become a stumbling block or root of bitterness within thee. The Lord give to thee the understanding mind, the childlike heart, the pure spirit of the children of light, and lead and guide thee into all truth. Amen."

The two companions went quietly from the room, and through the long and stately passages, where the worldly pomp visible had stirred in Dalaber on entering a sense of incongruity and almost of contempt.

But he did not think of these things as he walked out into the sunny street; and both had got far upon the road to their lodgings, hard by Moor Fields, ere either spoke a word.

"I trow he will do it," then said Arthur, drawing a long breath.

"You think so truly?"



Page 127

“I watched his face. It was hard to read its look; yet I thought there came a gleam of anger into it when I spoke of the peril they lay in from death by sickness in that noisome prison. After all, they are all scholars of his own college; and methinks he and the bishop have disagreed ere this over matters of discipline, and where mercy rather than judgment should be shown. All the world says that Master Garret and Robert Ferrar would have been sent to the stake had the bishop’s word prevailed, but that the cardinal would not give them up to him. It may be that he will be loath to give up Master Clarke and his friends; but surely the cardinal’s word would prevail, if he desired to make it.”

“And if the bishop has a victim, that might satisfy him,” spoke Dalaber gravely.

“Thou art thinking of thyself?” asked Arthur quickly.

“Why should I not? I have offered myself as a substitute. If they permit the exchange, I will not draw back.”

Arthur regarded him with a species of admiration. But he was silent awhile, finding speech difficult. Then he asked:

“Does Freda know?”

“Yes,” answered Dalaber briefly.

“And she was willing?”

“She was willing.”

They walked on in silence for some time, only pausing when they reached the open space of Moor Fields, where the apprentices were playing quarterstaff, wrestling, and shooting with bow and arrows, and shouting aloud in their glee. The friends stood awhile watching, but their thoughts were far away.

Suddenly Arthur broke out into what for him was rather vehement speech.

“Then thou art in truth a hero, Anthony, with the spirit of the warrior and the martyr. I have sometimes misjudged thee, thinking thee somewhat unstable, though a man of parts and one to be much beloved. I ask thy pardon now for having so misjudged thee. Thou hast all the stuff in thee which I have sometimes thought was lacking.”

“It was lacking. Thou hast not misjudged me,” answered Anthony gravely. “I have been unstable. I know it myself, none better. Alone, I should be unstable still. Indeed I may not trust myself even from day to day. But there is One who changeth not—One who is with us, and in us, and for us. He will be our strength and our stay in times of darkness and perplexity, and teach us to guide our steps aright. If I have found courage, that courage is His; if I can hold steadfast, it is in His power. That is all. I have put myself



into His hands. I shall take no thought for myself, what I shall speak or do. He is showing me that He would have all Christian men to live together in unity and peace. I do truly see and believe that. Yet if He command me to speak or to do that which men will call heresy and sin, He will give me grace to stand firm, even unto death.”



Page 128

Arthur was silent awhile. In his heart he scarcely believed that the cardinal would offer up Anthony Dalaber to the tender mercies of the implacable bishop; yet there was no knowing. The great man had evidently been struck by the personality and history of the young graduate, and it was possible he might recognize in him a type of character which might prove dangerous and subversive to the existing order of things. It was an anxious time for Arthur—more anxious, as it seemed, than for Anthony, who remained all the while very calm and tranquil, much occupied in reading and prayer, and very constant in his attendance at the various churches in the great city.

Having been for long debarred from taking part in public worship, it seemed a great refreshment of spirit for him to do so now. Arthur generally accompanied him; but often he rose quite early, and slipped out alone for some morning Mass, and came back with his face aglow with the mystic devotion in which he had been engaged.

“Call that man a heretic!” thought Arthur, as he watched and marked him; and he little knew that he was not the only man dogging Dalaber’s footsteps in those days. The cardinal had his own methods and his own carefully-trained servants, and not a thing that either young man did in those few days was unknown to Wolsey in his sumptuous palace, with the affairs of the kingdom and of other realms more or less pressing upon his attention.

On the appointed day they again appeared before him in his closet, and he received them with an urbanity which sat graciously upon his rather austere person.

“I have made inquiry concerning the matter upon which you came to me, my sons,” he said, “and to my sorrow and regret I find that you spoke only too truly as to the condition into which the unwholesome state of their prison has reduced those three men. I have therefore prevailed with the bishop to permit them to be delivered to their friends.

“And if you, Master Cole, who are well known in Oxford, will make personal application to the dean of the college, he will give you the needful authority for obtaining possession of the persons of the prisoners, who will be released and placed under your care. All that will be demanded of you, or of their friends, is that you will take care of them, and be answerable for their appearing at the bishop’s tribunal, should he summon them later to appear before him.”

Arthur’s heart leaped for joy within him. He spoke a few words of heartfelt thanks. But Anthony’s eyes never left the cardinal’s face.

“And shall I surrender myself prisoner in their place?”

A slight smile lighted the thin, pale face.

“Do you so desire to court prison and death, my son?”



“I do not desire it,” answered Anthony humbly. “I once did think I had courage and strength to fight and to overcome; I did think myself to be a hero. I have learned to know myself better since then. Love and life are sweet to me as to other men. But I did mean that which I did say, and I will not draw back. If a victim be wanted, let it be rather me than Master Clarke.”



Page 129

This time the cardinal's smile was more full and free.

"We will see whether we cannot make shift without a victim. Anthony Dalaber, you are a free man. There is no talk of arresting you in place of any other. That is neither the law of the land nor the practice of the church. I have watched you, my son; I see that you are of a godly mind. You may yet be a good and a great man in this land. Hold fast the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and God will bless and keep you.

"I trust we shall hear no more of heresy in Oxford. And when you receive John Clarke into your keeping, tell him that I regret the harshness to which he has been exposed, and that I have prevailed to effect his release, but that beyond this I cannot help him, but trust that between him and his bishop some better understanding may be speedily arrived at."

"We thank your Eminence from our hearts," spoke Arthur, as he bent his knee, feeling a double load of anxiety and sorrow lifted from his heart. "We will not forget all we owe to your clemency and kindness, and with more others than I can name we will pray for all blessings to rest upon your Eminence for this gracious act."

The cardinal was pressed for time, and dismissed the young men with a blessing. They went out into the sunny courtyard, scarce able to believe their own success.

Liberated from prison! Clarke to be liberated and delivered over to their care! Oh! they would soon restore him to health and strength by their loving ministrations. They would surely succeed in this. All the three to be given up to their friends! They must lose no time in riding to Oxford with the news.

Not a day of this lovely springtide should be wasted. They would ride all night, that release might come the earlier. Yes, there was full moon, and already the daylight lasted long and came again early. They would ride without a pause, save for needful refreshment for man and beast, till they reached Oxford. They could be there before daybreak.

On the morrow they could carry forth their friends to Poghley. It was a thought fraught with happiness and joy. They would not lose an hour. And so quickly were all their preparations made that before the shadows had grown long, before the sun had sunk far towards the horizon, their reckoning was paid, their bags were packed, their servants summoned, and the little cavalcade was ready to start forth and ride with loose rein to Oxford ere break of day.

It was no hardship, that quiet riding through the long hours of the misty night. They did not hurry their beasts, for they could not obtain any interview with dean or prison governor in the dead of night. So they pursued their way quietly, discussing many plans; and before the first light of day had begun to glimmer in the east it was settled



that, whilst Arthur should go direct to Oxford with the cardinal's mandate, and should make all needful arrangements for the immediate transportation of the sick men to Poghley, Anthony should ride there direct, to advise the young wife and her sister of what they might expect, and to see all made ready there.



Page 130

Eager as Arthur was to return home to Magdalen, he knew that his authority and his purse would go farther in Oxford than Anthony's. It was needful for him to be there in person; but it might be just as well for Anthony to keep away from the town at that juncture. Dalaber did not himself think of or fear any peril, but Arthur's other arguments prevailed with him; and shortly after dawn, at the parting of the ways, the two friends separated, Arthur and the servants riding direct to Oxford, whilst Dalaber took his solitary way towards Poghley.

His heart beat high as he began to trace the familiar outline of wood and hill. When he rode away a week ago, it was with a very strong presentiment that he would never see the place again. So resolved had he been to make confession of such of his beliefs as were accounted heresy that he had not dared to believe he could escape. Yet here he was, safe and sound, and rid at last of that haunting fear and remorse which had eaten into his very soul.

True, he had not said much, yet he knew that the cardinal had understood, and had, as it were, declined a further and fuller revelation. He had understood, on his side, that the church did not desire to push matters to extremity, and to lose the love and adherence of its most promising sons. He was willing, for his part, to avoid publicity for a time, to resume his interrupted studies, and to wait in patience for what would come out of this movement within and without the church.

But the sense of sailing under false colours had now been taken away. He had relieved his soul; he had spoken the truth; he had offered himself as a victim; he no longer stood condemned as a coward and a denier of his faith.

With a glad heart he rode onward through the rosy glow of a red and golden dawn. All nature seemed in harmony with his joy and triumph. The birds shouted their morning songs, and the budding trees and waving grass seemed silently to voice a happy answer. Primroses gemmed the banks, and the frail white anemones carpeted the twinkling woodlands, where sunbeams and shadows chased each other through a maze of tender green leaves. Then the horse beneath him, though somewhat wearied from the long journey, knew his homeward way, pricked forward his ears, and broke into a canter, bravely bearing his rider up the gentle incline, and through the gate that led towards the moated house.

Suddenly a white figure seemed to emerge from the thickets of shrubs, and a joyous voice exclaimed:

"Anthony, Anthony! is it thou?"

He was on his feet in an instant. The horse set off riderless for his own stable. Anthony's arms were about her, his kisses on her face.



“Freda! my beloved! my wife!”

“Anthony, O Anthony! And thou art free!”

“I am free, and the load has fallen. I am free and forgiven, and at peace with God and man. And, Freda, we must hasten to the house with the news; for Arthur has gone forward to obtain the release of Clarke and Sumner and Radley, and as soon as possible—it may even be today—he will bring them here to be cared for.”



Page 131

Chapter XVIII: The Release

Five days, however, elapsed at Poghley before any news came from Arthur at Oxford, and then it was brought by Dr. Langton, who, upon Dalaber's return, had started forth again to that place, partly to set his house in order and arrange his books and papers before his departure for foreign lands, partly because he hoped his skill in medicine and the arts of healing might prove of use to the victims of the prison house on their release.

For the sisters and Dalaber those days were happily passed, despite the anxiety they felt as to what might be passing in Oxford. To them it seemed as though the clouds of peril which had hung so long in their sky were rolling fast away. Dalaber was relieved from that burden of remorse and bitter humiliation which had been weighing upon him. Humble and contrite for past errors, past weaknesses, he was, and would remain; but he had delivered his soul by his frank admissions to the cardinal, and he could respect and admire the dignity and clemency of that powerful man, and be grateful to him for both.

Freda was his own, as she had never been before—her mind at rest, her heart satisfied, her old esteem and admiration and trust restored. Together they wandered through orchard, meadow, and woodland, speaking to each other from the bottom of their hearts, unveiling their most sacred thoughts and feelings, and sharing every aspiration, every hope, every plan for present or future. The world for them was a pure Arcadia; they almost forgot for the time being the more troublous world without.

It was like a green oasis in their lives, like a haven of rest and peace after driving storms and perilous hurricanes. They lived in the sunshine, and thanked God in their hearts, and received that rest and refreshment of body, soul, and spirit of which both stood rather sorely in need.

Then on the fifth day, as the sun was drawing towards its setting, Dr. Langton returned. They pressed eagerly round him to learn the news. His face was thoughtful and very grave.

"They are bringing Master Clarke. He is not more than a few miles distant. He will be here before dark. I have come to make all ready for him."

"Is Arthur with him?" asked Magdalen, whose hands were clasped about her father's arm.

"Yes; he is riding at a foot pace beside the litter. We have had to carry him thus all the way, and by very gentle stages. At the first I doubted if he could bear the journey. But he was himself desirous to see Poghley once again, and we decided to risk it. He has borne the journey almost better than I had feared."



“And now we will nurse him back to health and strength,” cried Magdalen, with earnestness. “Alas that so good a man should have to suffer so sorely!”

Freda observed that her father turned his head slightly away. She felt a sort of constriction at the heart, but it was Dalaber who put the next question.



Page 132

“Is only Clarke coming hither?” he asked. “What of Sumner and Radley who were with him in prison?”

Dr. Langton paused a brief while before answering, and then he said in a low and moved voice:

“Radley was scarce alive when we came to them. They were all taken to the Bridge House, where we had made preparation to receive them. But he died within a few hours. I scarce know whether he did really understand that liberty had come at last. On the morning of the second day Sumner died, and we thought that Clarke was lying in articulo mortis; but I tried in his case a certain drug, the use of which I have only recently discovered, whereupon he fell into a quiet, natural sleep, and the fever began to leave him. There is much sickness again in the town, and it seemed to me well that, if he could bear removal, he should be taken where stronger and purer air could be breathed.

“Yesterday, very early in the morning, we started forth. Arthur had had an easy litter constructed under his own eyes, which can be slung between two horses walking gently and evenly. In this way we have brought him. In another hour he should be here. I wish to make ready some large and airy chamber that opens direct upon the garden, where he can be carried daily to inhale the scents of the flowers and be enwrapped by the sunshine. If there be a chance of recovery—”

Dr. Langton stopped short, and Magdalen looked earnestly into his face. She read his thoughts there.

“You think he will die?”

“I fear so. I misdoubt me if there can be any rally. And in truth, my child”—he drew Magdalen gently onwards with him towards the room which he had fixed upon in his own mind as the one most suited to his purpose—“in truth, I know not if it were true kindness to seek to save that stainless life. I had speech with Dr. Higdon anent this very matter only the night before we started forth, and he told me that, albeit the bishop had been persuaded by the cardinal to permit the release of the prisoners for the present, yet that, should any recover—and in particular, Master Clarke—he was like to demand his surrender later into his own merciless hands; and it is well known that he has said that, since Wolsey would not burn Garret or Ferrar when he had them in his clutches, he would burn Clarke so soon as he was able to stand his trial. Some even say that he only suffered the men to be released from prison that Clarke should be sufficiently recovered to perish at the stake.”

Magdalen shuddered and hid her face in her hands.



“Oh that such things should be! And in a Christian land, and within the very Church of Christ itself!”

“We will trust it is not true,” spoke Dr. Langton gravely, “or that more Christian and more merciful counsel may prevail. But in all truth I know full well that, short of a miracle, Clarke will only come here to die. Perhaps the best that we can wish for him now is a peaceful and painless passing away in the midst of his friends, with no more fears of prison or martyrdom before his eyes; for in sooth I think his soul has soared into a region where all fear and anxiety are left behind.”



Page 133

Magdalen's eyes were full of tears. She had been from the first deeply attracted both by the words and by the personality of John Clarke, and sometimes she had had intimate talks with him on spiritual matters, which had made an indelible impression upon her heart.

She now busied herself diligently in making ready for his reception that pleasant sunny chamber which her father had selected. The great canopied beds of the day were too heavy and ponderous to be easily moved; but smaller couches and abundant bedding were quickly collected, and the room began to glow with the masses of flowers that Freda brought in from the garden and woodland beyond. The place was fragrant with the breath of cowslip and primrose, whilst, as the light faded from the west, the dancing flames of the log fire on the hearth gave a cheery air of welcome.

The sisters stood clasping hands as their friend was brought in by the bearers, and tenderly laid upon one of the two soft couches made ready—one beside the window, and one in a warmer situation near to the hearth.

It was upon this one that he was laid first, and Magdalen caught her breath in a little sob as she gazed upon his face—it was so thin and sunken, so absolutely colourless. The eyes were closed, and though there was an expression of deep peace and happiness upon the face, it looked to her more like the face of one who has triumphed in death than of one who is living and breathing yet.

Dalaber flung himself upon his knees beside the couch with a lamentable cry upon his lips.

“My master! my master! my friend!” he cried, and at the sound of these words and the familiar voice the long lashes quivered and slowly lifted themselves, and they saw the dim, sweet smile steal over the wan face.

“Is that Anthony? I cannot see. God bless thee, my son! He is giving me all I could ask or wish.”

Dr. Langton signed to his daughters to come away. The patient had no strength for further greetings then. Freda's eyes were blind with tears as she found herself hurrying from the room, and Magdalen threw herself into her husband's arms, weeping aloud in the fulness of her heart. He held her closely to him; he too was deeply moved.

“But we must not grieve for him, my beloved; as he himself has said so many times during these days, ‘To depart, and to be with Christ, is far better.’ He goes forth so joyfully into the great unseen that we must not seek too much to hold him back. His Lord may have need of him elsewhere. In truth, he is more fit for heaven than earth.”



“He dies a martyr, if any ever did!” spoke Freda, choking back her tears, and speaking with shining eyes. “He has laid down his life for a testimony to the truth. What martyr can do more than that?”

“Is there no hope of his life?” asked Magdalen, still clinging to her husband’s arm.

“Your father fears not,” answered Arthur; “and in sooth, after hearing the story of their imprisonment, I think the same myself. Oh, the patience, the sweetness, the self forgetfulness, with which he has borne all! One could weep tears of blood to think that such things are done to living saints on earth in the name of religion.”



Page 134

They looked breathlessly at Arthur, and he spoke again.

“I will not describe to you what we found when we entered the prison. Enough that one would not herd one’s swine in such a place. Two out of the three were dying; and the third, though sick as you now see him, was yet dragging himself from one to the other, to minister to their still greater needs, as he had done from the first, giving to them of his own meagre food and water—neither of which was fit for human beings to touch—and enduring all the slow agonies of fevered thirst day after day, that their in some way be lightened.

“Sumner lived to tell us that. From the first Radley had sickened, as the strong men oftentimes do in such places more quickly than the weaker and feebler of body. Clarke, who had brought his body into subjection by fasting, who had nursed the sick in their filthy homes, and spent weeks at times in fever-stricken spots—he resisted longest the ravages of the fell prison fever. He and Sumner nursed Radley as best they might. Then Sumner fell sick, and Clarke had them both to care for.

“To the very last he tended them. Though well nigh in as evil a case, he yet would rise and crawl to them, and give them food and water, or moisten their lips when they could no longer eat the coarse prison fare. His patience and sweetness were not quite without effect even on the jailer, and from time to time he would bring them better food and a larger measure of water.

“But even so, there was none to help or succour them in their hour of extremest need. May God look down and judge the things which pass upon this earth, and are done by those who take His name freely upon their lips! He whose eyes see all things have seen those three men in their prison house. May He be the judge of all things!”

“Thank God you came in time!” spoke Magdalen, with streaming eyes. “Thank God they did not die in that foul hole!”

“I do thank Him for that. I fear me poor Radley did not know that release for him had come; his greater release followed so hard afterwards. But Sumner lived long enough to know us, and to rejoice in the hope that Clarke’s life would be spared. We did not tell him how little chance there was of that. ‘He is one of God’s saints upon earth,’ were amongst his last words; ‘surely He has a great work for him to do here. Afterwards he will walk with Him in white, for he is worthy.’ And then in broken words he told us the story of those weeks in prison; and with a happy smile upon his lips he passed away. He did not desire aught else for himself. He left Clarke in the hands of his friends. He folded his hands together and whispered, ‘Say the Nunc dimittis for me, and the last prayer;’ and as we did so his soul took flight. The smile of holy triumph and joy was sealed by death upon his face.”

“Faithful unto death,” whispered Freda softly to herself, “he has won for himself a crown of life.”



Page 135

Anthony came to her presently, looking strangely white and shaken. They passed together out into the moonlight night. He was deeply moved, and she saw it; and her silence was the silence of sympathy.

“If only I had shared their faith, their steadfastness, their sufferings!” he spoke at last.

But she laid her hand upon his arm and whispered tenderly:

“Think not now of that. The past is not ours; and I know that God has forgiven all that was weak or sinful in it. No sin repented of but is washed away in the blood of the Lamb. Let us rejoice in that there are ever those who will follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, both here and hereafter, and will sing the song that no man else can learn. And if we ourselves fail of being counted in that glorious numbered host, may we not rejoice that others are found worthy of that unspeakable glory, and seek to gain strength and wisdom and grace from their example, so that in the days to come we may be able to tread more firmly in the narrow way they have travelled before us?”

They saw him the next day, for he asked to be moved out into the garden, into the sunshine of the sweet spring day. Weak as he was, Dr. Langton was of opinion that nothing could either greatly hurt or greatly restore him. And to fulfil his wishes was the task all were eager to perform. So, when the light was just beginning to grow mellow and rosy, and the shadows to lengthen upon the grass, Clarke was carried out and laid upon a couch in the shelter of the hoary walls, whilst he gazed about him with eyes that were full of an unspeakable peace and joy, and which greeted with smiling happiness each friendly face as it appeared.

They knew not how to speak to him; but they pressed his wasted hand, and sat in silence round him, trying to see with his eyes and hear with his ears, and listening to the fitful words which sprang from time to time to his lips.

“It is like the new heavens and the new earth,” he said once—“the earth which the Lord will make new, free from the curse of sin. Ah, what a glorious day that will be! If this fallen world of ours can be so beautiful, so glorious, so full of His praise, so full of heavenly harmonies, what will that other earth be like, where He will reign with His saints, and sin and death shall be no more?”

It seemed to others as though he were already living in that new earth of peace and joy, and in the immediate presence of the Lord. The light in his eyes grew brighter day by day, the shining of his face more intense. As his hold upon the things of this world relaxed, so did his sense of heavenly realities increase in intensity. All his words were of peace and love and joy. It seemed as though for him the veil were rent in twain, and his eyes saw the unspeakable glories beyond.

His gratitude to those who had brought him forth from the prison and set him in this fair place was expressed again and again. But once, in answer to something Freda spoke, he said with a wonderful lighting of the eyes:



Page 136

“And yet, if you can believe it, we were strangely happy even there, for the Lord was in the midst of us, as surely as He is here amid this peace and loveliness. When we are holding Him by the hand, feeling His presence, seeing His face in the darkness, believing that it is His will for us to be there, it is strange how the darkness becomes light, the suffering ceases, the horror all passes away. I do not mean that the enemy does not intervene—that he does not come and with his whispers seek to shake our faith, to cloud our spirits, to shroud us in darkness and obscurity. But thanks be to God, His Son, having overcome temptation in human flesh, we in His strength, by Him, and through Him, and in Him, have power to overcome. Satan came; but he did not stay, for One that was mightier was with us. Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

That was all he ever spoke of the prison life—no word of its hardships and sufferings, only of the power of the Lord to take away the bitterness, and to comfort, cheer, and strengthen. And so they ceased to think or to speak of it, too. It had not hurt him. The iron had never entered into his soul. And almost by now he had forgotten. All was peace and joy and love. And even the knowledge that his companions had passed away was no trouble to him.

“We shall meet so soon again,” he said, and the light deepened in his eyes. “I am so curious to know how it is with the departed—whether they lie at rest as in a heaven-sent sleep, while their heart waketh; or whether the Lord has work for them beyond the grave, into which they enter at once. I long to know what that blessed state is like, where we are with Christ, yet not in the glory of the resurrection, but awaiting that at His good pleasure. Well, soon all this will be made known to me; and I cannot doubt we shall meet again in joy and love those with whom we have walked in fellowship upon this earth, and that we shall in turn await those who follow after into peace, and so with them look forward to the glorious day when the living shall be changed and the dead receive their bodies back, glorified in resurrection life, and so enter all together into the presence of God, presented as one holy mystical body to Him, the Bride of the Lamb.”

There was just one shadow that fell for a moment athwart the perfect peace and joy of this departure. But it was not one that could touch his spirit for more than a moment.

As he felt life slipping fast away, and knew that very soon he must say farewell to earth and its sorrows and joys, he called Arthur to his side and asked:

“Will they admit me to the rite of the Holy Communion before I die?”

It was a question which Arthur had foreseen, and he had himself taken a special journey to Oxford to see the dean upon that very point.

But Clarke still lay beneath the ban of excommunication. He was still regarded as a heretic; and although, after all he had passed through, much sympathy was expressed



for him, and any further cruelty was strongly deprecated, yet the law of the church forbade that the holy thing should be touched by unhallowed hands, or pass unhallowed lips.

Page 137

So now he looked compassionately into Clarke's face and said:

"I fear me they will not do so. I have done what I can; but they will not listen. None may dare to bring it to you until the ban of the church be taken off."

Clarke looked into his face at first with a pained expression, but gradually a great light kindled in his eyes. He half rose from the couch on which he was lying, and he stretched forth his hands as though he were receiving something into them. Then looking upwards, he spoke—spoke with a greater strength than he had done for many days—and a vivid smile illuminated his face. They were all standing about him, for they knew the end was near, and they all saw and heard.

"Crede et manducasti," he said; and then, with a yet more vivid illumination of his features, he added in a whisper, "My Lord and my God!"

Then he fell back, and with that smile of triumph upon his face, passed away.

Over his remains, which were permitted to lie in consecrated ground, they set up a white cross; and beneath his name were the words:

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

Notes

[i] "Believe, and thou hast eaten." Words often used by the early "heretics," who were debarred from partaking of the feast of Holy Communion.

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Page 138

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