

The World of Romance eBook

The World of Romance by William Morris

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THE WORLD OF ROMANCE

BEING CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE Oxford and Cambridge magazine, 1856

By William Morris

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MCMVI*

In the tales . . . the world is one of pure romance. Mediaeval customs, mediaeval buildings, the mediaeval Catholic religion, the general social framework of the thirteenth or fourteenth century, are assumed throughout, but it would be idle to attempt to place them in any known age or country. . . Their author in later years thought, or seemed to think, lightly of them, calling them crude (as they are) and very young (as they are). But they are nevertheless comparable in quality to Keats's 'Endymion' as rich in imagination, as irregularly gorgeous in language, as full in every vein and fibre of the sweet juices and ferment of the spring.—J. W. MACKAIL

In his last year at Oxford, Morris established, assuming the entire financial responsibility, the 'Oxford and Cambridge Magazine,' written almost entirely by himself and his college friends, but also numbering Rossetti among its contributors. Like most college ventures, its career was short, ending with its twelfth issue in December, 1856. In this magazine Morris first found his strength as a writer, and though his subsequent literary achievements made him indifferent to this earlier work, its virility and wealth of romantic imagination justify its rescue from oblivion.

The article on Amiens, intended originally as the first of a series, is included in this volume as an illustration of Morris's power to clothe things actual with the glamour of Romance.

THE STORY OF THE UNKNOWN CHURCH

I was the master-mason of a church that was built more than six hundred years ago; it is now two hundred years since that church vanished from the face of the earth; it was destroyed utterly,—no fragment of it was left; not even the great pillars that bore up the tower at the cross, where the choir used to join the nave. No one knows now even where it stood, only in this very autumn-tide, if you knew the place, you would see the heaps made by the earth-covered ruins heaving the yellow corn into glorious waves, so that the place where my church used to be is as beautiful now as when it stood in all its splendour. I do not remember very much about the land where my church was; I have quite forgotten the name of it, but I know it was very beautiful, and even now, while I am thinking of it, comes a flood of old memories, and I almost seem to see it again,—that



old beautiful land! only dimly do I see it in spring and summer and winter, but I see it in autumn-tide clearly now; yes, clearer, clearer, oh! so bright and glorious! yet it was beautiful too in spring,

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when the brown earth began to grow green: beautiful in summer, when the blue sky looked so much bluer, if you could hem a piece of it in between the new white carving; beautiful in the solemn starry nights, so solemn that it almost reached agony—the awe and joy one had in their great beauty. But of all these beautiful times, I remember the whole only of autumn-tide; the others come in bits to me; I can think only of parts of them, but all of autumn; and of all days and nights in autumn, I remember one more particularly. That autumn day the church was nearly finished and the monks, for whom we were building the church, and the people, who lived in the town hard by, crowded round us oftentimes to watch us carving.

Now the great Church, and the buildings of the Abbey where the monks lived, were about three miles from the town, and the town stood on a hill overlooking the rich autumn country: it was girt about with great walls that had overhanging battlements, and towers at certain places all along the walls, and often we could see from the churchyard or the Abbey garden, the flash of helmets and spears, and the dim shadowy waving of banners, as the knights and lords and men-at-arms passed to and fro along the battlements; and we could see too in the town the three spires of the three churches; and the spire of the Cathedral, which was the tallest of the three, was gilt all over with gold, and always at night-time a great lamp shone from it that hung in the spire midway between the roof of the church and the cross at the top of the spire. The Abbey where we built the Church was not girt by stone walls, but by a circle of poplar trees, and whenever a wind passed over them, were it ever so little a breath, it set them all a-ripple; and when the wind was high, they bowed and swayed very low, and the wind, as it lifted the leaves, and showed their silvery white sides, or as again in the lulls of it, it let them drop, kept on changing the trees from green to white, and white to green; moreover, through the boughs and trunks of the poplars, we caught glimpses of the great golden corn sea, waving, waving, waving for leagues and leagues; and among the corn grew burning scarlet poppies, and blue corn-flowers; and the corn-flowers were so blue, that they gleamed, and seemed to burn with a steady light, as they grew beside the poppies among the gold of the wheat. Through the corn sea ran a blue river, and always green meadows and lines of tall poplars followed its windings. The old Church had been burned, and that was the reason why the monks caused me to build the new one; the buildings of the Abbey were built at the same time as the burned-down Church, more than a hundred years before I was born, and they were on the north side of the Church, and joined to it by a cloister of round arches, and in the midst of the cloister was a lawn, and in the midst of that lawn, a fountain of marble, carved round about with flowers and strange beasts,

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and at the edge of the lawn, near the round arches, were a great many sun-flowers that were all in blossom on that autumn day, and up many of the pillars of the cloister crept passion-flowers and roses. Then farther from the Church, and past the cloister and its buildings, were many detached buildings, and a great garden round them, all within the circle of the poplar trees; in the garden were trellises covered over with roses, and convolvulus, and the great-leaved fiery nasturium; and specially all along by the poplar trees were there trellises, but on these grew nothing but deep crimson roses; the hollyhocks too were all out in blossom at that time, great spires of pink, and orange, and red, and white, with their soft, downy leaves. I said that nothing grew on the trellises by the poplars but crimson roses, but I was not quite right, for in many places the wild flowers had crept into the garden from without; lush green briony, with green-white blossoms, that grows so fast, one could almost think that we see it grow, and deadly nightshade, *La bella donna*, O! so beautiful; red berry, and purple, yellow-spiked flower, and deadly, cruel-looking, dark green leaf, all growing together in the glorious days of early autumn. And in the midst of the great garden was a conduit, with its sides carved with histories from the Bible, and there was on it too, as on the fountain in the cloister, much carving of flowers and strange beasts. Now the Church itself was surrounded on every side but the north by the cemetery, and there were many graves there, both of monks and of laymen, and often the friends of those, whose bodies lay there, had planted flowers about the graves of those they loved. I remember one such particularly, for at the head of it was a cross of carved wood, and at the foot of it, facing the cross, three tall sun-flowers; then in the midst of the cemetery was a cross of stone, carved on one side with the Crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and on the other with our Lady holding the Divine Child. So that day, that I specially remember, in autumn-tide, when the Church was nearly finished, I was carving in the central porch of the west front; (for I carved all those bas-reliefs in the west front with my own hand;) beneath me my sister Margaret was carving at the flower-work, and the little quatrefoils that carry the signs of the zodiac and emblems of the months: now my sister Margaret was rather more than twenty years old at that time, and she was very beautiful, with dark brown hair and deep calm violet eyes. I had lived with her all my life, lived with her almost alone latterly, for our father and mother died when she was quite young, and I loved her very much, though I was not thinking of her just then, as she stood beneath me carving. Now the central porch was carved with a bas-relief of the Last Judgment, and it was divided into three parts by horizontal bands of deep flower-work. In the lowest division, just over the doors, was carved *The Rising of the Dead*; above were angels blowing long trumpets, and Michael the Archangel weighing the souls, and the blessed led into heaven by angels, and the lost into hell by the devil; and in the topmost division was the Judge of the world.

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All the figures in the porch were finished except one, and I remember when I woke that morning my exultation at the thought of my Church being so nearly finished; I remember, too, how a kind of misgiving mingled with the exultation, which, try all I could, I was unable to shake off; I thought then it was a rebuke for my pride, well, perhaps it was. The figure I had to carve was Abraham, sitting with a blossoming tree on each side of him, holding in his two hands the corners of his great robe, so that it made a mighty fold, wherein, with their hands crossed over their breasts, were the souls of the faithful, of whom he was called Father: I stood on the scaffolding for some time, while Margaret's chisel worked on bravely down below. I took mine in my hand, and stood so, listening to the noise of the masons inside, and two monks of the Abbey came and stood below me, and a knight, holding his little daughter by the hand, who every now and then looked up at him, and asked him strange questions. I did not think of these long, but began to think of Abraham, yet I could not think of him sitting there, quiet and solemn, while the Judgment-Trumpet was being blown; I rather thought of him as he looked when he chased those kings so far; riding far ahead of any of his company, with his mail-hood off his head, and lying in grim folds down his back, with the strong west wind blowing his wild black hair far out behind him, with the wind rippling the long scarlet pennon of his lance; riding there amid the rocks and the sands alone; with the last gleam of the armour of the beaten kings disappearing behind the winding of the pass; with his company a long, long way behind, quite out of sight, though their trumpets sounded faintly among the clefts of the rocks; and so I thought I saw him, till in his fierce chase he leapt, horse and man, into a deep river, quiet, swift, and smooth; and there was something in the moving of the water-lilies as the breast of the horse swept them aside, that suddenly took away the thought of Abraham and brought a strange dream of lands I had never seen; and the first was of a place where I was quite alone, standing by the side of a river, and there was the sound of singing a very long way off, but no living thing of any kind could be seen, and the land was quite flat, quite without hills, and quite without trees too, and the river wound very much, making all kinds of quaint curves, and on the side where I stood there grew nothing but long grass, but on the other side grew, quite on to the horizon, a great sea of red corn-poppies, only paths of white lilies wound all among them, with here and there a great golden sun-flower. So I looked down at the river by my feet, and saw how blue it was, and how, as the stream went swiftly by, it swayed to and fro the long green weeds, and I stood and looked at the river for long, till at last I felt some one touch me on the shoulder, and, looking round, I saw standing by me my friend Amyot, whom I love better than any

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one else in the world, but I thought in my dream that I was frightened when I saw him, for his face had changed so, it was so bright and almost transparent, and his eyes gleamed and shone as I had never seen them do before. Oh! he was so wondrously beautiful, so fearfully beautiful! and as I looked at him the distant music swelled, and seemed to come close up to me, and then swept by us, and fainted away, at last died off entirely; and then I felt sick at heart, and faint, and parched, and I stooped to drink of the water of the river, and as soon as the water touched my lips, lo! the river vanished, and the flat country with its poppies and lilies, and I dreamed that I was in a boat by myself again, floating in an almost land-locked bay of the northern sea, under a cliff of dark basalt. I was lying on my back in the boat, looking up at the intensely blue sky, and a long low swell from the outer sea lifted the boat up and let it fall again and carried it gradually nearer and nearer towards the dark cliff; and as I moved on, I saw at last, on the top of the cliff, a castle, with many towers, and on the highest tower of the castle there was a great white banner floating, with a red chevron on it, and three golden stars on the chevron; presently I saw too on one of the towers, growing in a cranny of the worn stones, a great bunch of golden and blood-red wall-flowers, and I watched the wall-flowers and banner for long; when suddenly I heard a trumpet blow from the castle, and saw a rush of armed men on to the battlements, and there was a fierce fight, till at last it was ended, and one went to the banner and pulled it down, and cast it over the cliff in to the sea, and it came down in long sweeps, with the wind making little ripples in it;—slowly, slowly it came, till at last it fell over me and covered me from my feet till over my breast, and I let it stay there and looked again at the castle, and then I saw that there was an amber-coloured banner floating over the castle in place of the red chevron, and it was much larger than the other: also now, a man stood on the battlements, looking towards me; he had a tilting helmet on, with the visor down, and an amber-coloured surcoat over his armour: his right hand was ungauntleted, and he held it high above his head, and in his hand was the bunch of wallflowers that I had seen growing on the wall; and his hand was white and small like a woman's, for in my dream I could see even very far-off things much clearer than we see real material things on the earth: presently he threw the wallflowers over the cliff, and they fell in the boat just behind my head, and then I saw, looking down from the battlements of the castle, Amyot. He looked down towards me very sorrowfully, I thought, but, even as in the other dream, said nothing; so I thought in my dream that I wept for very pity, and for love of him, for he looked as a man just risen from a long illness, and who will carry till he dies a dull pain about

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with him. He was very thin, and his long black hair drooped all about his face, as he leaned over the battlements looking at me: he was quite pale, and his cheeks were hollow, but his eyes large, and soft, and sad. So I reached out my arms to him, and suddenly I was walking with him in a lovely garden, and we said nothing, for the music which I had heard at first was sounding close to us now, and there were many birds in the boughs of the trees: oh, such birds! gold and ruby, and emerald, but they sung not at all, but were quite silent, as though they too were listening to the music. Now all this time Amyot and I had been looking at each other, but just then I turned my head away from him, and as soon as I did so, the music ended with a long wail, and when I turned again Amyot was gone; then I felt even more sad and sick at heart than I had before when I was by the river, and I leaned against a tree, and put my hands before my eyes. When I looked again the garden was gone, and I knew not where I was, and presently all my dreams were gone. The chips were flying bravely from the stone under my chisel at last, and all my thoughts now were in my carving, when I heard my name, "Walter," called, and when I looked down I saw one standing below me, whom I had seen in my dreams just before—Amyot. I had no hopes of seeing him for a long time, perhaps I might never see him again, I thought, for he was away (as I thought) fighting in the holy wars, and it made me almost beside myself to see him standing close by me in the flesh. I got down from my scaffolding as soon as I could, and all thoughts else were soon drowned in the joy of having him by me; Margaret, too, how glad she must have been, for she had been betrothed to him for some time before he went to the wars, and he had been five years away; five years! and how we had thought of him through those many weary days! how often his face had come before me! his brave, honest face, the most beautiful among all the faces of men and women I have ever seen. Yes, I remember how five years ago I held his hand as we came together out of the cathedral of that great, far-off city, whose name I forget now; and then I remember the stamping of the horses' feet; I remember how his hand left mine at last, and then, some one looking back at me earnestly as they all rode on together—looking back, with his hand on the saddle behind him, while the trumpets sang in long solemn peals as they all rode on together, with the glimmer of arms and the fluttering of banners, and the clinking of the rings of the mail, that sounded like the falling of many drops of water into the deep, still waters of some pool that the rocks nearly meet over; and the gleam and flash of the swords, and the glimmer of the lance-heads and the flutter of the rippled banners that streamed out from them, swept past me, and were gone, and they seemed like a pageant in a dream, whose meaning we know not; and those sounds too, the trumpets, and the clink of the mail, and the thunder of the horse-hoofs, they seemed dream-like too—and it was all like a dream that he should leave me, for we had said that we should always be together; but he went away, and now he is come back again.

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We were by his bed-side, Margaret and I; I stood and leaned over him, and my hair fell sideways over my face and touched his face; Margaret kneeled beside me, quivering in every limb, not with pain, I think, but rather shaken by a passion of earnest prayer. After some time (I know not how long), I looked up from his face to the window underneath which he lay; I do not know what time of the day it was, but I know that it was a glorious autumn day, a day soft with melting, golden haze: a vine and a rose grew together, and trailed half across the window, so that I could not see much of the beautiful blue sky, and nothing of town or country beyond; the vine leaves were touched with red here and there, and three over-blown roses, light pink roses, hung amongst them. I remember dwelling on the strange lines the autumn had made in red on one of the gold-green vine leaves, and watching one leaf of one of the over-blown roses, expecting it to fall every minute; but as I gazed, and felt disappointed that the rose leaf had not fallen yet, I felt my pain suddenly shoot through me, and I remembered what I had lost; and then came bitter, bitter dreams,—dreams which had once made me happy,—dreams of the things I had hoped would be, of the things that would never be now; they came between the fair vine leaves and rose blossoms, and that which lay before the window; they came as before, perfect in colour and form, sweet sounds and shapes. But now in every one was something unutterably miserable; they would not go away, they put out the steady glow of the golden haze, the sweet light of the sun through the vine leaves, the soft leaning of the full blown roses. I wandered in them for a long time; at last I felt a hand put me aside gently, for I was standing at the head of—of the bed; then some one kissed my forehead, and words were spoken—I know not what words. The bitter dreams left me for the bitterer reality at last; for I had found him that morning lying dead, only the morning after I had seen him when he had come back from his long absence—I had found him lying dead, with his hands crossed downwards, with his eyes closed, as though the angels had done that for him; and now when I looked at him he still lay there, and Margaret knelt by him with her face touching his: she was not quivering now, her lips moved not at all as they had done just before; and so, suddenly those words came to my mind which she had spoken when she kissed me, and which at the time I had only heard with my outward hearing, for she had said, “Walter, farewell, and Christ keep you; but for me, I must be with him, for so I promised him last night that I would never leave him any more, and God will let me go.” And verily Margaret and Amyot did go, and left me very lonely and sad.

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It was just beneath the westernmost arch of the nave, there I carved their tomb: I was a long time carving it; I did not think I should be so long at first, and I said, "I shall die when I have finished carving it," thinking that would be a very short time. But so it happened after I had carved those two whom I loved, lying with clasped hands like husband and wife above their tomb, that I could not yet leave carving it; and so that I might be near them I became a monk, and used to sit in the choir and sing, thinking of the time when we should all be together again. And as I had time I used to go to the westernmost arch of the nave and work at the tomb that was there under the great, sweeping arch; and in process of time I raised a marble canopy that reached quite up to the top of the arch, and I painted it too as fair as I could, and carved it all about with many flowers and histories, and in them I carved the faces of those I had known on earth (for I was not as one on earth now, but seemed quite away out of the world). And as I carved, sometimes the monks and other people too would come and gaze, and watch how the flowers grew; and sometimes too as they gazed, they would weep for pity, knowing how all had been. So my life passed, and I lived in that Abbey for twenty years after he died, till one morning, quite early, when they came into the church for matins, they found me lying dead, with my chisel in my hand, underneath the last lily of the tomb.

LINDENBORG POOL. {21}

I read once in lazy humour Thorpe's *Northern Mythology* on a cold May night when the north wind was blowing; in lazy humour, but when I came to the tale that is here amplified there was something in it that fixed my attention and made me think of it; and whether I would or no, my thoughts ran in this way, as here follows.

So I felt obliged to write, and wrote accordingly, and by the time I had done the grey light filled all my room; so I put out my candles, and went to bed, not without fear and trembling, for the morning twilight is so strange and lonely. This is what I wrote.

* * * * *

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

Yet surely nowhere so dismal as by the side of that still pool.

I threw myself down on the ground there, utterly exhausted with my struggle against the wind, and with bearing the fathoms and fathoms of the heavily-leaded plumb-line that lay beside me.

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Fierce as the rain was, it could not raise the leaden waters of that fearful pool, defended as they were by the steep banks of dripping yellow clay, striped horribly here and there with ghastly uncertain green and blue.

They said no man could fathom it; and yet all round the edges of it grew a rank crop of dreary reeds and segs, some round, some flat, but none ever flowering as other things flowered, never dying and being renewed, but always the same stiff array of unbroken reeds and segs, some round, some flat. Hard by me were two trees leafless and ugly, made, it seemed, only for the wind to go through with a wild sough on such nights as these; and for a mile from that place were no other trees.

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

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

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

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

May the Lord help my senses! I am *riding*!—on a mule; a bell tinkles somewhere on him; the wind blows something about with a flapping sound: something? in heaven's

name, what? *My long black robes.*—Why—when I left my house I was clad in serviceable broadcloth of the nineteenth century.

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

Soon I found that I was not alone; a man was riding close to me on a horse; he was fantastically dressed, more so than usual for that time, being striped all over in vertical stripes of yellow and green, with quaint birds like exaggerated storks in different attitudes counter-changed on the stripes; all this I saw by the lantern he carried, in the light of which his debauched black eyes quite flashed. On he went, unsteadily rolling, very drunk, though it was the thirteenth century, but being plainly used to that, he sat his horse fairly well.

I watched him in my proper nineteenth-century character, with insatiable curiosity and intense amusement; but as a quiet priest of a long-past age, with contempt and disgust enough, not unmixed with fear and anxiety.

He roared out snatches of doggrel verse as he went along, drinking songs, hunting songs, robbing songs, lust songs, in a voice that sounded far and far above the roaring of the wind, though that was high, and rolled along the dark road that his lantern cast spikes of light along ever so far, making the devils grin: and meanwhile I, the priest, glanced from him wrathfully every now and then to That which I carried very reverently in my hand, and my blood curdled with shame and indignation; but being a shrewd priest, I knew well enough that a sermon would be utterly thrown away on a man who was drunk every day in the year, and, more especially, very drunk then. So I held my peace, saying only under my breath:

“Dixit incipiens in corde suo, Non est Deus. Corrupti sunt et abominabiles facti sunt in studiis suis; non est qui faciat bonum, non est usque ad unum: sepulchrum patens est guttur eorum; linguis suis dolose agebunt, venenum aspidum sub labiis eorum. Dominum non invocaverunt; illic trepid-averunt timore, ubi non erat timor. Quis dabit ex Sion salutare Israel?”

and so I went on, thinking too at times about the man who was dying and whom I was soon to see: he had been a bold bad plundering baron, but was said lately to have altered his way of life, having seen a miracle or some such thing; he had departed to keep a tournament near his castle lately, but had been brought back sore wounded, so this drunken servant, with some difficulty and much unseasonable merriment, had made me understand, and now lay at the point of death, brought about by unskilful tending and such like. Then I thought of his face—a bad face, very bad, retreating forehead, small twinkling eyes, projecting lower jaw; and such a voice, too, he had! like the grunt of a bear mostly.

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Now don't you think it strange that this face should be the same, actually the same as the face of my enemy, slain that very day ten years ago? I did not hate him, either that man or the baron, but I wanted to see as little of him as possible, and I hoped that the ceremony would soon be over, and that I should be at liberty again.

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

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

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

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

"Boo—hoo! Church rat! Church mouse! Hilloa, Priest! have you brought the pyx, eh?"

From some cause or other he seemed to think this an excellent joke, for he almost shrieked with laughter as we went along; but by this time we had reached the castle. Challenge, and counter-challenge, and we passed the outermost gate and began to go through some of the courts, in which stood lime trees here and there, growing green tenderly with that Maytime, though the north wind bit so keenly.

How strange again! as I went farther, there seemed no doubt of it; here in the aftertime came that pool, how I knew not; but in the few moments that we were riding from the outer gate to the castle-porch I thought so intensely over the probable cause for the existence of that pool, that (how strange!) I could almost have thought I was back again listening to the oozing of the land-springs through the high clay banks there. I was wakened from that before it grew too strong, by the glare of many torches, and, dismounting, found myself in the midst of some twenty attendants, with flushed faces and wildly sparkling eyes, which they were vainly trying to soften to due solemnity; mock solemnity I had almost said, for they did not seem to think it necessary to appear really solemn, and had difficulty enough apparently in not prolonging indefinitely the shout of

laughter with which they had at first greeted me. "Take the holy Father to my Lord," said one at last, "and we will go with him."

So they led me up the stairs into the gorgeously-furnished chamber; the light from the heavy waxen candles was pleasant to my eyes after the glare and twisted red smoke of the pine-torches; but all the essences scattered about the chamber were not enough to conquer the fiery breath of those about me.

I put on the alb and stole they brought me, and, before I went up to the sick man, looked round on those that were in the rooms; for the rooms opened one into the other by many doors, across some of which hung gorgeous tapestry; all the rooms seemed to have many people, for some stood at these doors, and some passed to and fro, swinging aside the heavy hangings; once several people at once, seemingly quite by accident, drew aside almost all the veils from the doors, and showed an endless perspective of gorgeousness.

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And at these things my heart fainted for horror. “Had not the Jews of late,” thought I, the priest, “been very much in the habit of crucifying children in mockery of the Holiest, holding gorgeous feasts while they beheld the poor innocents die? These men are Atheists, you are in a trap, yet quit yourself like a man.”

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

Moreover it increased my horror that there was no appearance of a woman in all these rooms; and yet was there not? there, those things—I looked more intently; yes, no doubt they were women, but all dressed like men;—what a ghastly place!

“O man! do your duty,” my angel said; then in spite of the bloodshot eyes of man and woman there, in spite of their bold looks, they quailed before me.

I stepped up to the bed-side, where under the velvet coverlid lay the dying man, his small sparkling eyes only (but dulled now by coming death) showing above the swathings. I was about to kneel down by the bed-side to confess him, when one of those—things—called out (now they had just been whispering and sniggering together, but the priest in his righteous, brave scorn would not look at them; the humbled author, half fearful, half trustful, dared not) so one called out:

“Sir Priest, for three days our master has spoken no articulate word; you must pass over all particulars; ask for a sign only.”

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

The rooms grew fuller and fuller of people; they passed thick and fast between the rooms, and the hangings were continually rustling; one fat old man with a big belly crept under the bed where I was, and wheezed and chuckled there, laughing and talking to one who stooped down and lifted up the hangings to look at him.

Still more and more people talking and singing and laughing and twirling about, till my brain went round and round, and I scarce knew what I did; yet, somehow, I could not leave off; I dared not even look over my shoulder, fearing lest I should see something so horrible as to make me die.

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So I got on with the service, and at last took the pyx, and took thereout the sacred wafer, whereupon was a deep silence through all those rooms, which troubled me, I think, more than all which had gone before, for I knew well it did not mean reverence.

I held it up, that which I counted so holy, when lo! great laughter, echoing like thunder-claps through all the rooms, not dulled by the veiling hangings, for they were all raised up together, and, with a slow upheaval of the rich clothes among which he lay, with a sound that was half snarl, half grunt, with a helpless body swathed in bedclothes, a huge *swine* that I had been shriving tore from me the Holy Thing, deeply scoring my hand as he did so with tusk and tooth, so that the red blood ran quick on to the floor.

Therewithall he rolled down on to the floor, and lay there helplessly, only able to roll to and fro, because of the swathings.

Then right madly skirled the intolerable laughter, rising to shrieks that were fearfuller than any scream of agony I ever heard; the hundreds of people through all those grand rooms danced and wheeled about me, shrieking, hemming me in with interlaced arms, the women loosing their long hair and thrusting forward their horribly-grinning unsexed faces toward me till I felt their hot breath.

Oh! how I hated them all! almost hated all mankind for their sakes; how I longed to get right quit of all men; among whom, as it seemed, all sacredest things even were made a mock of. I looked about me fiercely, I sprang forward, and clutched a sword from the gilded belt of one of those who stood near me; with savage blows that threw the blood about the gilded walls and their hangings right over the heads of those—things—I cleared myself from them, and tore down the great stairs madly, yet could not, as in a dream, go fast enough, because of my passion.

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

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

Then I arose and turned to go, but even as I did so I heard a roar as if the world were coming in two, and looking toward the castle, saw, not a castle, but a great cloud of white lime-dust swaying this way and that in the gusts of the wind.

Then while the east grew bright there arose a hissing, gurgling noise, that swelled into the roar and wash of many waters, and by then the sun had risen a deep black lake lay before my feet.

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* * * * *

And this is how I tried to fathom the Lindenberg Pool.

* * * * *

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

A DREAM.

I dreamed once, that four men sat by the winter fire talking and telling tales, in a house that the wind howled round.

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

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

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

The man stopped and pondered awhile, leaning over the fire where the flames slept under the caked coal: he was an old man, and his hair was quite white. He spoke again presently. "And I have fancied sometimes, that in some way, how I know not, I am

mixed up with the strange story I am going to tell you.” Again he ceased, and gazed at the fire, bending his head down till his beard touched his knees; then, rousing himself, said in a changed voice (for he had been speaking dreamily hitherto): “That strange-looking old house that you all know, with the limes and yew-trees before it, and the double line of very old yew-trees leading up from the gateway-tower to the porch—you know how no one will live there now because it is so eerie,

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and how even that bold bad lord that would come there, with his turbulent followers, was driven out in shame and disgrace by invisible agency. Well, in times past there dwelt in that house an old grey man, who was lord of that estate, his only daughter, and a young man, a kind of distant cousin of the house, whom the lord had brought up from a boy, as he was the orphan of a kinsman who had fallen in combat in his quarrel. Now, as the young knight and the young lady were both beautiful and brave, and loved beauty and good things ardently, it was natural enough that they should discover as they grew up that they were in love with one another; and afterwards, as they went on loving one another, it was, alas! not unnatural that they should sometimes have half-quarrels, very few and far between indeed, and slight to lookers-on, even while they lasted, but nevertheless intensely bitter and unhappy to the principal parties thereto. I suppose their love then, whatever it has grown to since, was not so all-absorbing as to merge all differences of opinion and feeling, for again there were such differences then. So, upon a time it happened, just when a great war had arisen, and Lawrence (for that was the knight's name) was sitting, and thinking of war, and his departure from home; sitting there in a very grave, almost a stern mood, that Ella, his betrothed, came in, gay and sprightly, in a humour that Lawrence often enough could little understand, and this time liked less than ever, yet the bare sight of her made him yearn for her full heart, which he was not to have yet; so he caught her by the hand, and tried to draw her down to him, but she let her hand lie loose in his, and did not answer the pressure in which his heart flowed to hers; then he arose and stood before her, face to face, but she drew back a little, yet he kissed her on the mouth and said, though a rising in his throat almost choked his voice, 'Ella, are you sorry I am going?' 'Yea,' she said, 'and nay, for you will shout my name among the sword flashes, and you will fight for me.' 'Yes,' he said, 'for love and duty, dearest.' 'For duty? ah! I think, Lawrence, if it were not for me, you would stay at home and watch the clouds, or sit under the linden trees singing dismal love ditties of your own making, dear knight: truly, if you turn out a great warrior, I too shall live in fame, for I am certainly the making of your desire to fight.' He let drop his hands from her shoulders, where he had laid them, and said, with a faint flush over his face, 'You wrong me, Ella, for, though I have never wished to fight for the mere love of fighting, and though,' (and here again he flushed a little) 'and though I am not, I well know, so free of the fear of death as a good man would be, yet for this duty's sake, which is really a higher love, Ella, love of God, I trust I would risk life, nay honour, even if not willingly, yet cheerfully at least.' 'Still duty, duty,' she said; 'you lay, Lawrence, as many people do, most stress on the

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point where you are weakest; moreover, those knights who in time past have done wild, mad things merely at their ladies' word, scarcely did so for duty; for they owed their lives to their country surely, to the cause of good, and should not have risked them for a whim, and yet you praised them the other day.' 'Did I?' said Lawrence; 'well, in a way they were much to be praised, for even blind love and obedience is well; but reasonable love, reasonable obedience is so far better as to be almost a different thing; yet, I think, if the knights did well partly, the ladies did altogether ill: for if they had faith in their lovers, and did this merely from a mad longing to see them do 'noble' deeds, then they had but little faith in God, Who can, and at His good pleasure does give time and opportunity to every man, if he will but watch for it, to serve Him with reasonable service, and gain love and all noble things in greater measure thereby: but if these ladies did as they did, that they might prove their knights, then surely did they lack faith both in God and man. I do not think that two friends even could live together on such terms, but for lovers,—ah! Ella, Ella, why do you look so at me? on this day, almost the last, we shall be together for long; Ella, your face is changed, your eyes—O Christ! help her and me, help her, good Lord.' 'Lawrence,' she said, speaking quickly and in jerks, 'dare you, for my sake, sleep this night in the cavern of the red pike? for I say to you that, faithful or not, I doubt your courage.' But she was startled when she saw him, and how the fiery blood rushed up to his forehead, then sank to his heart again, and his face became as pale as the face of a dead man; he looked at her and said, 'Yes, Ella, I will go now; for what matter where I go?' He turned and moved toward the door; he was almost gone, when that evil spirit left her, and she cried out aloud, passionately, eagerly: 'Lawrence, Lawrence, come back once more, if only to strike me dead with your knightly sword.' He hesitated, wavered, turned, and in another moment she was lying in his arms weeping into his hair.

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

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

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

"And she saw him walking down toward the gateway-tower, clad in his mail-coat, with a bright, crestless helmet on his head, and his trenchant sword newly grinded, girt to his side; and she watched him going between the yew-trees, which began to throw shadows from the shining of the harvest moon. She stood there in the porch, and round by the corners of the eaves of it looked down towards her and the inside of the porch two serpent-dragons, carved in stone; and on their scales, and about their leering eyes, grew the yellow lichen; she shuddered as she saw them stare at her, and drew closer toward the half-open door; she, standing there, clothed in white from her throat till over her feet, altogether ungirdled; and her long yellow hair, without plait or band, fell down behind and lay along her shoulders, quietly, because the night was without wind, and she too was now standing scarcely moving a muscle.

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

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

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“But he came not back again all the next day, and Ella wandered about that house pale, and fretting her heart away; so when night came and the moon, she arrayed herself in that same raiment that she had worn on the night before, and went toward the river and the red pike.

“The broad moon shone right over it by the time she came to the river; the pike rose up from the other side, and she thought at first that she would have to go back again, cross over the bridge, and so get to it; but, glancing down on the river just as she turned, she saw a little boat fairly gilt and painted, and with a long slender paddle in it, lying on the water, stretching out its silken painter as the stream drew it downwards, she entered it, and taking the paddle made for the other side; the moon meanwhile turning the eddies to silver over the dark green water: she landed beneath the shadow of that great pile of sandstone, where the grass grew green, and the flowers sprung fair right up to the foot of the bare barren rock; it was cut in many steps till it reached the cave, which was overhung by creepers and matted grass; the stream swept the boat downwards, and Ella, her heart beating so as almost to stop her breath, mounted the steps slowly, slowly. She reached at last the platform below the cave, and turning, gave a long gaze at the moonlit country; ‘her last,’ she said; then she moved, and the cave hid her as the water of the warm seas close over the pearl-diver.

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

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

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

Meanwhile Giles sat with his hands clasped finger over finger, tightly, “till the knuckles whitened;” his lips were pressed firmly together; his breast heaved as though it would burst, as though it must be rid of its secret. Suddenly he sprang up, and in a voice that was a solemn chant, began: “In full daylight, long ago, on a slumberously-wrathful, thunderous afternoon of summer;”—then across his chant ran the old man’s shrill voice: “On an October day, packed close with heavy-lying mist, which was more than mere autumn-mist:”—the solemn stately chanting dropped, the shrill voice went on; Giles sank down again, and Hugh standing there, swaying to and fro to the measured ringing of his own shrill voice, his long beard moving with him, said:—

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“On such a day, warm, and stifling so that one could scarcely breathe even down by the sea-shore, I went from bed to bed in the hospital of the pest-laden city with my soothing draughts and medicines. And there went with me a holy woman, her face pale with much watching; yet I think even without those same desolate lonely watchings her face would still have been pale. She was not beautiful, her face being somewhat peevish-looking; apt, she seemed, to be made angry by trifles, and, even on her errand of mercy, she spoke roughly to those she tended:—no, she was not beautiful, yet I could not help gazing at her, for her eyes were very beautiful and looked out from her ugly face as a fair maiden might look from a grim prison between the window-bars of it.

“So, going through that hospital, I came to a bed at last, whereon lay one who had not been struck down by fever or plague, but had been smitten through the body with a sword by certain robbers, so that he had narrowly escaped death. Huge of frame, with stern suffering face he lay there; and I came to him, and asked him of his hurt, and how he fared, while the day grew slowly toward even, in that pest-chamber looking toward the west; the sister came to him soon and knelt down by his bed-side to tend him.

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

“So they spake thus in a quiet tone: ‘Body and soul together again, Ella, love; how long will it be now before the last time of all?’ ‘Long,’ she said, ‘but the years pass; talk no more, dearest, but let us think only, for the time is short, and our bodies call up memories, change love to better even than it was in the old time.’

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

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

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

“But somehow my life changed from the time when I beheld the two lovers, and I grew old quickly.” He ceased; then after a short silence said again: “And that was long ago, very long ago, I know not when it happened.” So he sank back again, and for a while no one spoke; till Giles said at last:

“Once in full daylight I saw a vision, while I was waking, while the eyes of men were upon me; long ago on the afternoon of a thunderous summer day, I sat alone in my fair garden near the city; for on that day a mighty reward was to be given to the brave man who had saved us all, leading us so mightily in that battle a few days back; now the very queen, the lady of the land, whom all men revered almost as the Virgin Mother, so kind and good and beautiful

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she was, was to crown him with flowers and gird a sword about him; after the 'Te Deum' had been sung for the victory, and almost all the city were at that time either in the Church, or hard by it, or else were by the hill that was near the river where the crowning was to be: but I sat alone in the garden of my house as I said; sat grieving for the loss of my brave brother, who was slain by my side in that same fight. I sat beneath an elm tree; and as I sat and pondered on that still, windless day, I heard suddenly a breath of air rustle through the boughs of the elm. I looked up, and my heart almost stopped beating, I knew not why, as I watched the path of that breeze over the bowing lilies and the rushes by the fountain; but when I looked to the place whence the breeze had come, I became all at once aware of an appearance that told me why my heart stopped beating. Ah! there they were, those two whom before I had but seen in dreams by night, now before my waking eyes in broad daylight. One, a knight (for so he seemed), with long hair mingled with golden threads, flowing over his mail-coat, and a bright crestless helmet on his head, his face sad-looking, but calm; and by his side, but not touching him, walked a wondrously fair maiden, clad in white, her eyelids just shadowing her blue eyes: her arms and hands seeming to float along with her as she moved on quickly, yet very softly; great rest on them both, though sorrow gleamed through it.

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

"I never heard such music as her words were; though I used to wonder when I was young whether the angels in heaven sung better than the choiresters sang in our church, and though, even then the sound of the triumphant hymn came up to me in a breath of wind, and floated round me, making dreams, in that moment of awe and great dread, of the old long-past days in that old church, of her who lay under the pavement of it; whose sweet voice once, once long ago, once only to me—yet I shall see her again." He became silent as he said this, and no man cared to break in upon his thoughts, seeing the choking movement in his throat, the fierce clenching of hand and foot, the stiffening of the muscles all over him; but soon, with an upward jerk of his head, he threw back the long elf locks that had fallen over his eyes while his head was bent down, and went on as before:

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"The knight passed his hand across his brow, as if to clear away some mist that had gathered there, and said, in a deep murmurous voice, 'Why the last time, dearest, why the last time? Know you not how long a time remains yet? the old man came last night to the ivory house and told me it would be a hundred years, ay, more, before the happy end.' 'So long,' she said; 'so long: ah! love, what things words are; yet this is the last time; alas! alas! for the weary years! my words, my sin!' 'O love, it is very terrible,' he said; 'I could almost weep, old though I am, and grown cold with dwelling in the ivory house: O, Ella, if you only knew how cold it is there, in the starry nights when the north wind is stirring; and there is no fair colour there, nought but the white ivory, with one narrow line of gleaming gold over every window, and a fathom's-breadth of burnished gold behind the throne. Ella, it was scarce well done of you to send me to the ivory house.' 'Is it so cold, love?' she said, 'I knew it not; forgive me! but as to the matter of a witness, some one we must have, and why not this man?' 'Rather old Hugh,' he said, 'or Cuthbert, his father; they have both been witnesses before.' 'Cuthbert,' said the maiden, solemnly, 'has been dead twenty years; Hugh died last night.'" (Now, as Giles said these words, carelessly, as though not heeding them particularly, a cold sickening shudder ran through the other two men, but he noted it not and went on.) "'This man then be it,' said the knight, and therewith they turned again, and moved on side by side as before; nor said they any word to me, and yet I could not help following them, and we three moved on together, and soon I saw that my nature was changed, and that I was invisible for the time; for, though the sun was high, I cast no shadow, neither did any man that we past notice us, as we made toward the hill by the riverside.

"And by the time we came there the queen was sitting at the top of it, under a throne of purple and gold, with a great band of knights gloriously armed on either side of her; and their many banners floated over them. Then I felt that those two had left me, and that my own right visible nature was returned; yet still did I feel strange, and as if I belonged not wholly to this earth. And I heard one say, in a low voice to his fellow, 'See, sir Giles is here after all; yet, how came he here, and why is he not in armour among the noble knights yonder, he who fought so well? how wild he looks too!' 'Poor knight,' said the other, 'he is distraught with the loss of his brother; let him be; and see, here comes the noble stranger knight, our deliverer.' As he spoke, we heard a great sound of trumpets, and therewithall a long line of knights on foot wound up the hill towards the throne, and the queen rose up, and the people shouted; and, at the end of all the procession went slowly and majestically the stranger knight; a man of noble presence he was, calm, and graceful to look on; grandly he went amid the gleaming of their golden armour; himself clad in the rent mail and tattered surcoat he had worn on the battle-day; bareheaded, too; for, in that fierce fight, in the thickest of it, just where he rallied our men, one smote off his helmet, and another, coming from behind, would have slain him, but that my lance bit into his breast.

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“So, when they had come within some twenty paces of the throne, the rest halted, and he went up by himself toward the queen; and she, taking the golden hilted sword in her left hand, with her right caught him by the wrist, when he would have knelt to her, and held him so, tremblingly, and cried out, ‘No, no, thou noblest of all knights, kneel not to me; have we not heard of thee even before thou camest hither? how many widows bless thee, how many orphans pray for thee, how many happy ones that would be widows and orphans but for thee, sing to their children, sing to their sisters, of thy flashing sword, and the heart that guides it! And now, O noble one! thou hast done the very noblest deed of all, for thou hast kept grown men from weeping shameful tears! O truly, the greatest I can do for thee is very little; yet, see this sword, golden-hilted, and the stones flash out from it,’ (then she hung it round him), ‘and see this wreath of lilies and roses for thy head; lilies no whiter than thy pure heart, roses no tenderer than thy true love; and here, before all these my subjects, I fold thee, noblest, in my arms, so, so.’ Ay, truly it was strange enough! those two were together again; not the queen and the stranger knight, but the young-seeming knight and the maiden I had seen in the garden. To my eyes they clung together there; though they say, that to the eyes of all else, it was but for a moment that the queen held both his hands in hers; to me also, amid the shouting of the multitude, came an under current of happy song: ‘Oh! truly, very truly, my noblest, a hundred years will not be long after this.’ ‘Hush, Ella, dearest, for talking makes the time speed; think only.’

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

“And that was long ago, very long ago.” So he ceased; then Osric, one of the two younger men, who had been sitting in awe-struck silence all this time, said, with eyes that dared not meet Giles’s, in a terrified half whisper, as though he meant not to speak, “How long?” Giles turned round and looked him full in the face, till he dragged his eyes up to his own, then said, “More than a hundred years ago.”

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

Then suddenly, as they sat thus, came a knock at the door of the house; so Hugh bowed his head to Osric, to signify that he should go and open the door; so he arose, trembling, and went.

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

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

Then withall as they shook their heads fearfully in answer, a great sigh rose up from her heart, and she said: "Then must I go away again presently, and yet I thought it was the last night of all."

And so she sat awhile with her head resting on her hand; after, she arose as if about to go, and turned her glorious head round to thank the master of the house; and they, strangely enough, though they were terrified at her presence, were yet grieved when they saw that she was going.

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Just then the wind rose higher than ever before, yet through the roar of it they could all hear plainly a knocking at the door again; so the lady stopped when she heard it, and, turning, looked full in the face of Herman the youngest, who thereupon, being constrained by that look, rose and went to the door; and as before with Osric, so now the wind blew strong against him; and it blew into his face, so as to blind him, tresses of soft brown hair mingled with glittering threads of gold; and blinded so, he heard some one ask him musically, solemnly, if a lady with golden hair and white raiment was in that house; so Herman, not answering in words, because of his awe and fear, merely bowed his head; then he was 'ware of some one in bright armour passing him, for the gleam of it was all about him, for as yet he could not see clearly, being blinded by the hair that had floated about him.

But presently he followed him into the room, and there stood such an one as the lady had described; the wavering flame of the light gleamed from his polished helmet, touched the golden threads that mingled with his hair, ran along the rings of his mail.

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

And as they gazed, the bells of the church began to ring, for it was New-Year's-eve; and still they clung together, and the bells rang on, and the old year died.

And there beneath the eyes of those four men the lovers slowly faded away into a heap of snow-white ashes. Then the four men kneeled down and prayed, and the next day they went to the priest, and told him all that had happened.

So the people took those ashes and buried them in their church, in a marble tomb, and above it they caused to be carved their figures lying with clasped hands; and on the sides of it the history of the cave in the red pike.

And in my dream I saw the moon shining on the tomb, throwing fair colours on it from the painted glass; till a sound of music rose, deepened, and fainted; then I woke.

GOLDEN WINGS

Lyf lythes to nee,
Twa wordes or three,
Of one who was fair and free,

And fele in his fight.

—*Sir Percival*.

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

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

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

It was a strange sight to see that gold and brass and marble inside that rough chapel which stood on the marshy common, near the river.

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

And what she worked at was two wings, wrought in gold, on a blue ground.

And as for what she sung, I could never understand it, though I know now it was not in Latin.

And she used to charge me straightly never to let any man into the house on St. Peter's day; therefore, I and our dog, which was a great old bloodhound, always kept the door together.

But one St. Peter's day, when I was nearly twenty, I sat in the house watching the door with the bloodhound, and I was sleepy, because of the shut-up heat and my mother's singing, so I began to nod, and at last, though the dog often shook me by the hair to keep me awake, went fast asleep, and began to dream a foolish dream without hearing, as men sometimes do: for I thought that my mother and I were walking to mass through the snow on a Christmas day, but my mother carried a live goose in her hand, holding it by the neck, instead of her rosary, and that I went along by her side, not walking, but turning somersaults like a mountebank, my head never touching the ground; when we got to the chapel door, the old priest met us, and said to my mother, 'Why dame alive, your head is turned green! Ah! never mind, I will go and say mass, but don't let little Mary there go,' and he pointed to the goose, and went.

Then mass begun, but in the midst of it, the priest said out aloud, 'Oh I forgot,' and turning round to us began to wag his grey head and white beard, throwing his head right back, and sinking his chin on his breast alternately; and when we saw him do this, we

presently began also to knock our heads against the wall, keeping time with him and with each other, till the priest said, 'Peter! it's dragon-time

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now,' whereat the roof flew off, and a great yellow dragon came down on the chapel-floor with a flop, and danced about clumsily, wriggling his fat tail, and saying to a sort of tune, 'O the Devil, the Devil, the Devil, O the Devil,' so I went up to him, and put my hand on his breast, meaning to slay him, and so awoke, and found myself standing up with my hand on the breast of an armed knight; the door lay flat on the ground, and under it lay Hector, our dog, whining and dying.

For eight hours I had been asleep; on awaking, the blood rushed up into my face, I heard my mother's low mysterious song behind me, and knew not what harm might happen to her and me, if that knight's coming made her cease in it; so I struck him with my left hand, where his face was bare under his mail-coif, and getting my sword in my light hand, drove its point under his hawberk, so that it came out behind, and he fell, turned over on his face, and died.

Then, because my mother still went on working and singing, I said no word, but let him lie there, and put the door up again, and found Hector dead.

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

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

'A King, if the people will but know it,' she said.

Then she knelt down by the dead body, turned it round again, so that it lay face uppermost, as before, then said:

'And so it has all come to this, has it? To think that you should run on my son's sword-point at last, after all the wrong you have done me and mine; now must I work carefully, least when you are dead you should still do me harm, for that you are a King—Lionel!'

'Yea, Mother.'

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

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

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

So we went, and my mother gazed about her for a while as if she were looking for something, but then suddenly went forward with her eyes on the ground, and she said to me:

'Is it not strange, that I who know the very place I am going to take you to, as well as our own garden, should have a sudden fear come over me that I should not find it after all; though for these nineteen years I have watched the trees change and change all about it—ah! here, stop now.'

We stopped before a great oak; a beech tree was behind us—she said, 'Dig, Lionel, hereabouts.'

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

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

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

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

But my mother wept softly above me, till I arose with a great shudder of delight and drew the edges of the hawberk over my cheek, I liked so to feel the rings slipping, slipping, till they fell off altogether; then I said:

'O Lord God that made the world, if I might only die in this armour!'

Then my mother helped me to put it on, and I felt strange and new in it, and yet I had neither lance nor horse.

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

I wept thereat, but she said: 'Nay, but see here.'

And taking the dead knight's lance from among the garden lilies, she rent from it the pennon (which had a sword on a red ground for bearing), and cast it carelessly on the ground, then she bound about it a pennon with my bearing, gold wings on a blue ground; she bid me bear the Knight's body, all armed as he was, to put on him his helm

and lay him on the floor at her bed's foot, also to break his sword and cast it on our hearth-stone; all which things I did.

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Afterwards she put the surcoat on me, and then lying down in her gorgeous raiment on her bed, she spread her arms out in the form of a cross, shut her eyes, and said:

'Kiss me, Lionel, for I am tired.'

And after I had kissed her she died.

And I mounted my dead foe's horse and rode away; neither did I ever know what wrong that was which he had done me, not while I was in the body at least.

And do not blame me for not burying my mother; I left her there because, though she did not say so to me, yet I knew the thoughts of her heart, and that the thing she had wished so earnestly for these years, and years, and years, had been but to lie dead with him lying dead close to her.

So I rode all that night for I could not stop, because of the thoughts that were in me, and, stopping at this place and that, in three days came to the city.

And there the King held his court with great pomp.

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

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

Whereupon one of the knights came near me and shaded his eyes with his hand as one does in a bright sun, meaning to mock at me for my shining armour, and he drew nearer and nearer till his long stiff beard just touched me, and then I smote him on the face, and he fell on the floor.

So the king being in a rage, roared out from the door, 'Slay him!' but I put my shield before me and drew my sword, and the women drew together aside and whispered fearfully, and while some of the knights took spears and stood about me, others got their armour on.

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



'The Lord reward you damoyzel,' I said. Then I saw that the King had left talking with that knight and was just going to stand up and say something out loud, so I went quickly and called out with a loud voice:

'O King Gilbert of the rose-land, I, Lionel of the golden wings, pray of you three boons in the name of Alys des roses and Sir Guy le bon amant.'

Then the King gnashed his teeth because he had promised if ever his daughter Alys des roses came back safe again, he would on that day grant any three boons to the first man who asked them, even if he were his greatest foe. He said, 'Well, then, take them, what are they?'

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'First, my life; then, that you should make me a knight; and thirdly, that you should take me into your service.'

He said, 'I will do this, and moreover, I forgive you freely if you will be my true man.' Then we heard shouting arise through all the city because they were bringing the Lady Alys from the ship up to the palace, and the people came to the windows, and the houses were hung with cloths and banners of silk and gold, that swung down right from the eaves to the ground; likewise the bells all rang: and within a while they entered the palace, and the trumpets rang and men shouted, so that my head whirled; and they entered the hall, and the King went down from the dais to meet them.

Now a band of knights and of damoyzels went before and behind, and in the midst Sir Guy led the Lady Alys by the hand, and he was a most stately knight, strong and fair.

And I indeed noted the first band of knights and damoyzels well, and wondered at the noble presence of the knights, and was filled with joy when I beheld the maids, because of their great beauty; the second band I did not see, for when they passed I was leaning back against the wall, wishing to die with my hands before my face. But when I could see, she was hanging about her father's neck, weeping, and she never left him all that night, but held his hand in feast and dance, and even when I was made knight, while the king with his right hand laid his sword over my shoulder, she held his left hand and was close to me.

And the next day they held a grand tourney, that I might be proven; and I had never fought with knights before, yet I did not doubt. And Alys sat under a green canopy, that she might give the degree to the best knight, and by her sat the good knight Sir Guy, in a long robe, for he did not mean to joust that day; and indeed at first none but young knights jousted, for they thought that I should not do much.

But I, looking up to the green canopy, overthrew so many of them, that the elder knights began to arm, and I grew most joyful as I met them, and no man unhorsed me; and always I broke my spear fairly, or else overthrew my adversary.

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

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

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

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

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

Then presently I saw a great knight come riding in with three black chevrons on a gold shield: and so he began to ride at me, and at first we only broke both our spears, but then he drew his sword, and fought quite in another way to what the other knights had, so that I saw at once that I had no chance against him: nevertheless, for a long time he availed nothing, though he wounded me here and there, but at last drove his sword right through mine, through my shield and my helm, and I fell, and lay like one dead.

And thereat the King cried out to cease, and the degree was given to Sir Guy, because I had overthrown forty knights and he had overthrown me.

Then they told me, I was carried out of the lists and laid in a hostelry near the palace, and Guy went up to the pavilion where Alys was and she crowned him, both of them being very pale, for she doubted if I were slain, and he knew that she did not love him, thinking before that she did; for he was good and true, and had saved her life and honour, and she (poor maid!) wished to please her father, and strove to think that all was right.

But I was by no means slain, for the sword had only cleft my helm, and when I came to myself again I felt despair of all things, because I knew not that she loved me, for how should she, knowing nothing of me? likewise dust had been cast on my gold wings, and she saw it done.

Then I heard a great crying in the street, that sounded strangely in the quiet night, so I sent to ask what it might be: and there came presently into my chamber a man in gilded armour; he was an old man, and his hair and beard were gray, and behind him came six men armed, who carried a dead body of a young man between them, and I said, 'What is it? who is he?' Then the old man, whose head was heavy for grief, said: 'Oh, sir! this is my son; for as we went yesterday with our merchandize some twenty miles from this fair town, we passed by a certain hold, and therefrom came a knight and men at arms, who when my son would have fought with them, overthrew him and bound him, and me and all our men they said they would slay if we did ought; so then they cut out my son's



eyes, and cut off his hands, and then said, "The Knight of High Gard takes these for tribute." Therewithal they departed, taking with them my son's eyes and his hands on a platter; and when they were gone I would have followed them, and slain some of them at least, but my own people would not suffer me, and for grief and pain my son's heart burst, and he died, and behold I am here.'

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Then I thought I could win glory, and I was much rejoiced thereat, and said to the old man,

‘Would you love to be revenged?’

But he set his teeth, and pulled at the skirt of his surcoat, as hardly for his passion he said, ‘Yes.’

‘Then,’ I said, ‘I will go and try to slay this knight, if you will show me the way to La Haute Garde.’

And he, taking my hand, said, ‘O glorious knight, let us go now!’ And he did not ask who I was, or whether I was a good knight, but began to go down the stairs at once, so I put on my armour and followed him.

And we two set forth alone to La Haute Garde, for no man else dared follow us, and I rejoiced in thinking that while Guy was sitting at the King’s table feasting, I was riding out to slay the King’s enemies, for it never once seemed possible to me that I should be worsted.

It was getting light again by then we came in sight of High Gard; we wound up the hill on foot, for it was very steep; I blew at the gates a great blast which was even as though the stag should blow his own mort, or like the blast that Balen heard.

For in a very short while the gates opened and a great band of armed men, more than thirty I think, and a knight on horseback among them, who was armed in red, stood before us, and on one side of him was a serving man with a silver dish, on the other, one with a butcher’s cleaver, a knife, and pincers.

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

So I said grimly, being in a rage, ‘I have a will to slay you.’

But I could scarce say so before the old merchant rushed at the red knight with a yell, who without moving slew his horse with an axe, and then the men at arms speared the old man, slaying him as one would an otter or a rat.

Afterwards they were going to set on me, but the red knight held them back, saying: ‘Nay, I am enough,’ and we spurred on our horses.

As we met, I felt just as if some one had thrown a dull brown cloth over my eyes, and I felt the wretched spear-point slip off his helm; then I felt a great pain somewhere, that did not seem to be in my body, but in the world, or the sky, or something of that sort.

And I know not how long that pain seemed to last now, but I think years, though really I grew well and sane again in a few weeks.

And when I woke, scarce knowing whether I was in the world or heaven or hell, I heard some one singing.

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

There was a window by my bed, I looked out at it, and saw that I was high up; down in the street the people were going to and fro, and there was a knot of folks gathered about a minstrel, who sat on the edge of a fountain, with his head laid sideways on his shoulder, and nursing one leg on the other; he was singing only, having no instrument, and he sang the song I had tried to listen to, I heard some of it now:

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

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

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

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

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

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

But I grew strong at last, and began to walk about, and in the Palace Pleasaunce, one day, I met Sir Guy walking by himself.

So I told him how that I thanked him with all my heart for my life, but he said it was only what a good knight ought to do; for that hearing the mad enterprise I had ridden on, he had followed me swiftly with a few knights, and so saved me.

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

And now I turned from him, and walked slowly up and down the garden-paths, not exactly thinking, but with some ghosts of former thoughts passing through my mind.



The day, too, was most lovely, as it grew towards evening, and I had all the joy of a man lately sick in the flowers and all things; if any bells at that time had begun to chime, I think I should have lain down on the grass and wept; but now there was but the noise of the bees in the yellow musk, and that had not music enough to bring me sorrow.

And as I walked I stooped and picked a great orange lily, and held it in my hand, and lo! down the garden walk, the same fair damozel that had before this given me good counsel in the hall.

Thereat I was very glad, and walked to meet her smiling, but she was very grave, and said:

'Fair sir, the Lady Alys des roses wishes to see you in her chamber.'

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

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But when we came to the lady's chamber, behold! before the door, stood a tall knight, fair and strong, and in armour, save his head, who seemed to be guarding the door, though not so as to seem so to all men.

He kissed the damozel eagerly, and then she said to me, 'This is Sir William de la Fosse, my true knight;' so the knight took my hand and seemed to have such joy of me, that all the blood came up to my face for pure delight.

But then the damozel Blanche opened the door and bade me go in while she abode still without; so I entered, when I had put aside the heavy silken hangings that filled the doorway.

And there sat Alys; she arose when she saw me, and stood pale, and with her lips apart, and her hands hanging loose by her side.

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

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

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

Then, within a while, we called in the Lady Blanche and Sir William de la Fosse, and while they talked about what we should do, we sat together and kissed; and what they said, I know not.

But I remember, that that night, quite late, Alys and I rode out side by side from the good city in the midst of a great band of knights and men-at-arms, and other bands drew to us as we went, and in three days we reached Sir William's castle which was called 'La Garde des Chevaliers.'

And straightway he caused toll the great bell, and to hang out from the highest tower a great banner of red and gold, cut into so many points that it seemed as if it were tattered; for this was the custom of his house when they wanted their vassals together.

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

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But on the very day that we came, they arrayed her in gold and flowers (and there were angels and knights and ladies wrought on her gold raiment), and I waited for an hour in the chapel till she came, listening to the swallows outside, and gazing with parted lips at the pictures on the golden walls; but when she came, I knelt down before the altar, and she knelt down and kissed my lips; and then the priest came in, and the singers and the censer-boys; and that chapel was soon confusedly full of golden raiment, and incense, and ladies and singing; in the midst of which I wedded Alys. And men came into Knights' Gard till we had two thousand men in it, and great store of munitions of war and provisions.

But Alys and I lived happily together in the painted hall and in the fair water-meadows, and as yet no one came against us.

And still her talk was, of deeds of arms, and she was never tired of letting the serpent rings of my mail slip off her wrist and long hand, and she would kiss my shield and helm and the gold wings on my surcoat, my mother's work, and would talk of the ineffable joy that would be when we had fought through all the evil that was coming on us.

Also she would take my sword and lay it on her knees and talk to it, telling it how much she loved me.

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

Think you that the shouting curses of the trumpet broke off our love, or in any ways lessened it? no, most certainly, but from the time the siege began, her cheeks grew thinner, and her passionate face seemed more and more a part of me; now too, whenever I happened to see her between the grim fighting she would do nothing but kiss me all the time, or wring my hands, or take my head on her breast, being so eagerly passionate that sometimes a pang shot through me that she might die.

Till one day they made a breach in the wall, and when I heard of it for the first time, I sickened, and could not call on God; but Alys cut me a tress of her yellow hair and tied it in my helm, and armed me, and saying no word, led me down to the breach by the hand, and then went back most ghastly pale.

So there on the one side of the breach were the spears of William de la Fosse and Lionel of the gold wings, and on the other the spears of King Gilbert and Sir Guy le bon amant, but the King himself was not there; Sir Guy was.

Well,—what would you have? in this world never yet could two thousand men stand against twenty thousand; we were almost pushed back with their spear-points, they

were so close together:—slay six of them and the spears were as thick as ever; but if two of our men fell there was straightway a hole.

Yet just at the end of this we drove them back in one charge two yards beyond the breach, and behold in the front rank, Sir Guy, utterly fearless, cool, and collected; nevertheless, with one stroke I broke his helm, and he fell to the ground before the two armies, even as I fell that day in the lists; and we drove them twenty feet farther, yet they saved Sir Guy.

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Well, again,—what would you have? They drove us back again, and they drove us into our inner castle walls. And I was the last to go in, and just as I was entering, the boldest and nearest of the enemy clutched at my love's hair in my helm, shouting out quite loud, 'Whore's hair for John the goldsmith!'

At the hearing of which blasphemy the Lord gave me such strength, that I turned and caught him by the ribs with my left hand, and with my right, by sheer strength, I tore off his helm and part of his nose with it, and then swinging him round about, dashed his brains out against the castle-walls.

Yet thereby was I nearly slain, for they surrounded me, only Sir William and the others charged out and rescued me, but hardly.

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

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

In the topmost room I found her, alas! alas! lying on the floor, as I said; I came to her and kissed her head as she lay, then raised her up; and I took all my armour off and broke my sword over my knee.

And then I led her to the window away from the fighting, from whence we only saw the quiet country, and kissed her lips till she wept and looked no longer sad and wretched; then I said to her:

'Now, O Love, we must part for a little, it is time for me to go and die.'

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

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

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

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

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And while she lay there, behold a sudden tramping that she did not hear, and over the green hangings the gleam of helmets that she did not see, and then one pushed aside the hangings with his spear, and there stood the armed men.

'Will not somebody weep for my darling?'

She sprang up from my feet with a low, bitter moan, most terrible to hear, she kissed me once on the lips, and then stood aside, with her dear head thrown back, and holding her lovely loose hair strained over her outspread arms, as though she were wearied of all things that had been or that might be.

Then one thrust me through the breast with a spear, and another with his sword, which was three inches broad, gave me a stroke across the thighs that hit to the bone; and as I fell forward one cleft me to the teeth with his axe.

And then I heard my darling shriek.

SVEND AND HIS BRETHREN

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

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

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

The mountains were cloven, and gave forth from their scarred sides wealth of ore and splendour of marble; all things this people that King Valdemar ruled over could do; they levelled mountains, that over the smooth roads the wains might go, laden with silk and spices from the sea: they drained lakes, that the land might yield more and more, as year by year the serfs, driven like cattle, but worse fed, worse housed, died slowly, scarce knowing that they had souls; they builded them huge ships, and said that they were masters of the sea too; only, I trow the sea was an unruly subject, and often sent them back their ships cut into more pieces than the pines of them were, when the adze

first fell upon them; they raised towers, and bridges, and marble palaces with endless corridors rose-scented, and cooled with welling fountains.

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

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

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

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

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

They could do everything but justice, and truth, and mercy; therefore God's judgments hung over their heads, not fallen yet, but surely to fall one time or other.

For ages past they had warred against one people only, whom they could not utterly subdue; a feeble people in numbers, dwelling in the very midst of them, among the mountains; yet now they were pressing them close; acre after acre, with seas of blood to purchase each acre, had been wrested from the free people, and their end seemed drawing near; and this time the king, Valdemar, had marched to their land with a great army, to make war on them, he boasted to himself, almost for the last time.

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

his daughter, go his thoughts, and he still paces up and down wearily, stopping now and then to gaze intently on things which he has seen a hundred times; and the night has altogether come on.

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At last the blast of a horn from outside, challenge and counter-challenge, and the wicket to the court-yard is swung open; for this house, being in a part of the city where the walls are somewhat weak, is a little fortress in itself, and is very carefully guarded. The old man's face brightened at the sound of the new comers, and he went toward the entrance of the house where he was met by two young knights fully armed, and a maiden. 'Thank God you are come,' he says; but stops when he sees her face, which is quite pale, almost wild with some sorrow. 'The saints! Cissela, what is it?' he says. 'Father, Eric will tell you.' Then suddenly a clang, for Eric has thrown on the ground a richly-jewelled sword, sheathed, and sets his foot on it, crunching the pearls on the sheath; then says, flinging up his head,—'There, father, the enemy is in the land; may that happen to every one of them! but for my part I have accounted for two already.' 'Son Eric, son Eric, you talk for ever about yourself; quick, tell me about Cissela instead: if you go on boasting and talking always about yourself, you will come to no good end, son, after all.' But as he says this, he smiles nevertheless, and his eye glistens.

'Well, father, listen—such a strange thing she tells us, not to be believed, if she did not tell us herself; the enemy has suddenly got generous, one of them at least, which is something of a disappointment to me—ah! pardon, about my self again; and that is about myself too. Well, father, what am I to do?—But Cissela, she wandered some way from her maidens, when—ah! but I never could tell a story properly, let her tell it herself; here, Cissela!—well, well, I see she is better employed, talking namely, how should I know what! with Siur in the window-seat yonder—but she told us that, as she wandered almost by herself, she presently heard shouts and saw many of the enemy's knights riding quickly towards her; whereat she knelt only and prayed to God, who was very gracious to her; for when, as she thought, something dreadful was about to happen, the chief of the knights (a very noble-looking man, she said) rescued her, and, after he had gazed earnestly into her face, told her she might go back again to her own home, and her maids with her, if only she would tell him where she dwelt and her name; and withal he sent three knights to escort her some way toward the city; then he turned and rode away with all his knights but those three, who, when they knew that he had quite gone, she says, began to talk horribly, saying things whereof in her terror she understood the import only: then, before worse came to pass came I and slew two, as I said, and the other ran away 'lustily with a good courage'; and that is the sword of one of the slain knights, or, as one might rather call them, rascally caitiffs.'

The old man's thoughts seemed to have gone wandering after his son had finished; for he said nothing for some time, but at last spoke dejectedly:

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'Eric, brave son, when I was your age I too hoped, and my hopes are come to this at last; you are blind in your hopeful youth, Eric, and do not see that this king (for the king it certainly was) will crush us, and not the less surely because he is plainly not ungenerous, but rather a good, courteous knight. Alas! poor old Gunnar, broken down now and ready to die, as your country is! How often, in the olden time, thou used'st to say to thyself, as thou didst ride at the head of our glorious house, 'this charge may finish this matter, this battle must.' They passed away, those gallant fights, and still the foe pressed on, and hope, too, slowly ebbed away, as the boundaries of our land grew less and less: behold this is the last wave but one or two, and then for a sad farewell to name and freedom. Yet, surely the end of the world must come when we are swept off the face of the earth. God waits long, they say, before He avenges his own.'

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

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

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

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

Then she said, 'Father, brother, and you, Siur, come with me to the chapel; I wish you to witness me make an oath.'

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

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

She walked up to the altar and took the blessed book of the Gospels from the left side of it, then knelt in prayer for a moment or two, while the three men stood behind her reverently. When she rose she made a sign to them, and from their scabbards gleamed three swords in the moonlight; then, while they held them aloft, and pointed toward the altar, she opened the book at the page whereon was painted Christ the Lord dying on the cross, pale against the gleaming gold: she said, in a firm voice, 'Christ God, who diedst for all men, so help me, as I refuse not life, happiness, even honour, for this people whom I love.'

Then she kissed the face so pale against the gold, and knelt again.

But when she had risen, and before she could leave the space by the altar, Siur had stepped up to her, and seized her hurriedly, folding both his arms about her; she let herself be held there, her bosom against his; then he held her away from him a little space, holding her by the arms near the shoulder; then he took her hands and laid them across his shoulders, so that now she held him.

And they said nothing; what could they say? Do you know any word for what they meant?

And the father and brother stood by, looking quite awe-struck, more so they seemed than by her solemn oath. Till Siur, raising his head from where it lay, cried out aloud:

'May God forgive me as I am true to her! hear you, father and brother?'

Then said Cissela: 'May God help me in my need, as I am true to Siur.'

And the others went, and they two were left standing there alone, with no little awe over them, strange and shy as they had never yet been to each other. Cissela shuddered, and said in a quick whisper: 'Siur, on your knees! and pray that these oaths may never clash.'

'Can they, Cissela?' he said.

'O love,' she cried, 'you have loosed my hand; take it again, or I shall die, Siur!'

He took both her hands, he held them fast to his lips, to his forehead; he said: 'No, God does not allow such things: truth does not lie; you are truth; this need not be prayed for.'

She said: 'Oh, forgive me! yet—yet this old chapel is damp and cold even in the burning summer weather. O knight Siur, something strikes through me; I pray you kneel and pray.'

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He looked steadily at her for a long time without answering, as if he were trying once for all to become indeed one with her; then said: 'Yes, it is possible; in no other way could you give up everything.'

Then he took from off his finger a thin golden ring, and broke it in two, and gave her the one half, saying: 'When will they come together?'

Then within a while they left the chapel, and walked as in a dream between the dazzling lights of the hall, where the knights sat now, and between those lights sat down together, dreaming still the same dream each of them; while all the knights shouted for Siur and Cissela. Even if a man had spent all his life looking for sorrowful things, even if he sought for them with all his heart and soul, and even though he had grown grey in that quest, yet would he have found nothing in all the world, or perhaps in all the stars either, so sorrowful as Cissela.

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

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

Withal came thoughts to each man, partly selfish, partly wise and just, concerning his own wife and children, concerning children yet unborn; thoughts too of the glory of the old name; all that had been suffered and done that the glorious free land might yet be a nation.

And the spirit of hope, never dead but sleeping only, woke up within their hearts: 'We may yet be a people,' they said to themselves, 'if we can but get breathing time.'

And as they thought these things, and doubted, Siur rose up in the midst of them and said: 'You are right in what you think, countrymen, and she is right; she is altogether good and noble; send her forth.'

Then, with one look of utter despair at her as she stood statue-like, he left the council, lest he should fall down and die in the midst of them, he said; yet he died not then, but lived for many years afterwards.



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

So she thought not at all, steeping her senses utterly in forgetfulness of the happy past, destroying all anticipation of the future: yet, as they left the city amid the tears of women, and fixed sorrowful gaze of men, she turned round once, and stretched her arms out involuntarily, like a dumb senseless thing, towards the place where she was born, and where her life grew happier day by day, and where his arms first crept round about her.

She turned away and thought, but in a cold speculative manner, how it was possible that she was bearing this sorrow; as she often before had wondered, when slight things vexed her overmuch, how people had such sorrows and lived, and almost doubted if the pain was so much greater in great sorrows than in small troubles, or whether the nobleness only was greater, the pain not sharper, but more lingering.

Halfway toward the camp the king's people met her; and over the trampled ground, where they had fought so fiercely but a little time before, they spread breadth of golden cloth, that her feet might not touch the arms of her dead countrymen, or their brave bodies.

And so they came at last with many trumpet-blasts to the king's tent, who stood at the door of it, to welcome his bride that was to be: a noble man truly to look on, kindly, and genial-eyed; the red blood sprang up over his face when she came near; and she looked back no more, but bowed before him almost to the ground, and would have knelt, but that he caught her in his arms and kissed her; she was pale no more now; and the king, as he gazed delightedly at her, did not notice that sorrow-mark, which was plain enough to her own people.

So the trumpets sounded again one long peal that seemed to make all the air reel and quiver, and the soldiers and lords shouted: 'Hurrah for the Peace-Queen, Cissela.'

* * * * *

'Come, Harald,' said a beautiful golden-haired boy to one who was plainly his younger brother, 'Come, and let us leave Robert here by the forge, and show our lady-mother this beautiful thing. Sweet master armourer, farewell.'

'Are you going to the queen then?' said the armourer.

'Yea,' said the boy, looking wonderingly at the strong craftsman's eager face.

'But, nay; let me look at you awhile longer, you remind me so much of one I loved long ago in my own land. Stay awhile till your other brother goes with you.'

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'Well, I will stay, and think of what you have been telling me; I do not feel as it I should ever think of anything else for long together, as long as I live.'

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

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

Presently his twin-brother Robert woke him from that dream, calling out: 'Now, brother Svend, are we really ready; see here! but stop, kneel first; there, now am I the Bishop.'

And he pulled his brother down on to his knees, and put on his head, where it fitted loosely enough now, hanging down from left to right, an iron crown fantastically wrought, which he himself, having just finished it, had taken out of the water, cool and dripping.

Robert and Harald laughed loud when they saw the crown hanging all askew, and the great drops rolling from it into Svend's eyes and down his cheeks, looking like tears: not so Svend; he rose, holding the crown level on his head, holding it back, so that it pressed against his brow hard, and, first dashing the drops to right and left, caught his brother by the hand, and said:

'May I keep it, Robert? I shall wear it some day.'

'Yea,' said the other; 'but it is a poor thing; better let Siur put it in the furnace again and make it into sword hilts.'

Thereupon they began to go, Svend holding the crown in his hand: but as they were going, Siur called out: 'Yet will I sell my dagger at a price, Prince Svend, even as you wished at first, rather than give it you for nothing.'

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

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

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

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

Svend, with Harald and Robert his two brethren, went their ways to the queen, and found her sitting alone in a fair court of the palace full of flowers, with a marble cloister round about it; and when she saw them coming, she rose up to meet them, her three fair sons.

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Truly as that right royal woman bent over them lovingly, there seemed little need of Siur's question.

So Svend showed her his dagger, but not the crown; and she asked many questions concerning Siur the smith, about his way of talking and his face, the colour of his hair even, till the boys wondered, she questioned them so closely, with beaming eyes and glowing cheeks, so that Svend thought he had never before seen his mother look so beautiful.

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

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

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

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

'Ah, mother, no,' he said, 'there is something with him that makes him seem quite infinitely beyond all other workmen I ever heard of.'

Some memory coming from that dreamland smote upon her heart more than the others; she blushed like a young girl, and said hesitatingly:

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

So Robert said: 'Yea, mother, he works with his left hand almost as much as with his right, and sometimes I have seen him change the hammer suddenly from his right hand to his left, with a kind of half smile, as one who would say, 'Cannot I then?' and this more when he does smith's work in metal than when he works in marble; and once I heard him say when he did so, 'I wonder where my first left hand work is; ah! I bide my time.' I wonder also, mother, what he meant by that.'



She answered no word, but shook her arm free from its broad sleeve, and something glittered on it, near her wrist, something wrought out of silver set with quaint and uncouthly-cut stones of little value.

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

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

There sat the seven brothers in the council chamber, waiting for the king, speaking no word, only thinking drearily; and under the pavement of the great church Cissela lay, and by the side of her tomb stood two men, old men both, Valdemar the king, and Siur.

So the king, after that he had gazed awhile on the carven face of her he had loved well, said at last:

'And now, Sir Carver, must you carve me also to lie there.' And he pointed to the vacant space by the side of the fair alabaster figure.

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

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

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

Siur stood in his own great hall (for his house was large), he stood before the dais, and saw a fair sight, the work of his own hands.

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

So Siur gazed till he heard footsteps coming; then he turned to meet them. And Svend and his brethren sat silent in the council chamber, till they heard a great noise and clamour of the people arise through all the streets; and then they rose to see what it might be. Meanwhile on the low marble tomb, under the dim sweeping vault sat, or rather lay, the king; for, though his right arm still lay over her breast, his head had fallen forward, and rested now on the shoulder of the marble queen. There he lay, with strange confusion of his scarlet, gold-wrought robes; silent, motionless, and dead. The seven brethren stood together on a marble terrace of the royal palace, that was dotted about on the baluster of it with white statues: they were helmetted, and armed to the teeth, only over their armour great black cloaks were thrown.

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

Above the heads of all men on that terrace shone out Svend's brave face, the golden hair flowing from out of his helmet: a smile of quiet confidence overflowing from his mighty heart, in the depths of which it was dwelling, just showed a very little on his eyes and lips.

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While all the vast square, and all the windows and roofs even of the houses over against the palace, were alive with an innumerable sea of troubled raging faces, showing white, upturned from the under-sea of their many-coloured raiment; the murmur from them was like the sough of the first tempest-wind among the pines, and the gleam of spears here and there like the last few gleams of the sun through the woods when the black thunder-clouds come up over all, soon to be shone through, those woods, by the gleam of the deep lightning.

Also sometimes the murmur would swell, and from the heart of it would come a fierce, hoarse, tearing, shattering roar, strangely discordant, of 'War! War! give us war, O king!'

Then Svend stepping forward, his arms hidden under his long cloak as they hung down quietly, the smile on his face broadening somewhat, sent from his chest a mighty, effortless voice over all the raging:

'Hear, O ye people! War with all that is ugly and base; peace with all that is fair and good.—NO WAR with my brother's people.'

Just then one of those unhelmetted, creeping round about stealthily to the place where Svend stood, lifted his arm and smote at him with a dagger; whereupon Svend clearing his right arm from his cloak with his left, lifted up his glittering right hand, and the traitor fell to the earth groaning with a broken jaw, for Svend had smitten him on the mouth a backward blow with his open hand.

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

The smile left Svend's face and heart now, he looked very stern as he said:

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

Between the good and the base, in the midst of the passionate faces and changing colours stood the great terrace, cold, and calm, and white, with its changeless statues; and for a while there was silence.

Broken through at last by a yell, and the sharp whirr of arrows, and the cling, clang, from the armour of the terrace as Prince Harald staggered through unhurt, struck by the broad point on the helmet.

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'What, War?' shouted Svend wrathfully, and his voice sounded like a clap of thunder following the lightning flash when a tower is struck. 'What! war? swords for Svend! round about the king, good men and true! Sons of the golden-haired, show these men WAR.'

As he spoke he let his black cloak fall, and up from their sheaths sprang seven swords, steel from pommel to point only; on the blades of them in fantastic letters of gold, shone the word WESTWARD.

Then all the terrace gleamed with steel, and amid the hurtling of stones and whizz of arrows they began to go westward.

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

Then those of the people who durst stay on the pier saw the ships of Svend's little fleet leaving one by one; for he had taken aboard those ten ships whosoever had prayed to go, even at the last moment, wounded, or dying even; better so, for in their last moments came thoughts of good things to many of them, and it was good to be among the true.

But those haughty ones left behind, sullen and untamed, but with a horrible indefinable dread on them that was worse than death, or mere pain, howsoever fierce—these saw all the ships go out of the harbour merrily with swelling sail and dashing oar, and with joyous singing of those aboard; and Svend's was the last of all.

Whom they saw kneel down on the deck unhelmed, then all sheathed their swords that were about him; and the Prince Robert took from Svend's hand an iron crown fantastically wrought, and placed it on his head as he knelt; then he continued kneeling still, till, as the ship drew further and further away from the harbour, all things aboard of her became indistinct.

And they never saw Svend and his brethren again.

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Here ends what William the Englishman wrote; but afterwards (in the night-time) he found the book of a certain chronicler which saith:

'In the spring-time, in May, the 550th year from the death of Svend the wonderful king, the good knights, sailing due eastward, came to a harbour of a land they knew not: wherein they saw many goodly ships, but of a strange fashion like the ships of the



ancients, and destitute of any mariners: besides they saw no beacons for the guidance of seamen, nor was there any sound of bells or singing, though the city was vast, with many goodly towers and palaces. So when they landed they found that which is hardly to be believed but which is nevertheless true: for about the quays and about the streets lay many people dead, or stood, but quite without motion, and they were all white or about the colour of new-hewn freestone, yet were they not statues but real men, for they had, some of them, ghastly wounds which showed their entrails, and the structure of their flesh, and veins, and bones.

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'Moreover the streets were red and wet with blood, and the harbour waves were red with it, because it dipped in great drops slowly from the quays.

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

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

THE CHURCHES OF NORTH FRANCE

I—SHADOWS OF AMIENS

Not long ago I saw for the first time some of the churches of North France; still more recently I saw them for the second time; and, remembering the love I have for them and the longing that was in me to see them, during the time that came between the first and second visit, I thought I should like to tell people of some of those things I felt when I was there;—there among those mighty tombs of the long-dead ages.

And I thought that even if I could say nothing else about these grand churches, I could at least tell men how much I loved them; so that though they might laugh at me for my foolish and confused words, they might yet be moved to see what there was that made me speak my love, though I could give no reason for it.

For I will say here that I think those same churches of North France the grandest, the most beautiful, the kindest and most loving of all the buildings that the earth has ever borne; and, thinking of their past-away builders, can I see through them, very faintly, dimly, some little of the mediaeval times, else dead, and gone from me for ever—voiceless for ever.

And those same builders, still surely living, still real men, and capable of receiving love, I love no less than the great men, poets and painters and such like, who are on earth now, no less than my breathing friends whom I can see looking kindly on me now. Ah! do I not love them with just cause, who certainly loved me, thinking of me sometimes between the strokes of their chisels; and for this love of all men that they had, and moreover for the great love of God, which they certainly had too; for this, and for this work of theirs, the upraising of the great cathedral front with its beating heart of the thoughts of men, wrought into the leaves and flowers of the fair earth; wrought into the faces of good men and true, fighters against the wrong, of angels who upheld them, of God who rules all things; wrought through the lapse of years, and years, and years, by the dint of chisel, and stroke of hammer, into stories of life and death, the second life, the second death, stories of God's dealing in love and wrath with the nations of the

earth, stories of the faith and love of man that dies not: for their love, and the deeds through which it worked, I think they will not lose their reward.

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So I will say what I can of their works, and I have to speak of Amiens first, and how it seemed to me in the hot August weather.

I know how wonderful it would look, if you were to mount one of the steeples of the town, or were even to mount up to the roof of one of the houses westward of the cathedral; for it rises up from the ground, grey from the paving of the street, the cavernous porches of the west front opening wide, and marvellous with the shadows of the carving you can only guess at; and above stand the kings, and above that you would see the twined mystery of the great flamboyant rose window with its thousand openings, and the shadows of the flower-work carved round it, then the grey towers and gable, grey against the blue of the August sky, and behind them all, rising high into the quivering air, the tall spire over the crossing.

But from the hot Place Royale here with its stunted pollard acacias, and statue of some one, I know not whom, but some citizen of Amiens I suppose, you can see nothing but the graceful spire; it is of wood covered over with lead, and was built quite at the end of the flamboyant times. Once it was gilt all over, and used to shine out there, getting duller and duller, as the bad years grew worse and worse; but the gold is all gone now; when it finally disappeared I know not, but perhaps it was in 1771, when the chapter got them the inside of their cathedral whitewashed from vaulting to pavement.

The spire has two octagonal stages above the roof, formed of trefoiled arches, and slim buttresses capped by leaded figures; from these stages the sloping spire springs with crocketed ribs at the angles, the lead being arranged in a quaint herring-bone pattern; at the base of the spire too is a crown of open-work and figures, making a third stage; finally, near the top of the spire the crockets swell, till you come to the rose that holds the great spire-cross of metal-work, such metal-work as the French alone knew how to make; it is all beautiful, though so late.

From one of the streets leading out of the Place Royale you can see the cathedral, and as you come nearer you see that it is clear enough of houses or such like things; the great apse rises over you, with its belt of eastern chapels; first the long slim windows of these chapels, which are each of them little apses, the Lady Chapel projecting a good way beyond the rest, and then, running under the cornice of the chapels and outer aisles all round the church, a cornice of great noble leaves; then the parapets in changing flamboyant patterns, then the conical roofs of the chapels hiding the exterior tracery of the triforium, then the great clerestory windows, very long, of four lights, and stilted, the tracery beginning a long way below the springing of their arches; and the buttresses are so thick, and their arms spread so here, that each of the clerestory windows looks down its own space between them, as if between walls: above the windows rise their canopies running through the parapet, and above all the great mountainous roof, and all below it, and around the windows and walls of the choir and apse, stand the mighty army of the buttresses, holding up the weight of the stone roof within with their strong arms for ever.

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We go round under their shadows, past the sacristies, past the southern transept, only glancing just now at the sculpture there, past the chapels of the nave, and enter the church by the small door hard by the west front, with that figure of huge St. Christopher quite close over our heads; thereby we enter the church, as I said, and are in its western bay. I think I felt inclined to shout when I first entered Amiens cathedral; it is so free and vast and noble, I did not feel in the least awe-struck, or humbled by its size and grandeur. I have not often felt thus when looking on architecture, but have felt, at all events, at first, intense exultation at the beauty of it; that, and a certain kind of satisfaction in looking on the geometrical tracery of the windows, on the sweeping of the huge arches, were, I think, my first feelings in Amiens Cathedral.

We go down the nave, glancing the while at the traceried windows of the chapels, which are later than the windows above them; we come to the transepts, and from either side the stained glass, in their huge windows, burns out on us; and, then, first we begin to appreciate somewhat the scale of the church, by looking up, along the ropes hanging from the vaulting to the pavement, for the tolling of the bells in the spire.

There is a hideous renaissance screen, of solid stone or marble, between choir and nave, with more hideous iron gates to it, through which, however, we, walking up the choir steps, can look and see the gorgeous carving of the canopied stalls; and then, alas! 'the concentration of flattened sacks, rising forty feet above the altar;' but, above that, the belt of the apse windows, rich with sweet mellowed stained glass, under the dome-like roof.

The stalls in the choir are very rich, as people know, carved in wood, in the early sixteenth century, with high twisted canopies, and histories, from the Old Testament mostly, wrought about them. The history of Joseph I remember best among these. Some of the scenes in it I thought very delightful; the story told in such a gloriously quaint, straightforward manner. Pharaoh's dream, how splendid that was! the king lying asleep on his elbow, and the kine coming up to him in two companies. I think the lean kine was about the best bit of wood-carving I have seen yet. There they were, a writhing heap, crushing and crowding one another, drooping heads and starting eyes, and strange angular bodies; altogether the most wonderful symbol of famine ever conceived. I never fairly understood Pharaoh's dream till I saw the stalls at Amiens.

There is nothing else to see in the choir; all the rest of the fittings being as bad as possible. So we will go out again, and walk round the choir-aisles. The screen round the choir is solid, the upper part of it carved (in the flamboyant times), with the history of St. John the Baptist, on the north side; with that of St. Firmin on the south. I remember very little of the sculptures relative to St. John, but I know that I did not like them much. Those about St. Firmin, who evangelised Picardy, I remember much better, and some of them especially I thought very beautiful; they are painted too, and at any rate one cannot help looking at them.

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I do not remember, in the least, the order in which they come, but some of them are fixed well enough in my memory; and, principally, a bishop, (St. Firmin), preaching, rising out of a pulpit from the midst of the crowd, in his jewelled cope and mitre, and with a beautiful sweet face. Then another, the baptising of the king and his lords, was very quaint and lifelike. I remember, too, something about the finding of St. Firmin's relics, and the translation of the same relics when found; the many bishops, with their earnest faces, in the first, and the priests, bearing the reliquaries, in the second; with their long vestments girded at the waist and falling over their feet, painted too, in light colours, with golden flowers on them. I wish I remembered these carvings better, I liked them so much. Just about this place, in the lower part of the screen, I remember the tomb of a priest, very gorgeous, with gold and colours; he lay in a deep niche, under a broad segmental arch, which is painted with angels; and, outside this niche, angels were drawing back painted curtains, I am sorry to say. But the priest lay there in cope and alb, and the gentle colour lay over him, as his calm face gazed ever at the angels painted in his resting place. I have dim recollection of seeing, when I was at Amiens before, not this last time, a tomb, which I liked much, a bishop, I think it was, lying under a small round arch, but I forget the figure now. This was in a chapel on the other side of the choir. It is very hard to describe the interior of a great church like this, especially since the whitewash (applied, as I said, on this scale in 1771) lies on everything so; before that time, some book says, the church was painted from end to end with patterns of flowers and stars, and histories: think—I might have been able to say something about it then, with that solemn glow of colour all about me, as I walked there from sunrise to sunset; and yet, perhaps, it would have filled my heart too full for speaking, all that beauty; I know not.

Up into the triforium, and other galleries, sometimes in the church, sometimes in narrow passages of close-fitting stone, sometimes out in the open air; up into the forest of beams between the slates and the real stone roof: one can look down through a hole in the vaulting and see the people walking and praying on the pavement below, looking very small from that height, and strangely foreshortened. A strange sense of oppression came over me at that time, when, as we were in one of the galleries of the west front, we looked into the church, and found the vaulting but a foot or two (or it seemed so) above our heads; also, while I was in the galleries, now out of the church, now in it, the canons had begun to sing complines, and the sound of their singing floated dimly up the winding stair-cases and half-shut doors.

The sun was setting when we were in the roof, and a beam of it, striking through the small window up in the gable, fell in blood-red spots on the beams of the great dim roof. We came out from the roof on to the parapet in the blaze of the sun, and then going to the crossing, mounted as high as we could into the spire, and stood there a while looking down on the beautiful country, with its many water-meadows, and feathering trees.

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And here let me say something about the way in which I have taken this description upon me; for I did not write it at Amiens; moreover, if I had described it from the bare reminiscences of the church, I should have been able to say little enough about the most interesting part of all, the sculptures, namely; so, though remembering well enough the general effect of the whole, and, very distinctly, statues and faces, nay, leaves and flower-knots, here and there; yet, the external sculpture I am describing as well as I can from such photographs as I have; and these, as everybody knows, though very distinct and faithful, when they show anything at all, yet, in some places, where the shadows are deep, show simply nothing. They tell me, too, nothing whatever of the colour of the building; in fact, their brown and yellow is as unlike as possible to the grey of Amiens. So, for the facts of form, I have to look at my photographs; for facts of colour I have to try and remember the day or two I spent at Amiens, and the reference to the former has considerably dulled my memory of the latter. I have something else to say, too; it will seem considerably ridiculous, no doubt, to many people who are well acquainted with the iconography of the French churches, when I talk about the stories of some of the carvings; both from my want of knowledge as to their meaning, and also from my telling people things which everybody may be supposed to know; for which I pray forgiveness, and so go on to speak of the carvings about the south transept door.

It is divided in the midst by a pillar, whereon stands the Virgin, holding our Lord. She is crowned, and has a smile upon her face now for ever; and in the canopy above her head are three angels, bearing up the aureole there; and about these angels, and the aureole and head of the Virgin, there is still some gold and vermilion left. The Holy Child, held in His mother's left arm, is draped from His throat to His feet, and between His hands He holds the orb of the world. About on a level with the Virgin, along the sides of the doorway, are four figures on each side, the innermost one on either side being an angel holding a censer; the others are ecclesiastics, and (some book says) benefactors to the church. They have solemn faces, stern, with firm close-set lips, and eyes deep-set under their brows, almost frowning, and all but one or two are beardless, though evidently not young; the square door valves are carved with deep-twined leaf-mouldings, and the capitals of the door-shafts are carved with varying knots of leaves and flowers. Above the Virgin, up in the tympanum of the doorway, are carved the Twelve Apostles, divided into two bands of six, by the canopy over the Virgin's head. They are standing in groups of two, but I do not know for certain which they are, except, I think, two, St. James and St. John; the two first in the eastern division. James has the pilgrim's hat and staff, and John is the only beardless one among them;

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his face is rather sad, and exceedingly lovely, as, indeed are all those faces, being somewhat alike; and all, in some degree like the type of face received as the likeness of Christ himself. They have all long hair falling in rippled bands on each side of their faces, on to their shoulders. Their drapery, too, is lovely; they are very beautiful and solemn. Above their heads runs a cornice of trefoiled arches, one arch over the head of each apostle; from out of the deep shade of the trefoils flashes a grand leaf cornice, one leaf again to each apostle; and so we come to the next compartment, which contains three scenes from the life of St. Honore, an early French bishop. The first scene is, I think, the election of a bishop, the monks or priests talking the matter over in chapter first, then going to tell the bishop-elect. Gloriously-draped figures the monks are, with genial faces full of good wisdom, drawn into quaint expressions by the joy of argument. This one old, and has seen much of the world; he is trying, I think, to get his objections answered by the young man there, who is talking to him so earnestly; he is listening, with a half-smile on his face, as if he had made up his mind, after all. These other two, one very energetic indeed, with his head and shoulders swung back a little, and his right arm forward, and the other listening to him, and but half-convinced yet. Then the two next, turning to go with him who is bearing to the new-chosen bishop the book of the Gospels and pastoral staff; they look satisfied and happy. Then comes he with the pastoral staff and Gospels; then, finally, the man who is announcing the news to the bishop himself, the most beautiful figure in the whole scene, perhaps, in the whole doorway; he is stooping down, lovingly, to the man they have chosen, with his left hand laid on his arm, and his long robe falls to his feet from his shoulder all along his left side, moulded a little to the shape of his body, but falling heavily and with scarce a fold in it, to the ground: the chosen one sitting there, with his book held between his two hands, looks up to him with his brave face, and he will be bishop, and rule well, I think. So, by the next scene he is bishop, I suppose, and is sitting there ordering the building of a church; for he is sitting under a trefoiled canopy, with his mitre on his head, his right hand on a reading-desk by his side. His book is lying open, his head turned toward what is going forwards. It is a splendid head and face. In the photograph I have of this subject, the mitre, short and simple, is in full light but for a little touch of shade on one side; the face is shaded, but the crown of short crisp curls hanging over it, about half in light, half in shade. Beyond the trefoil canopy comes a wood of quaint conventional trees, full of stone, with a man working at it with a long pick: I cannot see his face, as it is altogether in shade, the light falling on his head however.

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He is dressed in a long robe, quite down to his feet, not a very convenient dress, one would think, for working in. I like the trees here very much; they are meant for hawthorns and oaks. There are a very few leaves on each tree, but at the top they are all twisted about, and are thicker, as if the wind were blowing them. The little capitals of the canopy, under which the bishop is sitting, are very delightful, and are common enough in larger work of this time (thirteenth century) in France. Four bunches of leaves spring from long stiff stalks, and support the square abacus, one under each corner. The next scene, in the division above, is some miracle or other, which took place at mass, it seems. The bishop is saying mass before an altar; behind him are four assistants; and, as the bishop stands there with his hand raised, a hand coming from somewhere by the altar, holds down towards him the consecrated wafer. The thing is gloriously carved, whatever it is. The assistant immediately behind the bishop, holding in his hands a candle-stick, somewhat slantwise towards the altar, is, especially in the drapery, one of the most beautiful in the upper part of this tympanum; his head is a little bent, and the line made from the back of it over the heavy hair, down along the heavy-swinging robe, is very beautiful.

The next scene is the shrine of some Saint. This same bishop, I suppose, dead now, after all his building and ruling, and hard fighting, possibly, with the powers that be; often to be fought with righteously in those times. Over the shrine sits the effigy of the bishop, with his hand raised to bless. On the western side are two worshippers; on the eastern, a blind and a deaf man are being healed, by the touch of the dead bishop's robe. The deaf man is leaning forward, and the servant of the shrine holds to his ear the bishop's robe. The deaf man has a very deaf face, not very anxious though; not even showing very much hope, but faithful only. The blind one is coming up behind him with a crutch in his right hand, and led by a dog; the face was either in its first estate, very ugly and crabbed, or by the action of the weather or some such thing, has been changed so.

So the bishop being dead and miracles being wrought at his tomb, in the division above comes the translation of his remains; a long procession taking up the whole of the division, which is shorter than the others, however, being higher up towards the top of the arch. An acolyte bearing a cross, heads the procession, then two choristers; then priests bearing relics and books; long vestments they have, and stoles crossed underneath their girdles; then comes the reliquary borne by one at each end, the two finest figures in this division, the first especially; his head raised and his body leaning forward to the weight of the reliquary, as people nearly always do walk when they carry burdens and are going slowly; which this procession certainly

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is doing, for some of the figures are even turning round. Three men are kneeling or bending down beneath the shrine as it passes; cripples, they are, all three have beautiful faces, the one who is apparently the worst cripple of the three, (his legs and feet are horribly twisted), has especially a wonderfully delicate face, timid and shrinking, though faithful: behind the shrine come the people, walking slowly together with reverent faces; a woman with a little child holding her hand are the last figures in this history of St. Honore: they both have their faces turned full south, the woman has not a beautiful face, but a happy good-natured genial one.

The cornice below this division is of plain round-headed trefoils very wide, and the spandrel of each arch is pierced with a small round trefoil, very sharply cut, looking, in fact, as if it were cut with a punch: this cornice, simple though it is, I think, very beautiful, and in my photograph the broad trefoils of it throw sharp black shadows on the stone behind the worshipping figures, and square-cut altars.

In the triangular space at the top of the arch is a representation of our Lord on the cross; St. Mary and St. John standing on either side of him, and, kneeling on one knee under the sloping sides of the arch, two angels, one on each side. I very much wish I could say something more about this piece of carving than I can do, because it seems to me that the French thirteenth century sculptors failed less in their representations of the crucifixion than almost any set of artists; though it was certainly an easier thing to do in stone than on canvas, especially in such a case as this where the representation is so highly abstract; nevertheless, I wish I could say something more about it; failing which, I will say something about my photograph of it.

I cannot see the Virgin's face at all, it is in the shade so much; St. John's I cannot see very well; I do not think it is a remarkable face, though there is sweet expression in it; our Lord's face is very grand and solemn, as fine as I remember seeing it anywhere in sculpture. The shadow of the body hanging on the cross there, falls strangely and weirdly on the stone behind—both the kneeling angels (who, by the way, are holding censers), are beautiful. Did I say above that one of the faces of the twelve Apostles was the most beautiful in the tympanum? if I did, I retract that saying, certainly, looking on the westernmost of these two angels. I keep using the word beautiful so often that I feel half inclined to apologise for it; but I cannot help it, though it is often quite inadequate to express the loveliness of some of the figures carved here; and so it happens surely with the face of this angel. The face is not of a man, I should think; it is rather like a very fair woman's face; but fairer than any woman's face I ever saw or thought of: it is in profile and easy to be seen in the photograph, though somewhat in the shade.

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I am utterly at a loss how to describe it, or to give any idea of the exquisite lines of the cheek and the rippled hair sweeping back from it, just faintly touched by the light from the south-east. I cannot say more about it. So I have gone through the carvings in the lower part of this doorway, and those of the tympanum. Now, besides these, all the arching-over of the door is filled with figures under canopies, about which I can say little, partly from want of adequate photographs, partly from ignorance of their import.

But the first of the cavettos wherein these figures are, is at any rate filled with figures of angels, some swinging censers, some bearing crowns, and other things which I cannot distinguish. Most of the niches in the next cavetto seem to hold subjects; but the square camera of the photographer clips some, many others are in shadow, in fact the niches throw heavy shadows over the faces of nearly all; and without the photograph I remember nothing but much fretted grey stone above the line of the capitals of the doorway shafts; grey stone with something carved in it, and the swallows flying in and out of it. Yet now there are three niches I can say something about at all events. A stately figure with a king's crown on his head, and hair falling in three waves over his shoulders, a very kingly face looking straight onward; a great jewelled collar falling heavily to his elbows: his right hand holding a heavy sceptre formed of many budding flowers, and his left just touching in front the folds of his raiment that falls heavily, very heavily to the ground over his feet. Saul, King of Israel.—A bending figure with covered head, pouring, with his right hand, oil on the head of a youth, not a child plainly, but dwarfed to a young child's stature before the bending of the solemn figure with the covered head. Samuel anointing David.—A king again, with face hidden in deep shade, holding a naked sword in his right hand, and a living infant in the other; and two women before him, one with a mocking smile on her face, the other with her head turned up in passionate entreaty, grown women they are plainly, but dwarfed to the stature of young girls before the hidden face of the King. The judgment of Solomon.—An old man with drawn sword in right hand, with left hand on a fair youth dwarfed, though no child, to the stature of a child; the old man's head is turned somewhat towards the presence of an angel behind him, who points downward to something unseen. Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac.—Noah too, working diligently that the ark may be finished before the flood comes.—Adam tilling the ground, and clothed in the skins of beasts.—There is Jacob's stolen blessing, that was yet in some sort to be a blessing though it was stolen.—There is old Jacob whose pilgrimage is just finished now, after all his doings and sufferings, all those deceits inflicted upon him, that made him remember, perforce, the lie he said and acted long ago,—old Jacob blessing the sons of Joseph. And many more which I remember not, know not, mingled too with other things which I dimly see have to do with the daily occupations of the men who lived in the dim, far-off thirteenth century.

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I remember as I came out by the north door of the west front, how tremendous the porches seemed to me, which impression of greatness and solemnity, the photographs, square-cut and brown-coloured do not keep at all; still however I can recall whenever I please the wonder I felt before that great triple porch; I remember best in this way the porch into which I first entered, namely the northernmost, probably because I saw most of it, coming in and out often by it, yet perhaps the fact that I have seen no photograph of this doorway somewhat assists the impression.

Yet I do not remember even of this anything more than the fact that the tympanum represented the life and death of some early French bishop; it seemed very interesting. I remember, too, that in the door-jambs were standing figures of bishops in two long rows, their mitred heads bowed forward solemnly, and I remember nothing further.

Concerning the southernmost porch of the west front.—The doorway of this porch also has on the centre pillar of it a statue of the Virgin standing, holding the Divine Child in her arms. Both the faces of the Virgin Mother and of her Son, are very beautiful; I like them much better than those in the south transept already spoken of; indeed I think them the grandest of all the faces of the Madonna and Child that I have seen carved by the French architects. I have seen many, the faces of which I do not like, though the drapery is always beautiful; their faces I do not like at all events, as faces of the Virgin and Child, though as faces of other people even if not beautiful they would be interesting. The Child is, as in the transept, draped down to the feet; draped too, how exquisitely I know not how to say. His right arm and hand is stretched out across His mother's breast, His left hangs down so that His wrist as His hand is a little curved upwards, rests upon His knee; His mother holds Him slightly with her left arm, with her right she holds a fold of her robe on which His feet rest. His figure is not by any means that of an infant, for it is slim and slender, too slender for even a young boy, yet too soft, too much rounded for a youth, and the head also is too large; I suppose some people would object to this way of carving One who is supposed to be an infant; yet I have no doubt that the old sculptors were right in doing so, and to my help in this matter comes the remembrance of Ruskin's answer to what Lord Lindsay says concerning the inability of Giotto and his school to paint young children: for he says that it might very well happen that Giotto could paint children, but yet did not choose to in this instance, (the Presentation of the Virgin), for the sake of the much greater dignity to be obtained by using the more fully developed figure and face; {156} and surely, whatever could be said about Giotto's paintings, no one who was at all acquainted with Early French sculpture could doubt that the carvers of this figure here, *could*

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have carved an infant if they had thought fit so to do, men who again and again grasped eagerly common everyday things when in any way they would tell their story. To return to the statues themselves. The face of the young Christ is of the same character as His figure, such a face as Elizabeth Browning tells of, the face of One 'who never sinned or smiled'; at least if the sculptor fell below his ideal somewhat, yet for all that, through that face which he failed in a little, we can see when we look, that his ideal was such an one. The Virgin's face is calm and very sweet, full of rest,—indeed the two figures are very full of rest; everything about them expresses it from the broad forehead of the Virgin, to the resting of the feet of the Child (who is almost self-balanced) in the fold of the robe that she holds gently, to the falling of the quiet lines of her robe over her feet, to the resting of its folds between them.

The square heads of the door-valves, and a flat moulding above them which runs up also into the first division of the tympanum, is covered with faintly cut diaper-work of four-leaved flowers.

Along the jambs of the doorway on the north side stand six kings, all bearded men but one, who is young apparently; I do not know who these are, but think they must be French kings; one, the farthest toward the outside of the porch, has taken his crown off, and holds it in his hand: the figures on the other side of the door-jambs are invisible in the photograph except one, the nearest to the door, young, sad, and earnest to look at—I know not who he is. Five figures outside the porch, and on the angles of the door-jambs, are I suppose prophets, perhaps those who have prophesied of the birth of our Lord, as this door is apportioned to the Virgin.

The first division of the tympanum has six sitting figures in it; on each side of the canopy over the Virgin's head, Moses and Aaron; Moses with the tables of the law, and Aaron with great blossomed staff: with them again, two on either side, sit the four greater prophets, their heads veiled, and a scroll lying along between them, over their knees; old they look, very old, old and passionate and fierce, sitting there for so long.

The next division has in it the death and burial of the Virgin,—the twelve Apostles clustering round the deathbed of the Virgin. I wish my photograph were on a larger scale, for this indeed seems to me one of the most beautiful pieces of carving about this church, those earnest faces expressing so many things mingled with their regret that she will be no more with them; and she, the Virgin-Mother, in whom all those prophecies were fulfilled, lying so quiet there, with her hands crossed downwards, dead at last. Ah! and where will she go now? whose face will she see always? Oh! that we might be there too! Oh! those faces so full of all tender regret, which even They must feel for Her; full of all yearning, and longing that they too might

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finish the long fight, that they might be with the happy dead: there is a wonder on their faces too, when they see what the mighty power of Death is. The foremost is bending down, with his left hand laid upon her breast, and he is gazing there so long, so very long; one looking there too, over his shoulder, rests his hand on him; there is one at the head, one at the foot of the bed; and he at the head is turning round his head, that he may see her face, while he holds in his hands the long vestment on which her head rests.

In my photograph the shadow is so thick that I cannot see much of the burial of the Virgin, can see scarce anything of the faces, only just the forms, of the Virgin lying quiet and still there, of the bending angels, and their great wings that shadow everything there.

So also of the third and last division filling the top of the arch. I only know that it represents the Virgin sitting glorified with Christ, crowned by angels, and with angels all about her.

The first row in the vaulting of the porch I has angels in it, holding censers and candlesticks; the next has in it the kings who sprung from Jesse, with a flowing bough twisted all among them; the third and last is hidden by a projecting moulding.

All the three porches of the west front have a fringe of cusps ending in flowers, hanging to their outermost arch, and above this a band of flower-work, consisting of a rose and three rose-leaves alternating with each other.

Concerning the central porch of the west front.—The pillar which divides the valves of the central porch carries a statue of Our Lord; his right hand raised to bless, his left hand holding the Book; along the jambs of the porch are the Apostles, but not the Apostles alone, I should think; those that are in the side that I can see have their distinctive emblems with them, some of them at least. Their faces vary very much here, as also their figures and dress; the one I like best among them is one who I think is meant for St. James the Less, with a long club in his hands; but they are all grand faces, stern and indignant, for they have come to judgment.

For there above in the tympanum, in the midst over the head of Christ, stand three angels, and the midmost of them bears scales in his hands, wherein are the souls being weighed against the accusations of the Accuser, and on either side of him stands another angel, blowing a long trumpet, held downwards, and their long, long raiment, tight across the breast, falls down over their feet, heavy, vast, ungirt; and at the corners of this same division stand two other angels, and they also are blowing long trumpets held downwards, so that their blast goes round the world and through it; and the dead are rising between the robes of the angels with their hands many of them lifted to

heaven; and above them and below them are deep bands of wrought flowers; and in the vaulting of the porch are eight

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bands of niches with many, many figures carved therein; and in the first row in the lowest niche Abraham stands with the saved souls in the folds of his raiment. In the next row and in the rest of the niches are angels with their hands folded in prayer; and in the next row angels again, bearing the souls over, of which they had charge in life; and this is, I think, the most gloriously carved of all those in the vaulting. Then martyrs come bearing their palm-boughs; then priests with the chalice, each of them; and others there are which I know not of. But above the resurrection from the dead, in the tympanum, is the reward of the good, and the punishment of the bad. Peter standing there at the gate, and the long line of the blessed entering one by one; each one crowned as he enters by an angel waiting there; and above their heads a cornice takes the shape of many angels stooping down to them to crown them. But on the inferno side the devil drives before him the wicked, all naked, presses them on toward hell-mouth, that gapes for them, and above their heads the devil-cornice hangs and weighs on them. And above these the Judge showing the wounds that were made for the salvation of the world; and St. Mary and St. John kneeling on either side of Him, they who stood so once at the Crucifixion; two angels carrying cross and spear and nails; two others kneeling, and, above, other angels, with their wings spread, and singing. Something like this is carved in the central porch at Amiens.

Once more forgive me, I pray, for the poor way in which I have done even that which I have attempted to do; and forgive me also for that which I have left undone.

And now, farewell to the church that I love, to the carved temple-mountain that rises so high above the water-meadows of the Somme, above the grey roofs of the good town. Farewell to the sweep of the arches, up from the bronze bishops lying at the west end, up to the belt of solemn windows, where, through the painted glass, the light comes solemnly. Farewell to the cavernous porches of the west front, so grey under the fading August sun, grey with the wind-storms, grey with the rain-storms, grey with the beat of many days' sun, from sunrise to sunset; showing white sometimes, too, when the sun strikes it strongly; snowy-white, sometimes, when the moon is on it, and the shadows growing blacker; but grey now, fretted into black by the mitres of the bishops, by the solemn covered heads of the prophets, by the company of the risen, and the long robes of the judgment-angels, by hell-mouth and its flames gaping there, and the devils that feed it; by the saved souls and the crowning angels; by the presence of the Judge, and by the roses growing above them all for ever.

Farewell to the spire, gilt all over with gold once, and shining out there, very gloriously; dull and grey now, alas; but still it catches, through its interlacement of arches, the intensest blue of the blue summer sky; and, sometimes at night you may see the stars shining through it.

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It is fair still, though the gold is gone, the spire that seems to rock, when across it, in the wild February nights, the clouds go westward.

Footnotes:

{21} See Thorpe's *Northern Mythology*, vol. ii, p. 214.

{156} In the explanatory remarks accompanying the engravings from Giotto's frescoes in the Arena Chapel, published by the Arundel Society. I regret not being able to give the reference to the passage, not having the work by me.

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